

# *Journey to Us Conference*

with Dr. Greg and Erin Smalley

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY<sup>®</sup>

## MEET THE SMALLEYS

Vice President,  *greg*   
Marriage & Family Formation

Dr. Greg Smalley (@DrGregandErin) serves as the vice president of Marriage and Family Formation at Focus on the Family in the United States. In this role, he develops and oversees initiatives that prepare individuals for marriage, strengthen and nurture existing marriages and help couples in marital crises. He is the author of 17 books including *Fight Your*



*Way to a Better Marriage  
and Crazy Little Thing  
Called Marriage.*



























































































































































Erin Smalley serves as a marriage strategic spokesperson for Focus on the Family's marriage ministry. Erin holds a master's degree in clinical psychology from Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri, and maintains a counseling practice, specializing in working with married couples. She is the author of *Grown-Up Girlfriends* and *The Wholehearted Wife*.

Married since 1992, Greg and Erin live in Colorado with their four children.

## SESSION ONE

## SAFE & SECURE

When two people feel **safe** and **secure**, they relax and open their hearts, and then, friendship, passion, fun, intimacy and connection happen effortlessly.

"Love one another deeply, from the heart." (1 Peter 1:22, NIV)

# SESSION ONE

SAFE & SECURE

SAFE & SECURE

OPEN HEART

CLOSE & CONNECTED

1. **Cherish** your spouse.
2. **Nourish** your spouse.
3. **Commit** to your spouse.

# SESSION ONE

SAFE & SECURE

MY KEY INSIGHT:

## SESSION ONE — HOMEWORK

On the following pages, create a Cherish List and a Nourish List for your spouse.

## CHERISH LIST

[illegible]

## NOURISH LIST

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

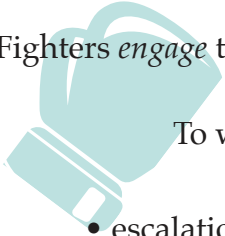


## SESSION TWO

### THE POWER OF HEALTHY CONFLICT

#### FIGHTERS

Fighters *engage* their spouse in order to pursue him or her.



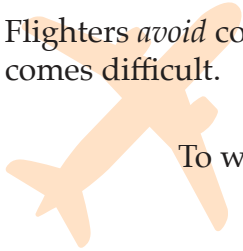
To win an argument, Fighters may exhibit characteristics including:

- escalation
- angry outbursts
- criticism
- sarcasm
- debating
- belittling comments

**Message:** *I'm not safe for any meaningful interaction.*

#### FLIGHTERS

Flighters *avoid* conflict or withdraw when the conversation becomes difficult.



To win an argument, Flighters may exhibit characteristics including:

- stuffing their feelings
- withdrawing
- isolating themselves
- minimizing problems
- having negative beliefs

**Message:** *I'm disconnecting from any meaningful interaction with you.*

## SESSION TWO

### THE POWER OF HEALTHY CONFLICT

The Reactive Cycle sets us up as adversaries—makes the relationship feel very unsafe.

The heart that stays closed will slowly fossilize or harden.

**"Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard." (Matthew 19:8, NIV)**

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## SESSION TWO

## THE POWER OF HEALTHY CONFLICT

[illegible]

## SESSION TWO

## THE POWER OF HEALTHY CONFLICT

[illegible]

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MY KEY INSIGHT:

## SESSION TWO — HOMEWORK

Discuss the Cherish List and Nourish List you created with your spouse.

## SESSION THREE

### YOUR CONFLICT CYCLE

Take the **Reactive Cycle Test** (starting on page 15) and map out your unique conflict cycle.



'S BUTTONS



'S REACTIONS

'S REACTIONS



'S BUTTONS



## THE REACTIVE CYCLE TEST

1. Describe a recent conflict, argument or negative situation with your spouse—something that really “pushed your button.”
2. How did this conflict make you feel about *yourself*?  
What did the conflict say about *you*?  
What was the “*self*” message—the message that it sent to *you*?  
What were the “*buttons*” that got pushed?

Circle all that apply, but **star** the most important feelings you felt about yourself.

“As a result of the conflict, I felt...”	What That Feeling Sounds Like
Rejected	My spouse doesn’t want me. My spouse doesn’t need me. I am not necessary in this relationship. My spouse does not desire me. I feel unwanted.
Abandoned	I will be alone. My spouse will ultimately leave me. I will be left alone to care for myself. My spouse won’t be committed to me for life.
Disconnected	We will become emotionally detached or separated.
Like a failure	I am not successful at being a husband / wife. I will not perform right or correctly. I will not live up to expectations. I will fall short in my relationship. I am not good enough.
Helpless / powerless	I cannot do anything to change my spouse or my situation. I do not possess the power, resources, capacity, or ability to get what I want. I will be controlled by my spouse.



## THE REACTIVE CYCLE TEST

"As a result of the conflict, I felt..."	What That Feeling Sounds Like
Defective	Something is wrong with me. I'm the problem.
Inadequate	I am not capable. I am incompetent.
Inferior	Everyone else is better than I am. I am less valuable or important than others.
Invalidated	Who I am, what I think, what I do, or how I feel is not valued.
Unloved	My spouse doesn't love me anymore. My spouse has no affection or desire for me. My relationship lacks warm attachment, admiration, enthusiasm, or devotion. I feel as if we are just roommates—that there are no romantic feelings between us.
Dissatisfied	I will not experience satisfaction within the relationship. In our marriage, I will exist in misery for the rest of my life. I will not be pleased within my marriage. I feel no joy in my relationship.
Cheated	My spouse will take advantage of me. My spouse will withhold something I need. I won't get what I want.
Worthless/ Devalued	I am useless; I have no value to my spouse.
Don't measure up	I am never able to meet my spouse's expectations of me. I am not good enough as a spouse.
Unaccepted	My spouse does not accept me; my partner is not pleased with me. My spouse does not approve of me.

## THE REACTIVE CYCLE TEST

"As a result of the conflict, I felt..."	What That Feeling Sounds Like
Judged	I am always being unfairly judged or misjudged. My spouse forms faulty or negative opinions about me. I am always being evaluated. My spouse does not approve of me.
Humiliated	This marriage is extremely destructive to my self-respect or dignity.
Ignored	My spouse will not pay attention to me. I will be unknown in my marriage. I feel neglected.
Unimportant	I am not important to my mate. I am irrelevant, insignificant, or of little priority to my spouse.
Guarded	I am afraid of opening up emotionally to my mate. I will be hurt emotionally if I allow my spouse past my "walls."
Misunderstood	My spouse fails to understand me correctly. He or she gets the wrong idea or impression about me. I will be misinterpreted or misread.
Misportrayed	My spouse has an inaccurate portrayal of me. I am misrepresented or represented in a false way. I am described in a negative or untrue manner. My spouse paints a wrong picture of me. My spouse has negative beliefs about me.
Disrespected	I will be insulted. My mate does not admire me. My spouse will have a low opinion of me. I will be disregarded. My mate has does not respect me. My spouse does not look up to me.

# THE REACTIVE CYCLE TEST

"As a result of the conflict, I felt..."	What That Feeling Sounds Like
Out of control	My marriage is wild, unruly, or hectic. My mate is unmanageable or uncontrollable. Things feel disorganized and in disorder.
Unaware	I do not know what is going on in the relationship. I do not have the necessary information. I'm in the dark. I'm clueless. Things feel secretive, hidden and undisclosed. I appear ignorant or uninformed.
Alone	I am by myself or on my own. I am without help or assistance. I am lonely. I am isolated.
Unfair	My spouse will treat me unfairly. My mate wants me to do things he/she is unwilling to do (there is a double standard). I am asked to do things that are unreasonable or excessive. My spouse treats me differently than others. I am not treated equally.
Disappointment	I am let down in the marriage. My mate is disappointed in me. My spouse is disillusioned by me.
Other:	



# THE REACTIVE CYCLE TEST

3. What do you do when you feel \_\_\_\_\_ ?

[insert the most important feeling from question No. 2]

How do you react when you feel that way?

Identify your common coping strategies to deal with your "buttons" being pushed.

**Circle** all that apply, but **star** the most important reactions.

Withdrawal	You avoid others or alienate yourself without resolution. You sulk, use the silent treatment.
Escalation	Your emotions spiral out of control. You argue, raise your voice, fly into a rage.
Earn-it mode	You try to do more to earn others' love and care.
Negative beliefs	You believe your spouse is far worse than is really the case. You attribute negative motives to your spouse.
Blaming	You place responsibility on others, not accepting fault. You're convinced the problem is your spouse's fault.
Exaggeration	You make overstatements or enlarge your words beyond bounds or the truth.
Tantrums	You have a fit of bad temper.
Denial	You refuse to admit the truth or reality.
Invalidation	You devalue your spouse; you do not appreciate who your partner is, what he or she feels or thinks or does.
Defensiveness	Instead of listening, you defend yourself by trying to provide an explanation.

## THE REACTIVE CYCLE TEST

Clinginess	You develop a strong emotional attachment or dependence on your spouse.
Passive–aggression	You display negative emotions, resentment, and aggression in unassertive passive ways, such as procrastination and stubbornness.
Caretaking	You become responsible for others by giving physical or emotional care and support to the point you are doing everything for your spouse and he or she does nothing to care for himself or herself.
Acting out	You engage in negative behaviors or addictions like drug or alcohol abuse, extra-marital affairs, excessive shopping or spending, or overeating.
Fix-it mode	You focus almost exclusively on what is needed to solve the problem.
Complain/criticize	You express unhappiness or make accusations. You present a “laundry list” of faults about your mate.
Striking out	You become verbally or physically aggressive, possibly abusive.
Manipulation	You pursue your mate to get them to do what you want; you control your spouse for your own advantage.
Anger or rage	You display strong feelings of displeasure or violent and uncontrolled emotions.
Catastrophize	You use dramatic, exaggerated expressions to depict that the relationship is in danger or that it has failed.
Emotionally shut down	You numb out emotionally. You become devoid of emotion, or you have no regard for other’s needs or troubles.
Humor	You use humor as a way of not dealing with the issue at hand.

## THE REACTIVE CYCLE TEST

Sarcasm	You use negative humor, hurtful words, belittling comments, cutting remarks, or demeaning statements.
Minimization	You assert that your spouse is overreacting to an issue. You intentionally underestimate, downplay, or soft-pedal the issue.
Rationalization	You attempt to make your actions seem reasonable. You try to attribute your behavior to credible motives. You try to provide believable but untrue reasons for your conduct.
Indifference	You are cold and show no concern.
Abdication	You give away responsibilities.
Self-abandonment	You desert yourself. You neglect yourself. You run yourself down.
Other:	

# 2 OPEN HEARTS MAKE ONE

## G R E A T M A R R I A G E





### FIGHT YOUR WAY TO A BETTER MARRIAGE™

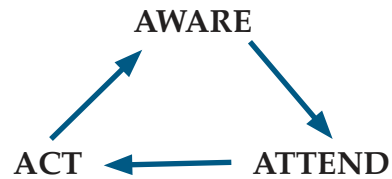
EMBRACING CONFLICT TO DEEPEN CONNECTION

small group curriculum

DR. GREG & ERIN SMALLEY

## SESSION THREE

### THE CARE CYCLE



## SESSION THREE

### THE CARE CYCLE

at a challenging  
place in your  
marriage?

**there is hope.**



Focus on the Family's Hope Restored Marriage Intensives are Christian counseling retreats designed to help your marriage succeed. Our professional counselors will give you the tools you need for healing, in a safe environment, away from the daily distractions of life.



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## SESSION THREE

# THE CARE CYCLE

[illegible]

## SESSION THREE

## THE CARE CYCLE

"Sometimes when I feel **(button)**, I **(reaction)**, but what I really want is to feel **(want)**."

[illegible]

MY KEY INSIGHT:

## SESSION FOUR

### CARING FOR SELF

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor *as* yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”  
(Mark 12:30-31, NIV, emphasis added)

#### Godly Self-Care

The God-given responsibility to care for yourself so you can love others from a place of fullness and abundance.

1. Recognize your incredible value.
2. Personal growth.
3. Regularly do things that fill you up in four key areas:
  - Emotionally.
  - Spiritually.
  - Mentally.
  - Physically.

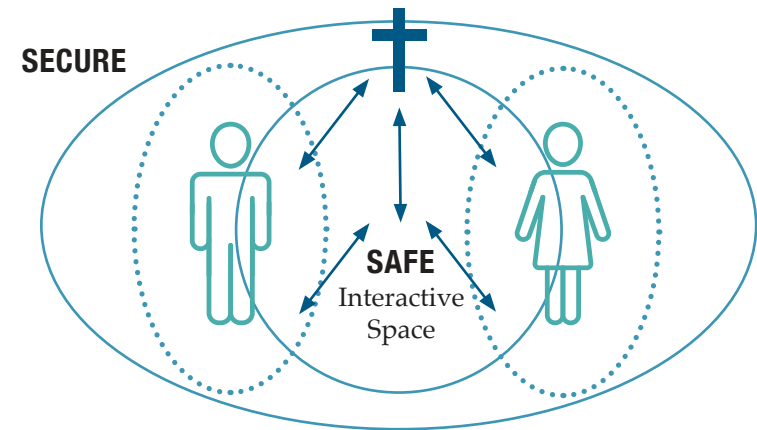
“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” (Proverbs 4:23, NIV)

### SESSION FOUR — HOMEWORK

In this season, what activity best helps you to care for you (emotionally, spiritually, mentally and physically)?  
How can your spouse best support you in pursuit of this activity?

## SESSION FOUR

### HEALTHY MARRIAGE MODEL



Talk about the Healthy Marriage Model. Which aspects do you want to include in your own marriage?

## CARING FOR SELF

[illegible]

MY KEY INSIGHT:

## CARING FOR SELF QUIZ

Taking great care of yourself (proactive and reactive) is always in the best interest of you, your spouse and your marriage.

## SELF ASSESSMENT: DO I CARE ABOUT SELF-CARE?

How well do you care for yourself?

Take the following quiz to find out.

You can grade yourself in the four main aspects of your personhood: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual.

## PHYSICAL

### HOW WELL DO I CARE FOR MY BODY?

1. Do I consistently eat well and follow a healthy diet?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
Never Sometimes Always

2. Do I regularly get enough sleep and rest?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
Never Sometimes Always

### 3. Do I engage in regular exercise and physical activity?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
Never Sometimes Always

Self-Care Quiz continued on the following page.



## MENTAL

### HOW WELL DO I CARE FOR MY MIND?

1. Do I keep my mind exercised and sharp by regularly staying curious and engaged in learning?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
 Never Sometimes Always

2. Am I active in thinking creatively through things like artistic endeavors or problem solving?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
 Never Sometimes Always

3. Do I look for opportunities to regularly exchange ideas with others?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
 Never Sometimes Always

## EMOTIONAL

### HOW WELL DO I CARE FOR MY HEART?

1. Do I recognize and value emotions as an intentional gift from God?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
 Never Sometimes Always

2. Am I able to accurately identify and label my own emotions?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
 Never Sometimes Always

3. Do I utilize my emotions, as God intended, to inform and guide my decision making?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
 Never Sometimes Always

## SPIRITUAL

### HOW WELL DO I CARE FOR MY SPIRIT?

1. Do I maintain an active relationship and communication with God through regular Bible study, prayer, meditation on His Word and listening to biblical teaching?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
 Never Sometimes Always

2. Am I Spirit-led in all decisions, seeking to fulfill my calling and purpose in life?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
 Never Sometimes Always

3. Do I maintain regular fellowship with other Christ followers?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
 Never Sometimes Always

## LOOK AT YOUR RESULTS

Evaluate which areas scored high or low. Now develop a plan to practice better self-care where needed across all four areas of your life.

The goal is for you to end up being well cared for, not to criticize yourself. God, your Dad in Heaven, wants you, His child, to be well cared for and blessed to be a blessing.

This simple self-assessment helps identify opportunities to better care for yourself so you can be more fully equipped to bless others and be part of something bigger than yourself with God.



# SESSION FIVE

## HEART TALK

### WORK TALK

A → B

- Problem Solving (brain)
- Focus: Facts and Opinions
- Goal: Solution
- Sense of Accomplishment

### HEART TALK

A → B

- Caring (inner life)
- Focus: Feelings and Longings
- Goal: Validation and Empathy
- Connection and Bonding

# SESSION FIVE

"The heart of the wise man instructs his mouth."  
(Proverbs 16:23, BSB)

### SPEAKER

- I — Identify my feelings
- C — Care about my feelings
- U — Seek to be understood,  
"I feel..."

### LISTENER

- I — Identify the emotional message
- C — Care about the feelings  
(compassion and empathy)
- U — Seek to understand by  
summarizing the emotional message (validation)

## SESSION FIVE

### HEART TALK



This digital experience can help you and your spouse leave the roommate life behind so you can become soulmates. The seven-week study includes teaching videos from Dr. Greg and Erin Smalley, plus a digital study guide. Learn more:

**RECONNECTEDMARRIAGE.COM**

## SESSION FIVE

### HEART TALK

MY KEY INSIGHT:

### SESSION FIVE — HOMEWORK

Choose a fun topic like your ideal date night, dream vacation or something from your “bucket list.” Take turns describing in detail where you would go and what you would do.

Practice listening and repeating back what you hear your spouse saying—especially the emotions.

Remember, your goal is to create a “heart-to-heart” connection. This is not a time for Work Talk.

## SESSION SIX

## WORK TALK

“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”  
(Philippians 2:4, BSB)

## 7 STEPS TO A WIN-WIN SOLUTION

1. Invoke the “No Losers” policy.
2. Heart Talk the issue (underlying desire).
3. Pray for unity and God’s will.
4. Brainstorm options.
5. Evaluate and pick one you both feel good about.
6. Try it.
7. Reevaluate and make changes as necessary.

## SESSION SIX

## WORK TALK

## SESSION SIX

### WORK TALK

## SESSION SIX

### WORK TALK

MY KEY INSIGHT:

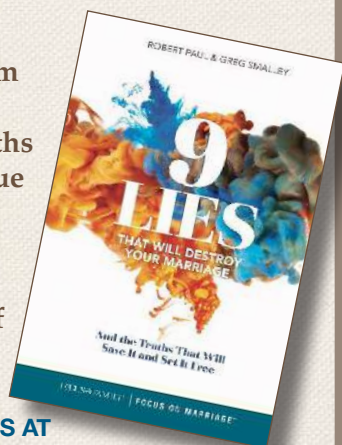
### SESSION SIX — HOMEWORK

Write your own “No Losers Policy.”

“I want both my spouse and me to feel good about all decisions, outcomes, solutions and plans we make. I will not be content with, or settle for, either of us feeling like we are losing. I will seek understanding and resolution until we both feel good about the direction we are headed.”

## ***9 Lies That Will Destroy Your Marriage: And the Truths That Will Save It and Set It Free***

Marriage experts Greg Smalley and Robert Paul identify the lies that harm marriages, explain how they work to destroy marriages, and reveal the truths that can improve marriages ... or rescue those that are floundering. This book includes self-tests to help readers assess the extent to which their own marriage has been affected by each of the nine lies.



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