



BEING A HUMAN ... that's enough

Module 7 PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

The Handbook for the Programme Participants

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The Handbook for the Programme Participants

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*“For love, we will climb mountains, cross seas,
traverse desert sands, and endure untold hardships.
Without love, mountains become unclimbable, seas uncrossable,
deserts unbearable and hardships our lot in life.”*

Gary Chapman

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“A successful marriage is an edifice that must be rebuilt every day.”

André Maurois

MODULE 7 PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

Partner relationships are very important parts of our lives. Every person has its emotional needs, the fulfilment of which contributes to the feeling of life satisfaction and happiness. In this respect, the partnership is a very special relationship.

The partnership gives to our lives support for overcoming daily challenges, the company of a person with whom we can share our joy, concern, sadness. The mutual love and the feeling that we are loved, gives us the courage to bring a new human being, with whom we want to share our love and knowledge, to this world.

By entering a partnership, we give our partner a privileged right to fulfil our important emotional needs. But in order to fulfil them with each other, we need to know them and learn how to meet these emotional needs.

Someone feels loved when he/she hears the words of love and affirmation, someone considers the act of service to be the manifestation of love, the other needs to feel a physical touch. Someone feels loved when he/she is gifted, another when he/she spends the quality time with the partner.

What are my emotional needs? How will I know who “the right partner” is? What should we do to make our partnership being a mutual enrichment for us? How do the two “I” become a common team “we”?

These topics will be discussed in the following lessons.

LESSON 7.1 Affection Versus Rational Love



We know it from romantic books and movies, and many of us also have our own experience. We mean, when we meet someone whose physical and character traits create a strong enough stimulus to start the process of getting to know the person.

In contact with this person, we feel pleasant, happy feelings which gradually become more intense in common experience. And so we try to repeat such common experiences and soon the intensity of our feeling is so strong that we say: *"I think I have fallen in love."* Gradually we are more convinced that what we feel to the person is true love and with the hope that these feelings are mutual, we confess the love to the person.

If these feelings are mutual, we feel like in the seventh heaven. We wake up and fall asleep with the thought of a loved one. We desire to be together as much as possible. We keep holding our hands, kissing, hugging... We dream of making each other extremely happy. It seems our beloved person is perfect, we are enchanted by her/his beauty and the charm of personality, and we neither can imagine someone more appropriate. Just like in fairy tales we have been listening to since our childhood, we start to dream of the marriage which we imagine to be the greatest bliss: *...and then there was a wedding and they lived happily together until they died...* Many couples enter into the marriage also in this state of affection.

But we have unpleasant news: *It is unrealistic for the state of affection to last forever.* According to research, the state of affection lasts an average of two years¹. Then we come back to the earth from our trip to heaven, we open our eyes and begin to see clearly also imperfections on the loved one. Many characters of our partner will even seem pretty annoying and some of his/her habits will start to upset us. These "little things", that we have overlooked in the affection, suddenly become huge obstacles. We are thinking about why we couldn't notice it earlier; it is so unmistakable...

But we have also the good news: *Love is powerful.* Therefore, when the affection passes away, *we may decide to love our partner not by instinct but by free choice.* The love, which is based on our will, can also be called the rational love. It is the love that unites reason and feelings. It is the decision to make efforts for the good of the partner. The decision to love your partner, that you make again and again every day, has amazing potential.



To think about

The affection is a very important part of the partnership. However, when deciding to marry, we should consider many other factors, that will, to a lesser extent and to a greater degree, affect our common life with a loved one.

Just “dating” gives us space for getting to know each other and considering how we fit together in other important areas of our lives, such as personal and intellectual traits, emotional balance, social interests, spiritual values, and others. Through the targeted mutual exploring we can make the right decision whether or not to marry the person.

It is very important to be extremely honest with each other when getting to know during the dating. A firm loving relationship cannot be built on simulation deception, and concealment of the truth. Such behaviour condemns the relationship to the end from the outset.

Lesson summary

Partner love has two stages.

The first stage is the state of affection. The experience of affection is based on instincts. It is not intentional: it simply occurs in a man-woman relationship. It may be encouraged or extinguished but it is not the result of a conscious decision. It can be compared to when a male court to a female in a realm of animals.

The second stage is when the affection, passion is over and the partners are willing to love each other not by instinct but by free choice. The love which is based on our will can also be called the rational love. It is the love that unites reason and feelings. It is the decision to make efforts for the good of the partner.

LESSON 7.2 Choosing a Partner



Few decisions will affect our lives as much as choosing a partner and a marriage. We surely agree that nobody is entering the marriage with the desire to be unhappy, or to make his/her partner unhappy.

Nevertheless, many married couples divorce because they already do not want to live in the marriage with the person they don't understand and who is so different. Well, how to choose "the right partner"? Which criteria do we need to consider?

When choosing a partner, it is important to consider the following areas²:

Partner personality traits – Each of us is unique and this is also related to our differences. The extent to which we differ from each other also affects our relationship. Much of this difference may, and can, enrich us. On the contrary, too big differences create a mismatch that can quickly grow into mutual quarrels and frustrations. Probably most of us will not find the partner with the perfect combination of personality traits which will be in line with our personality traits. However, it is good to know about these differences to avoid creating false expectations and to be able to make our ideas of future life together real, or to decide correctly whether or not to marry the partner. Therefore, it is good during the dating to know each other's character traits that will influence our coexistence to a greater or lesser extent. These include: *Optimism – Pessimism, Tidy – Untidy, Logical thinking – Intuition, Organizing – Spontaneity, Extrovert – Introvert, Activity – Passivity, Rapidity – Slowness* and so on.

Intellectual feature – Our intellectual side of personality is related to our thoughts, desires and perceptions of the world around us. For the person, who has finished the university with the red diploma, it may be difficult to discuss with someone who has had difficulty leaving the high school. Of course, the intellectual proximity of the partners is not always determined by the level of formal education they have completed. It is important that the intellectual talks between the partners are stimulating for both parties and do not end in disagreements which exhaust the both. The ability to disagree with one another and not to be grumpy about one another is one of the hallmarks of the partners' intellectual compatibility.

Emotional balance – Emotions are parts of our entire being. We do not choose them; they just are here. Sometimes we need more time to understand ourselves and let our feelings to be free. But this is crucial to our emotional balance. Being able to name your feelings and identify where they come from is a necessary skill to build a long-term relationship. Our reactions are also related to the emotions we experience, and when choosing the right response, we take care not to hurt ourselves or the others. Our natural emotional responses to problems mainly tell about our emotional balance. Inappropriate responses and manifestations of emotional instability include: self-closing, falling into depression, violence (physical or psychological), escaping to alcohol, drugs and so on. You should be careful about these manifestations also when choosing the partner.

Social interests – We are humans and the humans are sociable beings. We fulfil our need for social contact in various ways. For example, someone spends hours of his life on sports stadium stands, somebody in concert halls, theatres or cinemas. The others cannot imagine their lives without encountering Christian communities, the another without meeting friends in cafes and saloons. And some people prefer to climb mountain peaks in a smaller group of people. These individual forms of the social contact do not suit everyone. When choosing a partner, it is important to consider how important it is for us to share our social interests with the partner. If much, this criterion must be also taken into account when choosing the partner.

Spiritual values – All world cultures have their own belief systems explaining the phenomena of the intangible world. This indicates that the human is also the spiritual being. Our spiritual values or our religious beliefs affect our entire lives and have a great influence on our behaviour. When choosing the partner, it is necessary to be explored how much our spiritual values and religious beliefs are in accordance. What are our ideas of God? In what faith will we raise our children? What values do we profess? Consistency of partners in the field of religious beliefs and value systems is very important for the common life and raising the children. The very different attitudes of partners in this area of life very soon become a source of conflicts in the marriage.

Physical aspect of the relationship – The physical attractiveness of partners is often the first impulse for a relationship. Loving physical touch is so the part of the partnership also during “the dating”. People have different opinions on what physical touches are appropriate in each phase of the relationship. However, in the healthy relationship it is important that the partners respect each other’s borders, spiritual and moral values. If we force our partner to cross his/her borders, it is not a sign of love and our behaviour can be very damaging to our relationship. You also need to know that female sexuality and male sexuality are not the same. While men mostly focus on the sexual act itself (which is largely related to male physiology), for a woman, the sexual act is an intimate matter, that comes from a loving relationship (which is largely related to the need for safety in the case of the conception of a new life).

In short, we have introduced areas where it is important to be careful when choosing the partner, while it is necessary to emphasize the balance of the intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual and physical aspects of the relationship.



To think about

At present, an overemphasis is placed on sexuality. Momentary “one-night” relationships are common, but they prevent the formation of a long-time partnership.

The purpose of this behaviour is only to gain sexual experience and personal sexual satisfaction. This behaviour is often the manifestation of the sexual addiction or often leads to it. This kind of interaction neither can be considered as dating, nor is the basis for the long-time relationship.

Of course, there are many other problems that are related to this behaviour, e.g. venereal diseases, unwanted pregnancy, premature termination of pregnancy and related lifelong trauma, and so on.

If we understand sexual intercourse only as a way of releasing the sexual tension and the way to momentary satisfaction, it will cease to be an expression of love and unity between the partners and over time it will become just a simple manifestation of selfishness.

Lesson summary

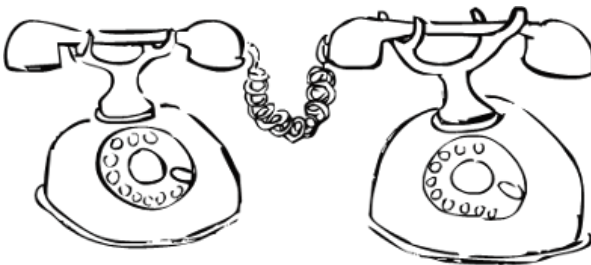
Few decisions will affect our lives as much as choosing a partner and a marriage.

When choosing a partner, it is important to consider the following area:

- Partner personality trait
- intellectual feature
- emotional balance
- social interests
- spiritual values
- physical aspect of the relationship.

The extent to which we differ from each other also affects our relationship. Our differences may, and can, enrich us, however, too big differences create a mismatch that can quickly grow into mutual quarrels and frustrations.

Therefore it is necessary to emphasize the balance of the intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual and physical aspects of the partnership when choosing the partner.



LESSON 7.3 Emotional Bank



In mutual contacts we interact emotionally. We can explain this effect in the concept of the so-called Emotional Bank³. Imagine, each of us has a kind of an emotional bank and a number of different accounts there.

Every person we know has one account there. Whenever we come into the contact with the person, he or she has the option to withdraw or deposit funds to the account he/she has in our Emotional Bank. Meetings that bring us pleasure are deposits. On the contrary, painful experiences are account withdrawals. As time goes by, the amount of funds in our Emotional Bank accounts is changing. Some friends are successful in collecting a lot of money in our bank. The others still remain in “the plus balance”, but this balance is low. Maybe it is because they are not often in contact with us. The third group of acquaintances has even less funds in their accounts, because our experience with them is different – sometimes pleasant, another time unpleasant. The value of their deposits is almost equal to the value of withdrawals. And meeting some people makes us more pain than joy, even thoughts of them leave us feeling bad. These people have come “down to us” and often we are no longer interested in meeting them. Their funds in our Emotional Bank are simply overdrawn.

Of course, hardly anybody thinks after a nice meeting: “Great, that was a three-point deposit!” or “Well, minus four points for Philip!” But even though we are unaware of this, the funds on our Emotional Bank accounts are increasing or decreasing. And the accumulated experience (positive or negative) determines our emotional response to the people we come into the contact with.

The emotional bank and partner life

Same also in the partnership, there two emotional banks still work – The Emotional Bank of a man and the Emotional Bank of a woman. And we make our deposits and withdrawals, by our words or acts, on the accounts of the Emotional Banks of our partners. Simple, right?

Why are so many couples dissatisfied then? Why do many marriages disintegrate?

This may be due to the ignorance of the important rule of the Emotional Bank, which sounds: *Each Emotional Bank account has its own currency.*

If we do not know in what currency is our account in our partner's Emotional Bank, it may easily happen that our idea of the amount in this account may not correspond with the reality at all. And while we will be tirelessly depositing euros in a dollar account, the partner's Emotional Bank will simply not accept these deposits, and they will remain "hanging" somewhere between us and our partner.

Therefore, it is absolutely crucial to find out in what currency our account at the partner's Emotional Bank is maintained. The currencies we use are also called *Love Languages*. These are ways of expressing love that make our emotional needs fulfilled and we feel loved.



To think about

In order to meet our emotional needs, we need to know them and learn how to fulfil them.

According to Gary Chapman,⁴ there are five basic ways in which people express and receive the emotional love.

He names them *Love languages*. They are:

- words of love and affirmation
- quality time
- gifts
- acts of service
- physical touch.

No love language is better than the other, and rarely do both partners have the same primary language.

We speak all love languages in a state of affection. We spend much time together, have long conversations, give each other gifts, help each other, touch a lot ... It is therefore highly probable that we also speak our partner's love language and he feels loved by us.

But when the affection is over, we prefer to speak our primary love language and then we are surprised when our partner does not understand what we are trying to tell him/her. Our efforts to show our love to him/her seem to be wasted.

If we want our partner to feel loved by us, we must show him/her love in his/her primary language. It is very likely that our primary love language won't be enough, if our partner does not understand it.

It means that it is necessary to learn to speak also the other love languages – our partner's love language and later our children's love languages, too.

Lesson summary

In mutual contacts we interact emotionally.

In order to meet our emotional needs, we need to know them and learn how to fulfil them.

There are five basic ways in which people express and receive the emotional love.

We call them Love Languages. They are:

- words of love and affirmation
- quality time
- gifts
- acts of service
- physical touch.

No love language is better than the other, and rarely do both partners have the same primary language. If we want our partner to feel loved by us, we must show him/her our love in his/her primary love language.



LESSON 7.4 Words of Love and Affirmation



One of the ways how to fulfil the partner's emotional needs is to express it through the words which will assure him/her of our positive and loving relationship with him/her ("*I love you!*", "*I appreciate you!*", "*I'm so glad you are my partner...*"), provide him/her encouragement and support ("*You will make it, I stand by you!*", "*Sign up for the course if it helps you. I'll watch the kids while you're on course.*"), or they express thanks ("*Thank you for everything you do for our family.*", "*Thanks for the nice conversation.*"). In our statements we can also focus on the partner's personality ("*I'm so happy that my husband is such a brave man.*"), behaviour ("*I admire you are always honest.*"), appearance ("*That dress really suits you. It is an honour for me to have such a beautiful woman by my side.*") or something that has been done ("*You have painted that room beautifully.*"). For the communication in this love language it is important to notice things that we appreciate or admire on the partner and express this appreciation or admiration verbally.⁵

A special way of sharing loving words and encouragement is through the written messages. A love card can delight the partner all day, because the written word has the advantage of reading it over and over and over again...

Love is a choice

The way we express our needs and wishes is also very important. The form of the order or demand will likely discourage the partner. *Example: "Can't you really see how dirty the car is? Wash it finally at the weekend, I can't look at it!"* Formulating the needs and wishes in the request allows the partner to choose whether or not to express his/her love in the given way. *Example: "Do you think you could have enough time to wash the car at the weekend?"* The partner has the choice because the love itself is the choice. That is its strength and meaning.



To think about

Using inappropriate communication patterns is hurting for the partner whose primary love language are the words of love and affirmation.

Here belong: *destructive criticism, contempt and disrespect, defence and excuses, being evasive*⁶.

In order to give the safety of the loving relationship to our partners, we should avoid such behaviour and replace it with healthier, constructive patterns.

Destructive criticism – in this kind of communication we attack the partner's personality and he/she feels verbally attacked. In destructive criticism we use negative statements about the partner's person, we blame, abuse him/her, we attack his/her characteristics and describe his/her mistakes, often using generalizing words like "never" or "always". *Example: "You have promised to wash up and clean the kitchen. But look into the sink! You NEVER get things to the end, and I ALWAYS have to finish it."*

A more effective way of expressing needs is constructive criticism and assertive expression of one's own needs. *Example: "We agreed to clean up the kitchen. There are some dishes in the sink, yet. I need you to wash them up, please."* Expressing your needs in an open and honest way helps to build mutual partner understanding.

Contempt and disrespect – the expressing of contempt and disrespect for the partner is very destructive to the partnership. Persiflage, sarcasm, disrespect, curses, "eye roll" – all of these behaviours make the partner feels incompetent and worthless. In this way we communicate the following message to our partner: *"I am disgusted with you and I give you the grace of staying with you at all."* The expressions of disrespect and contempt are fuelled by negative thoughts about the partner. Therefore, as with the replacement of destructive criticism, it is necessary to start expressing one's own feelings and needs in a respectful way and to avoid blaming the partner. *The example of inappropriate language: "You're really totally incapable. You aren't able to do a simple thing like shopping? After all, every fool can do it, only you can't!"*

The example of the respectful expression of our needs: "I would need you to shop exactly according to the list so I wouldn't miss the things to prepare dinner. It is important for me. How could I help you with it?"

Defence and excuses – Defence is a frequent response to the criticism, mainly in the situation when we feel accused wrongly. We are looking for excuses and playing innocent victims which can give us relief in the short term, but in the long run, excuses cause the partner to withdraw. With the excuses we communicate the message that we are unable to take the responsibility for our mistakes and that we don't take our partner's concerns seriously. Instead of defensive attitudes and excuses, it is more effective to take the responsibility for your actions and mistakes and to express the interest in your

partner's feelings. If we admit that we have a role to play in the problem situation and take on our part of the responsibility, a real dialogue can begin between us and the partner.

The example of the situation: "Have you let your friends know that we can't come to an agreed dinner tonight?" The example of the defensive attitude: "I had a lot to do today. I told you how much I have to do today. Why have you not just called them?" The example of taking the responsibility: "You're right. I forgot. I could have asked you to call them this morning, because I knew I had a hard day ahead. That's my fault. I can call them now."

Being evasive— evasive attitude is a typical response to the expressions of disrespect and contempt. The partner closes, withdraws from the conversation and stops answering. Such behaviour is due to his inner agitation and overloading feeling. The overloading feeling reduces our ability to process information, listen to, be empathetic and solve the situation creatively. In this situation, on the contrary, our defensive attitude will be strengthened.

In this state the partner is not able to discuss things rationally, he needs a break. For us, we can ask for a break: *"Look, I'm very upset and angry now. I cannot talk to you about it just now. Can we have a short break and then get back to it? It will be easier to finish this conversation if I calm down."*

Lesson summary

One of the ways how to fulfil the partner's emotional needs is to express the love through the words which will assure him/her of our positive and loving relationship with him/her, provide the partner encouragement and support, or express thanks.

In our statements we can focus on the partner's personality, behaviour, appearance or something specific he/she has done. For the communication in this love language it is important to notice things that we appreciate or admire in the partner and express this appreciation or admiration verbally.

LESSON 7.5 Quality Time



Another way to meet the partner's emotional needs is expressing love by spending quality time with the partner⁷. Paying close attention means giving each other the time of exclusive attention, the quality time. We give each other twenty

minutes of our lives. We give each other our lives through the mutual conversation or the activity we do in the pair. The most important aspect of quality time is proximity, but not the physical proximity, but mental closeness, which is conditioned by the mutual concentration of the partners on each other.

In giving the quality time with the conversation you need to be an active participant in this conversation. Sharing mental closeness involves the mutual openness of the partners and naming the feelings, experiences, ideas and dreams of both of them. When listening to the partner, you need to use the active listening principles again – to show your interest, be attentive and empathetic, not to judge, consider your answer. When the other person speaks, I am there as his/her companion, as the one who is interested in listening to what he/she is telling me. By active listening we show our interest in the partner – about what he/she wants to tell us about him/herself, his/her experiences, ideas, joy, fear...

Doing the common activity in the pair you show your partners that nobody and nothing is more important than him/her. We show him/her that we like to be with him/her and do things together. While working together, we can focus on the interests that we like both or at least one of the partners. It could be a sport, a weekend in mountains, tourism, concerts, theatre, and so on. By participating in the partner's favourite activity, we share his/her joy with the partner and show him/her how we care. In addition, the common activities also create the common memories which can be drawn from in the future.



To think about

When we meet someone and fall in love with each other, we spend a lot of time talking and discovering our partner's personality and world. We are interested in what he/she has gone through in life, what his/her plans, goals, dreams, friends are, what his/her family is, what he/she likes to do, is interested in, is afraid of.

Same, we are interested in what our partner has done during the day, what his/her relationships with mates (colleagues), teachers (boss) are, how the test (consultation) for which he/she has prepared turned out. Based on this information, we create a kind of “partner's life story map” so that we can navigate and harmonize our life together. Of course, this map also includes unexplored territories, but over a period of time we will be able to accurately estimate where we are going from and what to expect along the common way. However, it may happen that, after two or three years in the partnership, we can think we know our partner well and our intense interest in partner's opinions, experience, desires, dreams and fears begins to weaken. Years will run, we will be interested and asked less and less and in the next few years we may not be able to talk almost at all.

However, our life maps change. Our opinions change, our life events lead us to the roads we have never dreamed of before. Our priorities will change. New experiences will change us. Life is a change. No wonder, when we finally feel that we live in one household with a stranger.

How can we prevent this situation?

We need up-to-date news to be in the picture. It is necessary to ask and share regularly with everyday experiences. Spend a few minutes a day with news from your own home: How is my partner? What is new? What are his/her new impulses? How has the partner solved any current problem?

If I deal with a dilemma, I ask the partner's opinion. I do not have to follow it completely, but it is good to know it. With all these things I update “the map”.

Lesson summary

Another way to meet the partner's emotional needs is expressing the love by spending quality time with the partner.

We give each other our lives through the mutual conversation or the activity we do in the pair.

The most important aspect of the quality time is proximity, but not the physical proximity, but mental closeness, which is conditioned by the mutual concentration of the partners on each other.

LESSON 7.6 GIFTS



Next way to meet the partner's emotional needs is to express the love by giving gifts⁸. The gifts are the palpable expressions of our love while they needn't to be the expensive gifts. You can express your love with a little remembrance or your own production gift.

Giving the gifts is the manifestation that speaks to the another through a concrete symbol: *"I have thought of you, taking the time to choose the right remembrance to please you."*

For the partner, whose love language is receiving the gifts, these are love symbols and are more important for him/her than for the others. He/she is proud of the gifts received, and wears or presents them with the greatest pleasure. The gifts do not have to be expensive, their value is not at all related to their price, but directly related to the love.

The best gifts are those that we know that the partner will appreciate. We need to ask the right questions and observe the partner's behaviour in order to find out what would please him/her the most. We can notice how the partner responds to the gifts he/she receives from other family members, or what he/she says as he walks through the mall or browses the shopping catalogue. And of course, we can ask the partner directly what would please him/her. It is better to give something that the partner is interested in, rather than surprise him with the gift he doesn't want.

Love itself is the gift, and giving gifts is the way of expressing love that is common to diverse cultures from around the world.



To think about

The special gift which we can give to our partner in the difficult life situation is our physical presence. Then our person becomes the symbol of our love for the partner.

It is therefore very important, on the one hand to communicate clearly the need for the partner's physical presence, and it is equally important to take this request from the partner seriously, too. If we do not communicate our need clearly (because it can seem from our point of view it MUST be clear for everyone), it may happen that our partner does not evaluate his/her presence as important and we will feel it as an expression that he/she doesn't love us. All the more, the partner, who does not respond to the request for his/her

physical presence, makes his/her partner feel unloved. This behaviour (perhaps unwillingly) sends a message of disinterest in the partner's needs and this has little to do with love.

Lesson summary

Next way to meet the partner's emotional needs is to express the love by giving gifts or little remembrances.

Love itself is the gift and gifts are the palpable expressions of our love while they needn't to be expensive. You can express your love with a little remembrance or your own production gift.

Giving the gifts is the manifestation that speaks to the other through a concrete symbol: *"I have thought of you, taking the time to choose the right remembrance to please you."*

The special gift which we can give to our partner in the difficult life situation is our physical presence. Then our person becomes the symbol of our love for the partner.



LESSON 7.7 Acts of Service



Acts of service involves performing the activities which we know our partner will appreciate when we do them⁹. In the common household they are often services of the nature of housework, e.g. cooking meals, setting the table, vacuuming the floor, washing, taking out the rubbish, and many other services that we do with joy. This positive attitude is an important accompanying sign of acts of service. Only when acts of service are performed with joy and by free choice, they are the manifestations of love.

The partner, whose love language are the acts of service, appreciate his/her partner's invested energy and time as the proof of his/her love. If we want to show our partner that we love him/her, we need to find out what kind of help he/she would appreciate the most and then to do this work consistently. When the partner asks us for the service, his/her request helps us to direct the love in the right direction. With this request the partner shows us what would please him/her and by what we can express the love to our partner.

Love is the choice and every day we make the decision again whether or not to love our partner. If we choose to love him/her, it is effective to express our love in the way that the partner asks us.



To think about

Our ideas about male and female status largely affect the expectations with which we enter into marriage. In the past, a man's job was to feed a family, and a woman was expected to take care of the household. Clear rules, no reason for confusion.

Today, however, most women are employed, so men are expected to take on some of their household responsibilities. Creating a common household thus often requires partners to re-evaluate and change stereotypes, which they bring from their families, and it also requires their willingness to learn new things, or improve their skills. It is helpful to write down a list of all the duties that you need to do in your home. It would be ideal if everyone could do works which please him/her. However, if no of the partners is comfortable with some particular work, it is necessary to agree on who will take the responsibility for it, although doing it would not be pleasant. After some time of coexistence, it is good to evaluate how the partners are satisfied with the division of household responsibilities and to agree on some possible changes.

Lesson summary

Acts of service involves performing the activities which we know our partner will appreciate when we do them. The positive attitude is an important accompanying sign of love services. Only when the acts of service are performed with joy and by free choice, they are the manifestations of love.

The partner, whose love language are the acts of services, appreciate his/her partner's invested energy and time as the proof of his/her love.

Creating the common household requires partners to take the responsibility for doing the part of housework. The partners often need to re-evaluate and change stereotypes which they bring from their families and it also requires their willingness to learn new things, or improve their skills.



LESSON 7.8 Physical touch



Everything, we are, exists in our body. Touches are therefore a powerful tool to communicate the relationship of partners¹⁰. Holding hands, kissing, caress, hugging, having sex - all these are ways of communicating love between the partners.

The partner, whose love language is the physical touch, understands the touch language the best and he understands the hug or pushing away better than words. The loving touch gives him/her the safety of his/her partner's love, without which the person feels unloved.

Some touches of love take our full attention (*e.g. back massage*), others can only take a short time (*for example, placing your hand on your partner's shoulder when pouring tea, gentle kiss or hug when leaving home or coming back*). There is a whole range of touches which communicate our love to the partner and the other ones are yet to be discovered. Let the partner show us which of these touches are good for him/her. The partner, whose primary love language is physical contact, knows the best what he feels as the loving touch. Maybe some touches are uncomfortable for the partner or annoy him/her. If we insisted on these touches, we would communicate the opposite of love. We would show that we are not sensitive to the needs of the partner and that we do not care very much about what our partner feels pleasant (loving). We should not be misled by the idea that the touch that is pleasant to us must also be pleasant to the partner.

Appropriate and inappropriate touching

The physical contact can build or destroy the relationship. It can communicate the love or the hate. In every society there are appropriate and inappropriate ways to touch members of the opposite sex. The appropriate touching expresses the love while the inappropriate one humiliates the other.

Using the inappropriate touching is considered sexual harassment. Our bodies are not the property of the others and no one has the right to disparage them or use them to fulfil their own needs.

In the partnership the partners say what is appropriate or inappropriate. As with other love languages, the aspect of the free choice, whether I express the love to my partner with a specific touch or not, is important. If some kinds of touch are in the conflict with our spiritual values or morality, you need to communicate this openly to your partner.

The expression of love is to respect this attitude of the partner and to seek together physical contacts that will be acceptable for both partners.



To think about

Marriage is a very important relationship between two people. Marriage vows with our partner give us the privilege of fulfilling our intimate emotional needs. If we do not keep our promise to our partner, it is not fair to him. In the previous lessons we talked about the basic emotional needs which fulfilling makes we feel loved.

In the affection we meet the partner's emotional love through the all love languages. It is therefore highly probable that we also speak our partner's primary love language and he feels loved by us and vice versa. If we learn the partner's love language and often speak it, his/her need for love will continue to be met even after the fading of the affection and he/she will feel loved by us. But if we don't learn the partner's primary love language or we don't speak it, the partner won't feel be loved by us.

Failure in meeting the partner's emotional needs is often unintentional. However, the response for this is often a deliberate harm that often leads to the unbearable pain. Many people are very disappointed in their marriages then. When they find someone who encourages them and speaks their love language, the attractive force that pulls them to this person acts like a powerful magnet. It is the power of the basic human emotional needs. Partner begins to feel a natural desire to fulfil its own emotional needs and after a few years of "emotional dryness" he/she will probably fall in love again and will deceive mentally or physically his/her partner. The background he was supposed to give him/her a marriage begins to seek and find at someone else, not his life partner as he/she should do.

Meeting the partner's emotional needs is therefore an important decision of the rational love for which we can decide after the affection passes away. It is necessary to find the partner's primary love language and to decide to speak it. We cannot expect us to have great feelings, too, when we use our partner's love language. Maybe yes, but maybe not. Simply we decide to do this for the partner's good, to meet his/her emotional needs. If our partner does the same for us, our emotional needs will be fulfilled too. In such a state of emotional satisfaction, we can direct our creative energy outwards instead of still caring only for our own needs. And our marriage will flourish and grow.

Lesson summary

Everything, we are, exists in our body. Touches are therefore a powerful tool to communicate the relationship of partners.

The partner, whose love language is the physical touch, understands the touch language the best and he understands the hug or pushing away better than words. The loving touch gives him/her the safety of his/her partner's love, without which the person feels unloved.

The physical contact can build or destroy the relationship. It can communicate the love or the hate. In every society there are appropriate and inappropriate ways to touch members of the opposite sex. The appropriate touching expresses the love while the inappropriate one humiliates the other.



LESSON 7.9 Apology and The Way of Forgiveness



Nobody is perfect. Just as there is no perfect man, there is no perfect woman. We do not need to be perfect in order to build a strong loving relationship. But without what such a partnership cannot exist is apology and forgiveness¹¹.

We sometimes say or do something that can hurt the other. Such behaviour creates between the partner the emotional barrier which doesn't disappear simply by passing certain time. This barrier can only be removed only by sincerely asking for forgiveness and sincerely forgiving.

The same is true if we have injured the partner unconsciously, because the injury is real and is associated with the person who has injured.

The partner expresses with apology his appreciation of the partnership and his interest in solving this problem. If he/she refuses to apologize, he/she shows that he does not care about the relationship and does not hinder him/her if the partners estrange from each other. We cannot enforce excuses, but we can show our partner that he/she has hurt us with his misconduct and we care for reconciliation and we are willing to forgive him/her.

What does forgiveness mean?

Forgiveness is the first step in the process of coping with pain and restoring a loving relationship. Without the sincere apology and the real willingness to forgive, it is not possible to build a strong relationship.

It is important to realize that *forgiveness is not a feeling but a decision*. Instead of asking for justice, we choose to offer mercy and thus remove the emotional barrier which has been created between us due to the inappropriate behaviour.

We will not lose the memory with the forgiveness. Even though we knowingly forgive the person who has hurt us, memories of a painful event may repeatedly appear in our minds and be accompanied by feelings of pain and anger. It doesn't mean that we have not forgiven. It means only we have remembered the painful experience and that we are the emotional beings.

The forgiveness alone will not remove all the effects of inappropriate behaviour. All our actions have some consequences. Positive behaviour has the positive consequences and negative behaviour has the negative consequences. If a man leaves his wife and children and after ten years returns and asks the family for forgiveness, they can forgive him, but he will not give them back ten lost years.

The forgiveness cannot even build up lost trust. The trust in the partnership means relying on the partner's honest behaviour. This trust can only be built again by changing the behaviour of the partner who has broken the trust and proving that it can be relied upon him/her again. This includes the long-term fulfilment of the promises as well as openness and honesty to the partner.

Also, the forgiveness does not always result in the reconciliation of the partners, which is understood as the understanding again between the partners. The forgiveness doesn't remove all the pain and doesn't automatically return the former love to the partners. *The forgiveness opens the door to reconciliation, while fulfilling the desire for the reconciliation requires a willingness to overcome differences, solving the conflicts from the past, to find new approaches in living together and to regularly meet each other's emotional needs.*



To think about

Do you know any married couples in your neighbourhood that prove that the swear "in good times and in bad, in health and in sickness" is not just empty words, but their true decision which they still stand firm? Once the reporter asked the elderly husbands about a long and beautiful marriage recipe. What was their answer? "We lived at a time when broken things were not thrown out but repaired." How valued it must be to survive side by side, hand in hand and heart at heart all life.

Lesson summary

Nobody is perfect. We sometimes say or do something that can hurt the other. Such behaviour creates between the partner the emotional barrier which doesn't disappear simply by passing a certain time. This barrier can only be removed only by our sincerely apologizing and partner's sincerely forgiving us.

Forgiveness is the first step in the process of coping with pain and restoring a loving relationship. The fulfilling the desire for reconciliation requires a willingness to overcome differences, solving conflicts from the past, to find new approaches in living together and to regularly meet each other's emotional needs.

MODULE 7 SUMMARY

When we think about how much time partners spend preparing for living together and how much time, for example, to prepare for the career, we cannot be surprised if we are far more successful in our career than in the marriage life.

Systematic, conscious preparing for the marriage opens up more possibilities for us to respond to the problems in the marriage life. It helps us to develop skills necessary in the partnership and family life, it helps to change our house into a loving home, a safe haven to which every member of the family likes to return after a hard day.

Building a loving partnership is not easy, it takes our time and willingness to work on ourselves and on our relationship.

Improving the skills needed for a partnership life is a good investment of partners' energy and time in a common future. However, it makes sense to work on the partnership skills even when we are not in any relationship.

The energy, which we give to preparing for life in a marriage, will return to us several times more.

The love moves the world. Love your partners and your children with such love that will help them to develop their potential for the good of our world.

NOTES

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