



*"Ultimately the bond of all companionship, whether in marriage or in friendship, is communication"*  
~ Oscar Wilde



## JUST FACTS

### Harmful Conflictual Style in Marriage

Conflict is a normal occurrence in all marriages. This is because a marriage consists of two individuals and each individual is of a different gender, has a different personality, comes from different family background and possesses different expectations, needs, wants and interests. Differences itself is not the problem but rather how the couple responds to the differences is what really matters. Positive feelings in marriage erode when conflicts are handled poorly. There are **4 key patterns of conflictual interactions that will harm marital relationship**.

#### 1. ESCALATION

- Occurs when spouses negatively respond back and forth to each other, continually becoming angrier so that conditions get worse and worse. The attitude underlying the communication is one of offensive and/or defensive. Issues do not get resolved.
- This negative-to-negative character of conversations often leaves couples with angry, frustrated and hopeless feelings.

#### 2. INVALIDATION

- Occurs when one spouse puts down the thoughts, feelings or character of the other or when one is expecting sympathy or encouragement but gets criticism instead.
- Invalidation hurts. It leads naturally to covering up who you are and what you think, this can lead to loneliness and lack of intimacy in the marriage.

#### 3. WITHDRAWAL AND AVOIDANCE

- Occurs when one spouse (pursuer) brings up a problematic issue and the other (withdrawer) avoids or pull away from the discussion
- The withdrawing or avoiding spouse may tend to be quiet during an argument or may quickly agree to some suggestions just to end the conversation, with no real intention of following through or just leaves, seemingly to do something else.

- This relationship pattern gets worse if it is allowed to continue. That's because pursuers will pursue more aggressively as withdrawers pull back more with nothing being resolved.

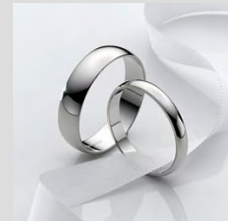
#### 4. NEGATIVE INTERPRETATION

- Occurs when one spouse consistently believes that the motives of the other are more negative than is really the case.
- Negative interpretation creates an atmosphere of hopelessness and demoralisation. A marriage cannot survive happily if each spouse's action is constantly interpreted as intentionally hurtful or frustrating to the other.
- Negative interpretation is something a person must confront within himself/herself. It cannot be done as a couple as only the individual can control how he/she interprets the other partner's behavior.

If you spot any of these harmful interactions in your marital relationship, get help quickly. There are good books on communication skills in the local bookstores that can assist you to develop more healthy communication patterns. You may also consider seeing a counsellor who can guide you and help you to identify problem areas and assist you in learning better ways to communicate.

For couples considering marriage or for couples married for less than 3 year, please do attend the Smart Start course which will give you the basic tools to build a healthy marriage.

## ANNOUNCEMENT



### SMARTSTART Pre-Marriage Course

Dates: 1 & 8 December 2007 (Saturdays)  
Time: 9am – 4pm  
Venue: Unit 20-2, Jln PJU 8/5G, Damansara Perdana, 47820 Petaling Jaya

Limited to only 25-couples. To register or for more information, please contact CLM.

## CONTACT US

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