

# Couple**TALK**

Enhancing Your Relationship

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

## TEACHING GUIDE

The purpose of this program is to strengthen partner relationships by building skills which emphasize growth and behavioral change. Persons using the materials should accomplish the following six objectives:

- 1 Understand the role which fighting plays in maintaining a satisfying relationship.
- 2 Adopt active listening techniques when communicating with each other about significant issues.
- 3 Use “I” statements to express feelings about important matters.
- 4 Identify expectations that frequently cause conflict.
- 5 Set priorities that will allow the couple to maintain a balance between their relationship and work and family responsibilities.
- 6 Identify and adopt practices that strengthen and protect a couple’s friendship.

### Materials

The program, *Couple Talk: Enhancing Your Relationship*, includes the following materials:

1. **Set of Six Written Lessons** and a **Survey Evaluation**. Lesson titles include:
  - “How to Fight Right”
  - “Learning to Listen”
  - “Expressing Yourself”
  - “Managing Expectations”
  - “The Balancing Act”
  - “Best Friends”
2. **Activity Cards** to reinforce the lesson information.
3. **Teaching Guide** to support the lesson material (this publication).
4. **Audiotape** to listen to the six lessons and activity cards.
5. **Program Support Resources** such as a computer disk with *Couple Talk* graphics.

### How to Use the Program

There are several options for using the *Couple Talk: Enhancing Your Relationship* program.

☆ **Option 1: Home-study Program**

☆☆ **Option 2: Public Meeting**

☆☆☆ **Option 3: Workshop Series (six meetings)**

☆☆☆☆ **Option 4: Public Display**



**Suggestions for Implementing Each Option are Included in the Following Sections:**

### ☆ Option 1: Home-study Program

Program materials for *Couple Talk: Enhancing Your Relationship* can be provided to a person or couple desiring a home-study course on building relationships. There are several methods available for distributing the information:

- **Lessons and activity cards only.**
- **Lessons, activity cards and audiotape.**
- **Audiotape only.**
- **Audiotape and activity cards.**

It is suggested that participants who complete the lessons and activities be encouraged to complete and return the survey evaluation. This information should be returned to the name and address indicated on the bottom of the evaluation form.

### ☆☆ Option 2: Public Meeting (approximately one hour)

Contact your family and consumer sciences county extension agent about your plans to offer a public meeting on *Couple Talk: Enhancing Your Relationship*. The extension office may be able to help promote your efforts and obtain the materials you need.

- **Obtain copies of the lessons and activity cards for each participant, including yourself.**
- **Prior to the public meeting, read through the entire set of materials.**
- **Prepare yourself for each suggested activity by mentally thinking about how people will react and how you will respond.**
- **Plan a room arrangement which will allow participants to see each other during discussion.**
- **Have paper and pencils available for each participant.**
- **Use a flip chart, chalk board or overhead projector with clear transparencies and a marker if you want to write down group responses.**

#### **Suggested Meeting Format:**

1. Start with a group bonding activity. Ask couples to introduce themselves and have each partner answer one of the following questions:

**Partner #1:** *“How did you meet?”*

**Partner #2:** *“What is a favorite activity that you like to do together?”*

If a person has no partner at the meeting, ask for a self-introduction that includes an answer to one of these questions.





2. Concentrate on the information given in Lesson One, “How To Fight Right.” Emphasize the following points:
  - **The importance of fighting.**
  - **The three different styles of settling conflict: yelling, avoiding and listening.**

*Think of examples to illustrate these styles. You might want to have participants perform role-playing situations to illustrate each style. For instance, use “housework” as a role-playing issue. Have two persons yell at each other as they are discussing the problem of getting the housework done; have two persons avoid the issue; and have two persons listen to each other as they deal with the conflict.*
  - **The keys to successful fighting: little escalation, no hide and seek, and mutual respect.**
3. Use Part 1 on the “How to Fight Right” activity card for a group activity. Talk about the information provided and ask each person to write down personal body reactions to partner conflict. If the audience is couples, have partners share responses with each other and follow with a group discussion. If the participants do not have partners, lead a group discussion only. After listing body reactions, ask each person to write down three ways in which he or she plans to stay calm when a partner disagreement arises. Conduct a partner and/or group discussion.
4. At the conclusion of these activities, pass out the set of lessons and activity cards. Talk about the following sections presented in the lesson introduction: “Helpful Hints,” “Words of Caution,” and “In Addition....” Encourage participants to complete the activities on each card as they finish each lesson.
5. Review the evaluation form with participants. Ask them to complete it when they have finished the six lessons and return it as indicated. Inquire if there are any questions.

### ☆☆☆ Option 3: Workshop Series (Six: 1-hour weekly meetings)

Prepare for this option by reading the entire series of lessons and becoming very familiar with the activity cards. In addition, it would be helpful for you to read one or more of the following books. They are listed in order of suggested preference.

**Markman, Howard, Scott Stanley and Susan L. Blumberg.** *Fighting for your Marriage.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994.

**Gottman, John.** *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994.

### Suggested Workshop Format:

1. Follow the guidelines given for Option 2. At the conclusion of the first workshop, ask participants to read Lesson One, “How to Fight Right.” Also request that they complete Part 2 on the “How to Fight Right” activity card before the next workshop.



2. At the beginning of each workshop, begin with a group bonding activity if the group needs time to re-establish rapport and build trust.
3. After the opening activity, ask participants to reflect on the previous week's lessons and activities. Encourage discussion regarding their reactions to the activities. **Suggested question to ask participants:** *"How did this lesson apply to you and your partner?"*
4. Introduce Lesson Two, "Learning to Listen" by highlighting the key point given on the activity card, and if time allows, summarize the content of the lesson. Be prepared to initiate Part 1 or Part 2 on the "Learning to Listen" activity card.
5. Remind participants to read the next lesson and do the activities before the next workshop.
6. Follow the same format in each subsequent workshop, allow time for discussion of the previous week's lesson and activities. Introduce the next lesson with the key points and an activity given on the activity card.
7. At the conclusion of the final workshop, request that participants complete and return the survey evaluations to you. Please send the evaluations to the address indicated on the bottom of the evaluation form.
8. Complete the workshop series with a celebration. Discuss with your group what type of event would be enjoyable, such as a potluck meal, an outdoor hike, picnic, etc. You might consider designing a certificate to give to each participant. During the celebration, thank participants for their commitment to the workshops and to building their relationships. Express your appreciation for their willingness to open up and talk freely.

### ☆☆☆☆ Option 4: Public Display

A public display can be created by using the activity cards and a poster designed with *Couple Talk* graphics. A graphics file can be found on the *Couple Talk* computer disk. Contact your family and consumer sciences county extension agent about your plans to have a display. The extension office may be able to help with promotion and obtain the materials you need.

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