

DEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP

Lesson 10

Workbook Assignment

It's Not Working

Overview

There are behaviors and communication changes that occur when a relationship is no longer working. Feelings between the partners may have changed or the relationship no longer fulfills original needs. Some distresses in a relationship may prove to be temporary, while others indicate more serious problems.

Objectives

- Participants will examine the course of a relationship that has experienced distress.
 - Participants will identify specific behavior changes that occur when a relationship is in trouble.
 - Participants will discuss how to recognize warning signs for future relationships.
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Vocabulary

choices
distress

compromise
cues

Key Concepts

- Relationships undergo constant change.
 - When feelings change, the relationship may be in trouble.
 - Problems increase for relationships in distress.
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Preparation for Lesson

Instructor will need:

- Workbook assignment *It's Not Working*
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Teaching the Lesson

This lesson focuses on behaviors that indicate when a relationship is ready to break up. Briefly review the different stages of relationship development that were presented in Lesson 5. Begin the discussion by asking:

Questions for Discussion:

1. Are there times when a relationship shouldn't continue? Why?
2. What might be some warning signs that a relationship is about to break up?

- Discuss the typical behaviors that people demonstrate when they are no longer emotionally invested in a relationship. Be sure to point out that changes in communication patterns are primary indicators of trouble. Changes in behaviors toward one another and attitudes toward the relationship will also be evident when a relationship is no longer growing in a positive way.

- The workbook assignment is designed to be more self-evaluative than interactive. Ask the participants to choose a relationship they have experienced that did not work out. (It is not necessary to be limited to a dating relationship in this exercise. Any life relationship will demonstrate the same pattern). They are to graph the course of the relationship prior to its end so that they can see patterns of behavior that were evident.

- Conclude the lesson by addressing the Questions for Discussion found at the bottom of page 36.

LECTURE NOTES:

All relationships that are ongoing experience periods of difficulty. Solid relationships are able to weather the difficulty and remain intact. But some relationships do not have a strong foundation and will be more seriously affected by distress. Friendship and dating relationships that are not well established may break up under pressure because there is no permanent commitment between the partners. Individuals are free to make new choices and leave the relationship if it no longer meets his/her emotional needs. When one or both of the partners begin to lose interest in the relationship, more problems will develop between them.

Dating partners will recognize that there are problems developing by changes in the way they interact together. One partner may become more distant, or critical. The number and

intensity of arguments between the partners usually increases as well. Spending time together is no longer enjoyable or a priority.

A relationship that is in trouble does not necessarily have to end. Individuals who are willing to work out the difficulties and who still have deep feelings for one another can usually find a way to overcome the problem issues. Working through problems requires understanding and flexibility on the part of the couple. This may ultimately result in a stronger relationship for the future.

Some individuals may feel that the relationship is not worth the effort of trying to stay together, or they may have found someone else they prefer spending time with. In such cases it would be best to end the relationship. Even though a relationship does not survive, there are still important concepts that can be learned from the experience.

IT'S NOT WORKING

Relationships that are in trouble often don't "feel" right for the dating couple. Either partner may notice that something has changed about the relationship because he/she begins to interact with the other person differently. There are typical behaviors that indicate when a relationship is experiencing distress.

A. CHART A RELATIONSHIP: Choose a relationship from your own experience that demonstrated distress. In the box below, chart your perception of the course of that relationship before and after problems developed.

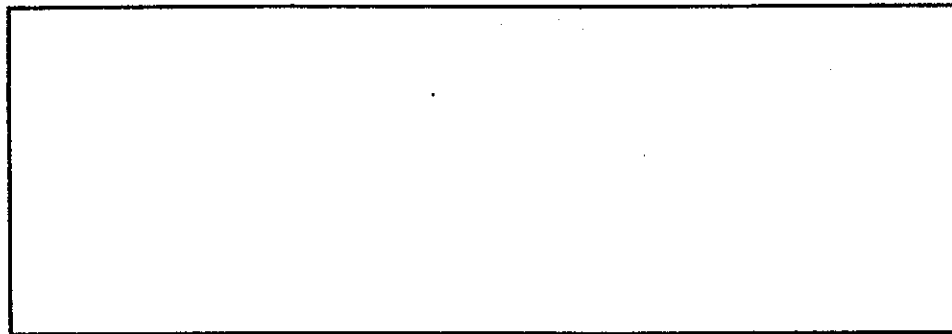
RELATIONSHIP

No Problems

Some Problems

Big Problems

Break Up



TIMELINE

(Use days, weeks, months or years to show the length of time the relationship lasted)

1. Over the course of the relationship, was more time spent with few or no problems, or with many problems? Why do you think that was so?
2. At the time of break-up, were you grateful that the relationship was ending, did you want it to continue? Why?

B. WHEN THE RELATIONSHIP WAS IN TROUBLE

Below, analyze your perception of the changes that occurred in the relationship prior to the break-up. Be as specific as you can with your answers.

THE RELATIONSHIP

<u>At the beginning</u>	<u>Later</u>

1. Changes in what you said to each other.

2. Changes in what you did together.

3. Changes in how you treated each other.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Looking back over your responses, why do you think the changes occurred?
2. What patterns do you see in the responses that could help you identify warning signs of distress in a future relationship?