

Sixteen Week  
Relationship Course

Based on the book

*Getting the Love You Want,*  
by Harville Hendrix

by Donald Stoesz

**Short Course Description of**  
**Getting the Love You Want, by Harville Hendrix**  
**16 sessions of 2 hours each, once-a-week sessions**  
**including watching 3 movies and a graduation**

by Donald Stoesz

Harville Hendrix is a marriage therapist who uses Freudian theory and a variety of exercises to help couples work on their marriages. Hendrix believes that a long-term commitment to marriage has a variety of emotional, social, mental, spiritual, and health benefits. He asks couples who come to his weekend workshops to **commit to staying in their relationship for three months** before deciding to break up. He believes that the couple's willingness to work at their marriage will yield positive results.

**Chapters one to three** help couples understand the reasons that they were attracted to their spouses. A lot of it has to do with the way the couples were raised by their parents. Couples recognize in each other aspects of their father's and/or mother's characteristics. They **unconsciously** chose their partners because of ways in which they were seeking to heal childhood wounds. The first three chapters help couples bring these unconscious factors of attraction, love, and commitment into the open.

**Chapter four to six** deal with the power struggles that result after the euphoria of romantic love has worn off. **A power struggle results because each spouse is not experiencing the love and care that they expected from their spouses when they first fell in love.** One realizes that one's spouse is not one's parents. One's spouse will not care for a person every time one starts "kicking and screaming like a baby." Neither person is being healed and loved in the way that they feel they ought to be loved. Both spouses try to force the other to love them. These power struggles are known as "core arguments." Couples return again and again to the same unfulfilled aspects of the marriage.

The marriage is bound for failure if the couple does not get beyond these self-defeating behaviours. **Hendrix suggests that couples re-romanticize their relationship so that the marriage can get back on the right track.** They need to re-understand the reasons they were attracted to each other in the first place.

**Chapters seven to nine** outline exercises that help couples re-romanticize their relationship. **Validation of feelings, mirroring responses, empathy for the other person's point of view, and willingness to change** are ways in

which a spouse can move from defensiveness and self justification to authentication of the other person's feelings, attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs.

Hendrix suggests in **chapters ten to twelve** that the secret to a happy marriage has to do with a spouse's ability to love the other person unconditionally. The only way to "get the love you want" is by loving the other person without strings attached. A mutual adult-adult love is possible if agape love for the other person becomes real. A person's willingness to sacrifice their well being for the sake of the other person is the only way that a couple can get beyond the power struggle. Assumptions of fairness, "tit for tat," and the idea that one's own needs are more important than one spouse's need to be replaced with empathy, concern, and self-less love. One receives love only if one gives love. Forgiveness, compromise, letting go, surrender, and acceptance are all stages in this miracle of being able to love.

Three movies, **No Reservations**, **Life as a House**, and **Why Did I Get Married?** illustrate the possibility of love and relationships in a variety of settings and circumstances. Participants answer questions and discuss the movies in light of Hendrix's insights.

Participants are given an assignment every week that is based on the chapter being considered. **They answer three to five questions that pertain to themselves, their spouse, their parents, and the status of their relationship.** Each participant is asked to analyze their (past) situation so that they can establish a pro-social relationship and/or deepen their current marriage.

The two hour sessions consist of a 30 minute presentation by the facilitator. This talk is followed by an hour and a half of sharing by participants in small groups of 3 - 4. The facilitator rotates through the groups to make sure the discussion stays on track. Discussion of the topics in a larger group is sometimes preferred to meeting in small groups.

## Assignment Questions

### Chapter One: The Mystery of Attraction

**Question 1:** Describe in detail the most significant relationship you have had in your life. Explain why you were attracted to this person. Name at least 5 positive characteristics.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Question 2:** How did the relationship change over the years? If there was a separation or divorce, describe the reasons for this breakup. Name at least 5 negative characteristics of your (former) partner that you find difficult to live with.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Question Three:** Can you describe one moment, reason, or incident that triggered a crisis in your relationship? Relive the feelings of this moment. Add as many "incidents" as are helpful and give a timeline of these events.

Hendrix suggests that we are attracted to our significant others for **unconscious** reasons. **Question 4:** Have you been able to figure out what these unconscious reasons are?

Hendrix talks about "**old-brain**" **mentality**. These are ideas, emotions, values, and beliefs that influenced how we grew up. **Question 5:** Can you name the assumptions you had about marriage when you met your significant other?

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Hendrix suggests that we tend to **1) run away, 2) attack, 3) have sex, 4) submit to the person, 5) nurture the person, or 6) be nurtured by the person** if these old-brain assumptions are questioned. **Question 6:** Describe similar situations in your relationship(s) with significant others. Why did you settle on one person rather than the other? What "old-brain" features described above (6 possibilities) were present in these relationships?

## Chapter Two: Childhood Wounds

One reason we are attracted to a person is because of how we were raised. Hendrix suggests that we need to look into our childhood to understand our characteristics. The first thing he suggests is that we are either "**fusers**" or "**isolators.**" If we were ignored as a child, we are looking for attention and a sense of belonging from others. If we were smothered as a child, we need to feel a sense of independence. **Question 1:** Is or was your significant other a fuser or isolator? Are you a fuser or an isolator? Explain.

Hendrix speaks about a **repressed self.** I was brought up in a strict home. I felt the need to control my emotions and actions. It has taken me awhile to get in touch with my feelings. **Question 2:** Name the things that you were not allowed to talk about when you were young.

Hendrix suggests that we have something called a **disowned self.** This is the part of ourselves that we have a hard time accepting or recognizing. **Question 3:** Name some aspects of yourself of which you are not aware. Ask others to tell you something about yourself that you might have a hard time accepting. Can you own those parts of yourself which make you uncomfortable?

A fourth term Hendrix uses is the **lost self**. This is the part of ourselves that we feel needs to be completed by someone else. We feel as though we will not be whole unless we are bonded to other people. **Question 4:** Are you comfortable with being alone on a Friday or Saturday evening? Can you live with loneliness without acting out? Name some ways in which you are active or involved on an individual basis without the company of someone else.

A fifth term that Hendrix uses is the **false self**. I have a need to control feelings, so I store them in a mental compartment until I am ready to deal with them. I have created a facade of response that hides my real feelings until such time as I feel that it is safe to process them. **Question 5:** Name some masks that you have built up that protect yourself from others. Do you have some false illusions about who you are?

Hendrix speaks about the need to be fulfilled as a result of one's lost, false, repressed, and disowned self. One way to do this is to "**fuse**" with another person in order to be whole. **Question 6:** To what extent can a partner fulfill you? How much is the intimacy that you seek with another person worth? Is it possible to experience intimacy without being in a relationship with another person?

### **Chapter Three: Your Imago**

Hendrix suggests in chapter three that we are attracted to people who complement us. The example of Lyn and Peter reflects this principle. While Peter is outgoing, confident, and at ease with himself, Lynn is more introverted but emotionally available. Peter was attracted to Lynn because of her emotional characteristics. Lynn was attracted to Peter because of his easy-going personality. **Question One:** Your assignment is to compare the characteristics of your significant other with your father and mother. In what ways were you attracted to the "negative" aspects of your spouse's personality that were reflected in the "negative" aspects of your parents? Name as many positive characteristics about your significant other as negative characteristics.

**In what ways are your spouse like 'your father' ?**

*Negative characteristics*

*Positive Characteristics*

**In what ways are your spouse like your mother?**

*Negative characteristics*

*Positive characteristics*

**In what ways are you like your father?**

*Negative characteristics*

*Positive characteristics*

**In what ways are you like your mother?**

*Negative characteristics*

*Positive characteristics*

## Movie: No Reservations, Questions

1. How did Kate's personality affect her relationship with others?
2. How did Zoe coming to live with Kate affect their lives?
3. How did Zoe's life change after her mother's death?
4. Who related to the restaurant staff better, Kate or Nick? Why?
5. How did Kate's guardianship of Zoe help her?
6. What changes did Kate have to make when Zoe came to live with her?
7. How did these changes affect Kate's life?
8. What happened that improved the relationship between Kate and Zoe?
9. What happened between Kate and Nick that improved their relationship?
10. Kate assumed that Nick was going to take her job during their argument. What was her communication like?

## Chapter Four: Romantic Love

Hendrix suggests four characteristics of romantic love, **1) recognition, 2) timelessness, 3) reunification, and 4) necessity**. These aspects of love come into play because of the infantile ways in which we have been brought up. We fall in love because the person we are attracted to resembles so closely the relations we had with our parents. The woman reflects the way our father or mother acted. That is why there is instant **recognition**. We feel that we have known our new friend for a long time.

We feel as though our love is **timeless**. We fuse the emotions with which we grew up with the emotions that we feel for our friend. We feel that our spouse speaks to the needs we had as children. The spouse nurtures us in the ways that our parents nurtured us. **Timelessness** reduces the historical distance between our parents' love and our spouse's love.

We are **reunified** with the original self that we had when we were raised by our parents. The emotional, physical, and social intimacy that we have with our spouse is like the way that our mother held and nurtured us, the way our father showed his affection, and the way that we were loved.

We believe that we **cannot live without this person**. They extend the love, affection, and circumstances that we faced as we grew up. Our spouse extends our lives by representing a continuity with the past. Their emotional, spiritual, and social reactions are familiar because we experienced those feelings when we grew up. If our parents were cold, we know how to cope with a spouse that is cold. If our parents were affectionate, we know what we need to do to be affectionate with our spouses. A transference from our unconscious memories of how we were raised to our current emotional attachment to our spouses occurs.

**Question 1:** Can you identify with the **timelessness** that you feel when you meet a friend who can identify with you and is attracted to you? To what extent is this the result of your feelings as a child in relation to your parents?

**Question 2:** To what extent can you **recognize** your parents in your spouse? What issues are you trying to resolve with your spouse that you had with your parents?

**Question 3:** To what extent do you feel a **sense of ecstasy** when you are/were with your spouse? Can you relive the euphoria, intimacy, love, and affection that you and your spouse had when you first got to know each other?

**Question 4:** To what extent did you believe that you "**had**" **to get married**, live together, be together, in order to feel like a whole person? Have your views changed on the matter? To what extent is love or marriage or commitment a necessity?

### **From Romantic Love to a Power Struggle**

Hendrix suggests that this initial state of **timeless love** is, in fact, an illusion. This sense of euphoria cannot last. Our spouse or friend is not our parents. We will spend the rest of our relationship untangling these two realities.

Let me give some examples from the book. John is attracted to Cheryl because she is critical like his mother. Her anger is a useful tool for him to channel his un-expressed rage. She helps him stay in denial over the pain she is causing him. John will have to decide whether these experiences are worth the relationship. John is attracted to Cheryl precisely because she represents a challenge to him. Cheryl pushes him away in the same way that his mother pushed him away.

The more that Cheryl pushes John away, the more he tries to win her affection. He is willing to put up with this impossible situation because he is still trying to get over the negative relationship he had with his mother. Instead of marrying someone who wants him, as Patricia does, he is willing to put up with the challenges of Cheryl.

John's recognition that he is looking for his "lost" mother will help him establish a better relationship with Cheryl. He realizes that he will never be able to replace the love that he did not get from his mother. He may have to stop chasing Cheryl and learn to be content with himself.

**Question 5:** Give examples of the way in which your marriage relationship is like your interaction with others, e.g. your parents, your peer group, etc.?

## **Chapter Five: Power Struggle**

We are moving from a consideration of the reasons we fell in love to a consideration of the relationship itself. Hendrix suggests that it does not take long after a couple has committed themselves to each other that they begin to have a power struggle. The reason for this power struggle has to do with the fact that one entered into the relationship in order to be nurtured (as well as to give nurture).

Commitment brings with it expectations of how our spouses will fulfill us. We may expect them to cook, for us to have children, for them to do the laundry, work outside the home, have sex frequently, etc. They may have different expectations. Perhaps they do not want children, cooked only one good meal for you when you were dating, is not very clean around the house, likes cuddling but no sex, etc. Your spouse also expects that you will earn a certain amount of money, visit their family every weekend, go to Mexico on vacation, work outside the home, etc.

Suddenly, the very things that you liked about your spouse (e.g. their independence and outgoing personality) are obstacles to your marriage. What you were really looking for was affection, their willingness to attend to your needs rather than the other way around.

The spouse is perhaps not around very much because they work. They are at their family's place or with their friends when they have time off. These activities begin to make you feel like the "fifth wheel." It is as if your spouse does not need you in their lives. Suddenly, the romantic relationship that you had is turning into something else. You are in the same place that you were before the marriage, home alone on Friday evenings while they are "gallivanting around." Their outgoing personality needs socialization while your introverted personality needs time alone. This does not much of a marriage make.

We try to force the other person to pay more attention to us because our needs are not being met. We kick and scream, we become demanding, we bargain by saying that you will go to their family's place if they spend more time with you. We believe that our spouse will do what we ask them to do if we inflict pain on them.

We act this way because this is how we got our parents' attention when we were young. When we screamed as a child, we were listened to. We do the same thing when we are adults. We believe that the same attention will happen. Hendrix explains that our show of anger toward our spouse actually pushes them away rather than getting them to love us more. What does it take to change this behaviour to get the result you want?

First, one needs to realize that one's spouse is not one's parents. Even though

you could act as a child when you were young, childish behaviour will not work on your spouse. They are an adult and need love and affection from you. It is a two-way street. How can there be mutual love in a way that both parties are satisfied? How can you get from a power struggle in which you try to force your spouse to do what you want to letting your partner know what you want? Are you willing to fulfill their needs?

Let me give an example from the book. John was attracted to Cheryl because her emotional outbursts and angry retorts against others spoke to his repressed personality. Cheryl expressed emotions that John did not feel safe expressing himself. The trouble started when she "shone her bright light of emotions and anger" at John. John immediately used his super-ego to tell her to calm down and not get so emotional. John felt that it was alright for Cheryl to get angry at other people. He did not feel that it was alright for him to get angry. Cheryl was fulfilling a part of John with which he felt uncomfortable.

John needs to get in touch with his repressed anger to become a whole person. He needs to tell Cheryl how she is making him feel. Cheryl's emotions and anger need to be matched by John's emotions and anger.

Let me give another example. You may have married your spouse because they are more sociable than you. You like the fact that they take you out to parties, introduces you to their friends, and likes dancing and bowling.

This arrangement works well until you realize one day that this socializing is all too much. You used to go out four times a year when you were alone. Now you go out every week. Your introverted self begins to rebel. You tell your spouse, "let's stay home on Friday evening," "watch a movie," "watch the baseball game," or "cook a meal." They consider this side of yourself "boring." You let them party while you stay home on Friday nights, just like you did before you were married.

Part of the problem is that you are projecting the needs that you had from your parents onto your spouse. You are assuming that your spouse will act the role of your mother or father. You find out that they are an adult with their own needs and wants. You need to extinguish the projection or wish-fulfillment that you had of them!!

This brings us to the story of Kathryn and Bernard. Bernard expected Kathryn to know how he was feeling. Kathryn expected Bernard not to sulk when she asked him to do something. Kathryn discovered that she was afraid of Bernard when he isolated and got quiet. Her father became violent when he became depressed. Kathryn was projecting this fear onto her husband. It was not until they named the problem that Kathryn realized that this was an irrational fear. Bernard simply liked being alone. He was not going into the garage because he was angry at Kathryn.

Regardless of the issues involved, power struggles happen because you feel that your spouse is not contributing in the same way that you are contributing to fulfilling their desires. We believe that everything has to be fair. If I do something for you, you need to do something for me. If I have been hurt by you, I have to hurt you in order for you to understand what I am going through.

People act out in a similar manner to the way in which they were offended against. If a person was abused when they were young, they tend to abuse another person because they feel that this is a way that other people will understand the pain that they are going through. "My wife cheated on me. I am going to cheat on her to show her how it feels." We know that two wrongs do not make a right. We do it anyway to show the other person how we feel. We do not believe that we can make another person understand our pain by simply talking about it.

This is a hard lesson to learn. The need to be "equally loved" by the other person even as we accept them is a long process. Hendrix suggests that we get into a power struggle because we are fighting to have our needs met. We believe that this is possible by forcing the other person to do what we want.

**Question 1:** Have you ever been in a power struggle with your spouse? Can you recall the details of the struggle? Were you able to resolve it? Did you go through the stages of shock, anger, denial, bargaining, and despair that Hendrix talks about (pages 80-82)?

**Question 2:** Have you realized that just because your spouse has characteristics like your parents, that they are different? Can you validate the feelings, needs, and wants that they have? Can you name these?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Question 3:** To what extent have you been able to establish an adult-adult relationship with your spouse? Are both of you independent from your families? Co-dependency in couples occurs when your spouse's family or your own family is still "hooked into" your marriage relationship.

**Question 4:** If you are separated or divorced, can you explain the reasons for your break-up? Did it have to do with some core issues in which they felt that they were not getting their needs met? Was there a betrayal of trust involved? Would you call it a power struggle?

## Chapter Six: Becoming Conscious

Hendrix spends quite a bit of time talking about the reasons we are afraid to change. He suggests that we would rather sabotage our current relationship than reach out and change. We are so stuck in self-defeating behaviours that we would rather defeat ourselves than be successful. We are afraid of change because we know how much work it will take; how much we must be open to change.

**Question 1:** Describe the fears that you have that have prevented you from changing? Changing may mean leaving the relationship, working at a better relationship, staying single and being happy, or it may mean something else? Describe your current situation.

Hendrix describes what better communication looks like when we became less defensive and more open to hearing what our friends or spouses have to say. The trick is to get past the feeling of attack that someone is throwing at us. We need to get to the root of the fear that someone else is having.

Let me give an example. I might say to my spouse that I want to move and find a new job. I am having difficulties at work. For me, it makes perfect sense to change jobs or to move. When my spouse protests loudly, I simply repeat all the reasons why we need to move. I do not listen to them and their reasons.

What could some of these reasons be? First, they may have a good job and do not want to leave that. Perhaps our children have adjusted to a new school. My spouse does not want to disturb our children's progress and sense of well being. They may have family close by and are worried that they may not see them as often if we move. They may have some good friends that they do not want to leave. They may enjoy the church they are going to. They may enjoy the city in which we live.

Those are six reasons that they have for not moving. Once you take these reasons into account, your own dissatisfaction with your job begins to look less important. While you may have dissatisfaction at your job, there may be a way that you can rectify that situation rather than deciding to move. Taking your spouse's situation into account changes how you work out problems in your own life.

**Question 2:** Describe a situation in your life where your spouse's needs were more important than your own. How did you respond to this situation? Did your relationship get stronger or weaker? How did you resolve the situation?

Hendrix speaks about one's spouse "becoming an ally and resource." One's spouse is a wounded person in need of healing. One needs to take responsibility for "one's dark side." One needs to look "deep inside oneself" for abilities that one lacks. Can you ask your spouse for help with that inadequacy?

Hendrix speaks about the fact that you can only find a friend if you are willing to "make a friend." Walter had the illusion that there are friends out there that should be magically available to him. He learned that he can only find a friend if he is willing to be a friend.

**Question 3:** Describe situations in which you have had to change to be there for your spouse or friend.

**Question 4:** Describe some abilities that you lack that you need to work on.

**Question 5:** Do you have a "dark side" that you claim ownership of?

**Question 6:** What are some hurts that your spouse experienced that need healing?

**Question 7:** How were you able to fulfill your spouse's needs? List as many as you can think of.

### **Movie: Life As A House, Questions**

- a. How did George's life change when he lost his job, and only had months to live?  
Do we change only because of external circumstances?
- b. Was Sam a normal teenager in the way he acted, dressed, etc.?
- c. Describe the stepfather's parenting skills. How did he change?
- d. What characteristics did the children have that were like their parents?
- e. In what way did George's dream affect those around him?
- f. How did Sam's parents' divorce affect him?
- g. How did George connect with Sam?
- h. What happened to change the relationship between George and his ex-wife?
- i. Do you think Sam and his mother's attitude about life changed when they found out George was dying?
- j. Do you think Sam did the right thing by giving away the house?

## **Chapter Seven: Commitment**

Harville suggests that we need work on a relationship for at least three months to see if it will work. He suggests that we are so engrained in our habits that we no longer know what it means to commit to a lengthy relationship.

**Question 1:** What is the pain level of your commitment to a relationship? Do you find it easy to let go of a relationship when it goes sideways? Would you describe yourself as someone who is "willing to stick it out"? Rate yourself between 1 and 10, with 1 being low commitment and 10 being high commitment or loyalty.

We find ingenious ways of avoiding our partners. We are afraid of them because we feel that we will be abandoned by them. We are angry because they do not fulfill our desires. This fear of intimacy, pain, and change makes us avoid having a quality relationship with our spouse.

**Question 2:** Describe how you have avoided dealing with issues with your spouse. What are the reasons for entering into these strategies? Were you afraid of rejection, change, divorce? Hendrix speaks about a couple "living separate lives" in their relationship. Was it similar for you?

Hendrix says that our quality of emotional and spiritual and social health increases if one commits to a long-term relationship. Partners feel a sense of freedom when they commit to each other. They do not have to live in fear of abandonment. Their knowledge that their partner is there for them lessens their anxieties and makes them more open to dealing with the relationship. An isolator lessens their anxiety because they know that there is time and space within the relationship that enables resolution of conflicts over time.

**Question 3:** Describe situations in your life in which you have been able to commit to something for a relatively long time. This could be a job, schooling, living in one place, being committed to a long term friendship, being married, etc. Concentrate on the times that you were committed rather than on the times that you failed.

## **Chapter Eight: Creating a Zone of Safety**

Hendrix assumes that it is possible to show love and care for someone else without expecting anything in return. We often do things for others to get something in return. Hendrix believes that it is possible to show love unconditionally.

We have been made to show mutual love as well as unconditional love. Mutual love is something that we show each other to nurture ourselves. Mutual love works well if we are healthy. We show love to others because we feel secure within ourselves. We are not afraid of "losing" something if we give freely of our love. We are being nourished by others in the same way. We are emotionally healthy within ourselves. We are not co-dependent on someone else to feel okay about ourselves.

We cannot show mutual love when we are going through conflict with our spouse because we are getting enough of our needs met by our spouse. This lack in us makes us want to force our spouse to love us, to show affection, to take our needs into account. We have moved from a love that is relatively free of expectations to one that is dependent on how the spouse responds. This is a power struggle, not a marriage based on mutual love.

The only way out of a power struggle is to show love to one's spouse unconditionally, namely with no strings attached. This love is something we showed when we first met and dated our spouse. If we were able to show love and affection at the beginning of our relationship, why are we not able to do so now? Is it possible to suspend the power struggle that we are having to show unconditional love to our spouses? Hendrix suggests that we can only get back to a mutual love if we show unconditional love. We can only "get the love that we want," to quote the name of his book, if we are able to show love ourselves.

Name the ways in which you have shown love to your spouse. Can you relive the ways in which you and your spouse loved each other at the beginning? Can you come up with realistic ways to show love now?

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

How many things would you like to do differently from the actions you listed?

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

## Chapter Nine: Increasing Your Knowledge

Let me start with a story. There were three men who all thought that they were Jesus. The therapist did not know what to do with them. He put them together in a room to sort it out. After several weeks of living together, one of the men said, "Well, we cannot all be Jesus. I am going to go back to being John." He lived happily ever after.

I was reminded of this story when I read Harville Hendrix's ninth chapter. He uses a similar example when he met a patient in a mental hospital who thought he was Jesus. It was only when Hendrix validated this man's feelings and thoughts as Jesus that the man was able to be "himself."

These two examples show the importance of validation. No matter how crazy we sound, we sometimes express views, opinions, and feelings, and act in ways that appear irrational to someone else. These actions are "crazy," "irresponsible," or "irrational" until someone **validates** the reasons for our statements. As Hendrix says, there is always a kernel of truth in the criticism that we hear from someone else. Are we able to lower our defenses enough to hear what the other person is saying?

A similar situation happens when we have a relationship break-down. We pick on some small item that irritates us and "milk it" to be **validated** in our criticisms. We want to be right on at least one small issue. The trick in this case is to present it in such a way that we can be heard. We need to use "I" statements. We need to be more reflective of why we are feeling the way we do. We need to state those feelings to our spouse.

Hendrix's comments made me realize that I need to work harder at communication and communion. What are the ways I validate my spouse's feelings so that we can have a wonderfully romantic relationship? We need to get beyond the spoken words to hear the fears and anxieties that our spouse is having. Can we move beyond defensiveness to validating, feeling empathy for, and mirroring what our spouses are trying to tell us?

Hendrix is asking us whether we have **empathy** for our spouse's situation. Are we able to feel what our spouse is feeling? No matter how badly we are at communication, our spouses knows whether we care or not. Marriages can last if each partner is willing to truly care for the other person. This is a belief statement that needs verification. Would your spouse have stayed in the relationship if you truly cared for her?

I am committed to making my wife happy so I will be happy. When I see her content and satisfied, I feel content and satisfied myself. It is as though I am living my happiness through her. Hendrix suggests that empathy goes a long way in making a marriage work.

The first assignment is to look at your wife's criticisms. Your spouse's criticisms have some basis in reality. Take the time to list 5 of them. What is the biggest criticism that your spouse makes of you?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Your criticisms of your spouse speak to an unnamed need inside yourself. What are some things that you say of your spouse that also pertain to you?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5.

A third assignment has to do with denial, mirroring, validation, and empathy. Joseph is an older man who wants children. His younger wife, Amira, told him that she did not want any. Because he did not take her seriously, they have a problem. Can we validate strong feelings that our spouses have that we are having problems accepting?

A last assignment has to do with looking at your partner in a realistic way. Are you able to see who she really is? Are you able to love that person? If you cannot re-fall in love with the same person that you married, then the relationship may be doomed. If I cannot imagine my spouse and I in an ongoing romantic relationship, then the rewards of being married will grow less and less. A person will start looking in other direction if there are not taking care of the loving that should be happening within a marriage.

**Movie: WHY DID I GET MARRIED? by Tyler Perry, Questions**

1. Did Diane understand Terry's point about her work, couples' time, etc.?
- 2) Did Diane see how her priorities affected their relationship?
- 3) Did Terry effectively communicate his needs?
- 4) Diane's goal was to become business partner. Terry wanted a family. How did each of their needs affect the other?
- 5) Angie and Marcus argued a lot. What was the reason behind their anger?
- 6) Was Sheila a confident person? How did having to drive to the retreat demoralize her? Was Marcus supportive or abusive?
- 7) Was the advice that Angie gave to Patricia and Gavin helpful?
- 8) What happened when Gavin and Patricia looked at how their coping skills negatively affected their relationship?
- 9) Did Marcus understand the consequences of his infidelity?
- 10) Do you agree with the 80-20 rule?

## **Chapter Ten: Defining Your Curriculum**

Hendrix suggests that it is impossible to love yourself with out loving someone one else. He suggests that we can love ourselves when we have learned to love someone else.

He also suggests that friendship is not enough to fulfill this need for love. We need something more than friendship to fulfill the need for intimacy in our lives. The words, "Let's just be friends," in a dating situation means that that person is not willing to commit to an intimate relationship. Hendrix is suggesting that we all need to be deeply loved by someone else. We spend a lot of our time looking for that love.

Intimacy and marriage only work if we are willing to change chronic behaviours and attitudes to our spouses. This is hard work because we resist changing old habits. To take the next person into account requires shifting our focus away from ourselves and onto the other person. We need to work at specific areas in order to re-romanticize the relationship.

**Question One:** What are the chronic ways in which you have acted to distance yourself from your spouse?

**Question Two:** Name the different ways in which you have sabotaged your relationship.

**Question Three:** Is it possible to change these behaviours? What has been the hardest part of this process?

## **Chapter Eleven: Creating a Sacred Space**

We need to name our childhood hurts to see how that affects our relationship with your spouse. Take the time to recall and relate your childhood experiences. Divide them into three parts, ages 1 - 12, 12-18, and 18 - 25. Explain how you were raised by your parents, how peers and friends became important, and how you learned to be an adult.

Explain areas in your life that were delayed, inadequately dealt with, or a lack that you have had to work on. Include information about when you first met your spouse and how that affected your maturation process.

The most important part of this exercise has to do with understanding yourself better, the factors that affected who you are, your priorities in life, etc.

**1-12**

**12-18**

**18-25**

## **Chapter Twelve: Portrait of Two Relationships**

The purpose of this last chapter is to help us understand the true nature of a loving relationship. I would like you to come up with a vision of what a true relationship with your (future) spouse looks like. Use the last relationship that you had to develop a positive outlook on communication and communion. Put down the things that you are looking for in a relationship. Describe all the positive and negative attributes that you bring to the relationship .

Positive characteristics could be financial security, education, care-free, out-going, responsible, etc. Negative characteristics could be being overly critical, withdrawn, unable to share emotions, weak in finances, etc.

<b>Positives you bring into a marriage</b>	<b>Negatives you bring into a marriage</b>
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7

Do the same thing for your spouse. What are the things that have worked in your marriage? What areas do you need to work on?

<b>What worked?</b>	<b>What needs work?</b>
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5.	5
6	6
7	7

## Evaluation for 16 week Relationship Course

1. What were highlights in the course?
2. What could have been improved?
3. Was the format useful, getting input for 30 minutes, breaking into groups of 3-4 each, or in a large group, and sharing for an hour?
4. Were the movies beneficial? Other suggestions?  
*No Reservations, Life as a House, and Why Did I get Married?*
5. Did the course help you to improve your relationship with your spouse?
6. Did the course help you establish a significant new relationship?
7. Were there some chapters that were better than others?
8. Were there some questions that were better than others?
9. Other comments???

Thanks for filling out this questionnaire .