

## CORE LEARNING

### *Love Busters*

Notes...

Love Busters are the thoughts, words and actions that decrease the levels of attraction between spouses. They are...

- Habits that make spouses less attractive to each other.
- Habits that withdraw love tokens from a spouse's love bank.
- Inappropriate expressions of a self-centered perspective which lacks empathy.
- Habits that can be overcome with new thoughts, words and actions.

Dr. Willard Harley has identified six categories of Love Busters:

#### **Instinctual Habits**

1. Selfish Demands
2. Disrespectful Judgments
3. Angry Outbursts

#### **Learned Habits**

4. Annoying Habits
5. Independent Behavior
6. Dishonesty

Four additional love-busting behaviors identified by Dr. John Gottman are...

1. Criticism
2. Defensiveness
3. Contempt
4. Stonewalling

Gottman calls these the *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. More information on Love Busters and the Four Horsemen is included on Handout 3.

One of the reasons so many marriages fail in our culture is because many people get married with little knowledge about



how to keep the marriage healthy and happy. There are key skills that must be learned and several instinctive and learned habits that must be unlearned if a person is going to succeed at marriage. The dive-in-and-see-if-you-sink-or-swim mentality isn't a good plan for someone who wants to get married and stay happily married. Planning and learning are both necessary in marriage.

Many of the skills couples need to remain happy were covered in sessions #1 and #2. Now we will look at the habits that often need to be unlearned to keep a marriage healthy and happy.

Use the following steps to prepare the engaged couple for a discussion of Love Busters in their relationship.

- Give a copy of *Handout 3: Love Busters* to each person. They can use it as a reference for this presentation and activity.
- Summarize the six categories of *Love Busters* and the *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* for the couple using the following descriptions:
  - *Selfish Demands*: Telling your spouse to do something without considering his/her feelings about the request.
  - *Disrespectful Judgments*: Assuming and acting as though your perspective is superior to your spouse's and that you have a responsibility to fix your spouse through lectures, ridicule, name-calling, etc.
  - *Angry Outbursts*: Raising your voice, yelling, throwing things, kicking things, breaking things, hitting, etc. all as a way to get what you want when other methods fail
  - *Annoying Habits*: Habitual behaviors that irritate your spouse even when you do them without the intention of causing any harm
  - *Independent Behavior*: Implementing a plan of action or engaging in activities without consulting your spouse

- *Dishonesty*: Lying to protect yourself or your spouse from negative consequences or lying to make yourself or a situation appear better than it actually is
- *Criticism*: Issuing a complaint to your spouse while also attacking your spouse's character or motives.
- *Defensiveness*: Responding to your spouse's complaint with a counter-attack to deflect responsibility for an issue your spouse raises – trying to make the issue your spouse's problem
- *Contempt*: Like disrespectful judgments, contempt is the attitude of superiority
- *Stonewalling*: Refusing to participate in a conversation as a way of protecting yourself from your spouse's criticisms, lectures, rants, etc.
- Show the YouTube video: *More Weird things all Couples Fight about*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRMXzq3bN\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRMXzq3bN_8) –  
 Instruct the couple to watch the video and identify the love-busting behaviors that they witness in the video. They may use *Handout 3: Love Busters* as a reference.
- Discuss the behaviors they listed. It may be helpful to watch the video again after you discuss what they saw if you think they missed a lot of them.
- Share your own story of how you and your spouse identified and overcame one or two Love Busters in your own marriage.

### *Solvable vs. Unsolvable Issues*

It is important to note that some issues never go away in a marriage. It's helpful to think of them as "unsolvable". Chronic issues are like chronic diseases. For example, if you get a simple bacterial infection, you can usually solve this problem with a visit to your doctor and a prescription. But, if you develop Multiple Sclerosis, you will not be able to get rid of it. It is a problem that will not go away. Solving M.S. is not a reasonable goal; rather, learning to live with M.S. is a more reasonable goal.