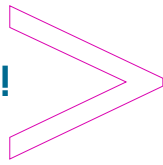


REAL QUALITY TIME

...no more excuses.

WELCOME!



**THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING MFL
AS YOUR PARTNER IN DEVELOPING
YOUR RELATIONSHIP.**

We are committed to supporting relationships so that couples, families and the community can enjoy the benefits of lifelong marriages and committed relationships.



The course is based on research that has been done to identify what contributes to the survival of marriages and committed relationships. The research by John Gottman and Nan Silver has been going on for more than 20 years and its conclusions have been rigorously tested many times.

The purpose of this course is to help you to develop the skills that have been identified as supporting relationships. It is for people who are in relationships that work quite well, but could do with a bit of attention.

This course focuses on skills that most people will be able to master easily with practice. Some of the tasks will feel a bit unnatural - but after all, if making enduring relationships was natural everyone would be doing it already!

There are surprises in store as you grow closer to and discover even more about the person you have chosen to share your life with. You may find that some of your assumptions about them are wrong. Perhaps even more surprising, you may find that there is more to you than you realised.

The skills are packaged together in seven groups. Some people will set aside time each week; others will do a bit and come back to it later. Perhaps the most useful way to use this material is to take a weekend off and concentrate on building your relationship.

If your relationship is in serious trouble, this course is best approached with support from a marriage professional.

The course uses experiential education methods. There is a lot of doing, talking and listening and most importantly, reflecting. Many people already spend quite a bit of time reflecting or mulling things over. Some people have not yet developed this area of their life. Never fear! There is plenty of guidance on what to think about and you will soon be comfortable doing that part of the course.

MFL thanks and acknowledges the work of Ruth Richter in developing this course.

To get the best out of this course, be positive, patient and persevering.

- 1 Only support for each other is necessary. Surprising as it may seem, pointing out personal negatives is not useful. If you are tempted, remember that when people feel put down or criticised they retreat. It has exactly the opposite effect to what is needed when building a relationship.
- 2 Use this course to break new ground. Keep away from the same old issues you know so well.
- 3 Use time apart if you think things are getting a bit much. Just like other areas of life, different people have different tolerances to sharing and exploring.
- 4 If one exercise is not making sense, don't worry. Do the next one and try again. Sometimes things fall into place.

There will be information about any materials you will need and an indication of the approximate time each exercise will take.

Most of all we hope you enjoy this course and through it develop and deepen your commitment to each other.

RESEARCH - *Gottman and Silver*

John Gottman and Nan Silver did significant research with several thousand couples to identify the factors that lead to successful enduring marriages. It is recorded in their book, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*.

They report that couples in enduring relationships 'have hit upon a dynamic that keeps their negative thoughts and feelings about each other (which all couples have) from overwhelming their positive ones.'

Using their research as a resource, this course explores the underlying skills that couples need to build an enduring relationship. There are seven relationship skills:

- 1 Going in the same direction.
- 2 Noticing the positives
- 3 Recognising and respecting differences
- 4 Paying attention
- 5 Keeping connected
- 6 Keeping open
- 7 Managing differences and conflicts

ALL OF THESE SKILLS WILL BE COVERED DURING THE COURSE.

They are not really separate, but it is useful to consider each skill separately.

- 1 Going in the same direction, covers the past, present and future directions of your relationship:
 - Our relationship is like ...
 - Our life and times
 - Our values
 - Wishing and hoping.
- 2 Noticing the positives, will help you identify the positives in your self and your partner and explore how to give praise and compliments.
- 3 Recognising and respecting differences covers differences in:
 - Personality
 - Dealing with information
 - Decision making styles
 - "I love you" preferences
 - Language difference.
- 4 Paying attention, focuses on attending to the balance in your relationship.
- 5 Keeping connected, covers:
 - Your use of time
 - Priorities
 - Keeping close.
- 6 Keeping open, deals with:
 - The meaning of life and everything
 - What do you make it mean?
 - Structured discussion
 - Repair attempts.
- 7 Managing differences and conflicts, includes:
 - Stressors from outside the relationship
 - Yielding to win
 - Raising issues in a gentle way
 - Having an accepted way of raising issues
 - Handling overwhelming feelings
 - Keeping close through difficulties.

We wish you well as you begin, and hope that this course will help you to enjoy your life together.

PURPOSE

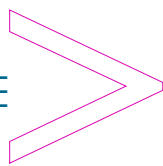
Begin building a shared understanding of each other and your relationship.

MATERIALS

Two big sheets of paper and some coloured pens or pencils.

TIME

About an hour, depending on how much detail you put in.
It doesn't all have to be done at once.

ACTIVITY ONE**OUR RELATIONSHIP IS LIKE...**

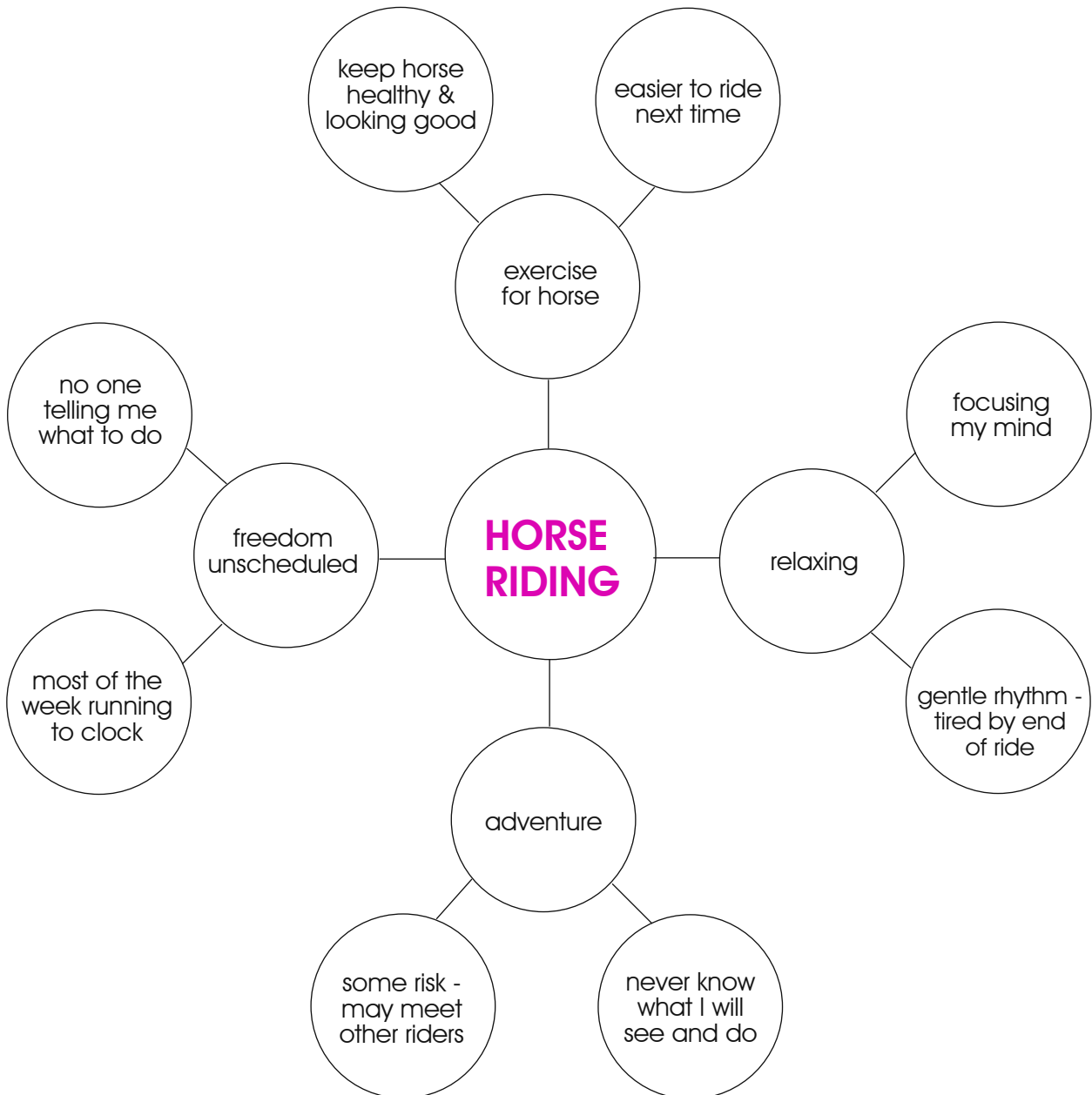
*Individually,
choose something you like A LOT,
or something that gives you pleasure.
It can be a hobby, activity, food or anything!*

- 1** In the middle of your piece of paper draw a circle that is big enough to fit in the name of your chosen pleasure.
- 2** Put the name of your pleasure in the circle.
- 3** Draw four lines coming out from the circle.
- 4** On the end of each line draw another circle big enough for a word or two. In each circle put a word that describes something about your pleasure.
- 5** On each of the four new circles draw two new lines and circles. Add words that describe what you put into the first four circles.

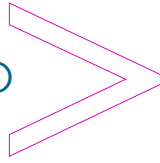
When you are satisfied that you have finished, share it with your partner. This activity can help you discover and share things about your relationship. Which bits are like your relationship? Which aspects of your relationship can be expressed with the words you have used in your diagram?

Share with your partner.

EXAMPLE

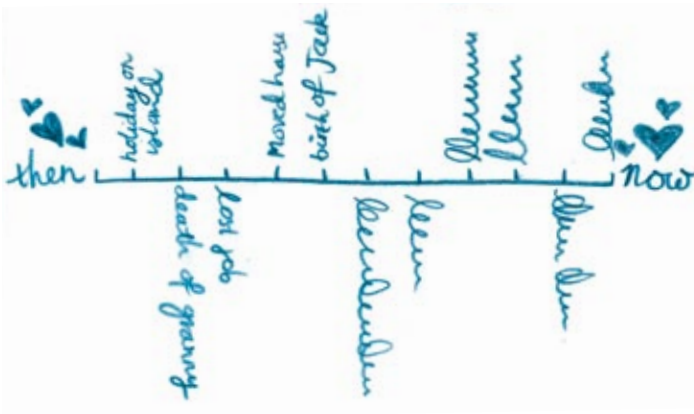


ACTIVITY TWO



OUR LIFE AND TIMES...

*Individually,
draw a timeline of your relationship
on a large piece of paper.*



1 Start with a horizontal line across the middle of the paper. Divide the timeline into 10 equal sections and allocate a number of years per section. A longer relationship would have more years per section. For example, for a 30 year long relationship each section would represent three years. For a shorter relationship of 5 years each section would represent 6 months. Mark in the years to make it easier to share later.

2 Mark challenges, changes, decisions, events and feelings on the line. Use the following list to help. Put events you remember as positive above the line and anything you remember as negative below the line.

3 Add colour to indicate particular emotions or themes. You could consider marking things to do with children one colour and those about your relationship another.

Some ideas...

BELIEFS Did you start or finish believing in something at that time?
This does not have to be religious; it could be that you finally stopped believing that your favourite team will win a Grand Final one day or that something that has been important to you no longer is.

CAREER Were there any changes in your career?
Any changes involving work-mates?
Extra pressures or particular wins?
A change of direction?

COMMITMENTS Did you take on extra commitments or finally finish something you'd been putting a lot of energy into? Was it easy or hard to deliver on the commitment you'd made?

FAMILY When were any children born?
Were there any life events, difficulties or special occasions in your family that affected you?

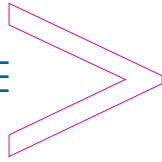
FRIENDS When did you meet the friends that have stuck with you?
Any major events connected with friends?
Did you lose a friend?

HEALTH Were there health scares or illness?
Did you make resolutions to change your eating or exercise patterns?
How long did it last?

LEARNING Have you done any study or other courses while you have been together?
How did it affect you and your relationship?

LOCATION Where did you live?

ACTIVITY THREE



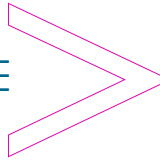
OUR VALUES

*Individually,
write a statement about what is important
to you in each of the following categories.
Think about choices you have made over time
that reveal your commitments.*

Values are the summary of our deep commitments and desires about what we stand for and who we want to be. We receive our values from the significant people in our lives, as well as our own experiences. Values are expressed through the choices we make. Unlike goals, values are never 'completed'; they are an ongoing process. Share these with your partner. Are there any surprises? Any differences? How many are similar?

BELIEFS	
FAMILY	
FRIENDS	
HEALTH	
LEARNING	
RECREATION	
RELATIONSHIP	
WORK	

ACTIVITY THREE



WISHING & HOPING



Imagine you have three wishes to make your relationship more interesting, exciting, good to be in and positive. Spend some time thinking about what you would wish for.

Individually, write down 20 possible wishes...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

Together, come up with a top ten you can agree would be good to try for.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Compare your lists. Are there any you share exactly?

CHOOSE THREE

that you both would really like to have happen. Write them out.

WHAT CAN YOU DO

To begin to make these wishes come true?

Wish 1

Wish 2

Wish 3
