Men and Women in Relationship: A Couple's Group

TI 065 - Thematic

By

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May 1993
Introduction

This group will provide heterosexual couples with a forum for exploring issues common to romantic relationships between men and women. Its goal is to assist couples in enhancing their relationships by gaining new insight into such issues and new possibilities for addressing them. The theoretical framework that will structure the group process draws from family systems theory, and also emphasizes the relevance of gender. The group is designed for couples who have been in a relationship for at least 4 months, who are not in crisis, and who have made a commitment to explore a long-term relationship. It is anticipated that the couples presenting themselves for the group will be diverse in numerous ways: the age of their relationship, their depth of commitment, the insight they bring to problematic issues in their relationship, and their readiness to experiment with different ways of interacting. And within each couple there will be diversity, not only with regard to these characteristics but also in terms of individual development. Therapists should strive to respond to the unique needs of each couple, and each client.
Theoretical Framework

A systems view of the couple assumes that the couple is not a set of two discrete, self-contained persons, but a mutually influencing, interactive system in which the identity of each person is partly established through interacting with the other. Rather than viewing each member of the couple as a fixed set of characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors, and asking which person has more pathology and is more to blame—and who thus carries the onus of change—this view advocates examining the couple’s process of interaction. A systems perspective asks questions such as the following: What are the typical patterns of interaction for a couple, in times of both stress and calm? Does each member tend to assume a particular role? How does each member contribute to a pattern of interaction?

Focusing on gender issues allows us to see how cultural norms concerning male and female roles affect the dynamics of interaction within heterosexual couples. By assigning differential roles to men and women, gender norms constrain both genders but in different ways, creating conflicting expectations and behaviors in men and women. For example, if we accept the hypotheses that women have defined themselves through relationships more than men, have been socialized as caretakers and nurturers, and have been granted more liberty to experience emotion, we can see that one common pattern for women in relationships with men is to focus on the relationship to their own detriment, continually pursuing closeness and intimacy with their partners, and experiencing and expressing the emotion not only for themselves but also for their partner (and hence for the entire system). On the other hand, men who have been socialized to deny their needs for psychological intimacy and to focus excessively on achieving independence and self-sufficiency may tend to distance themselves emotionally in the relationship.
Thus a perspective that acknowledges the centrality of gender-role socialization in structuring and constraining interactions between men and women helps us to understand why particular patterns emerge. It also reveals that these patterns are not the result of individual pathology but are prescribed by powerful, long-standing norms. It helps us to formulate a more egalitarian view of the couple and points out the direction for change, in which both men and women are free to experience the joys and responsibilities of intimacy and also to pursue fulfillment of their own goals independently of the relationship. Ideally, both members of the couple become empowered individually, while acting to facilitate the other's growth.
Session 1: Laying the Groundwork

I. Introduction [5 minutes]

Individual members are asked to introduce themselves by first name to the group, and to identify their partner. Coleaders then introduce themselves to the group and explain to the group members their personal interests in leading a couple’s group. They should discuss the information gleaned from pre-group screenings about what unites group members, both as individuals and as couples (e.g., desires for enhancing communication, learning new ways of negotiating conflict, changing frustrating patterns of interaction). They should also identify their core beliefs about possibilities for constructive change. For example, the authors would describe the Bowenian/family systems perspective view of relationships as process. In addition, coleaders should acknowledge and attempt to normalize group members’ anxiety, resistance to change, and differing levels of commitment.

II. Ground Rules [5 minutes]

Coleaders should discuss the following basic group procedures and expectations of group members:

1) Confidentiality of the group: maintaining confidentiality of all that is disclosed is essential to the development of trust in the group.

2) Attendance: regular attendance is necessary because each session is time-intensive, provides unique exercises and learning experiences, and builds on the previous one.

3) Participation: utilizing the group fully means that members will participate in activities and exercises, share reactions and feelings with the group, and learn from other group members by giving and receiving feedback. In addition, completing homework exercises will be important for integrating new information and experiences from the group into their daily lives.
III. Opposing Circles Exercise

Purpose. To allow group members to introduce themselves to each other and to begin the process of self-disclosure and trust-building.

Instructions to participants. We are going to divide the group into two circles, with half forming an inner circle and half an outer circle. Members of the inner circle will be facing outward and members of the outer circle will be facing inward. Thus you will face members of the opposing circle. Please form two opposing circles at this time. As much as possible, we would like members of each couple to be in the same circle.

We want the inner-circle members to be listeners and the outer-circle members to be disclosers. Look at the group members in front of you. If you are in the outer circle disclose or share one thing, fact, or belief about yourself. Members of the inner circle are to listen carefully to make sure they understand what is being shared. Take about 30 seconds now to share one thing about yourself.

Now, each member of the outer circle please move to the left until a new member of the inner circle is in front of you, and share once again the information you gave the last person plus a new disclosure. [Repeat instructions until all members of the outer circle return to their original positions. At each shift, members of the outer circle are to disclose all previously shared information plus one new item. When the outer circle has returned to its starting place, the inner-circle members become the disclosers and the entire process is repeated.]

Processing exercise. After completing the exercise, return to the large-group format and allow participants to share their reactions to the exercise. Reinforce the importance and value of their getting to know each other.
IV. Group Discussion: So Why Do We Need Relationships? [30 minutes]

Purpose. To open up the subject of relationships in a general way, so that people are drawn into the discussion without feeling threatening. To examine the diversity of interests and needs that people have in relationships, and set the stage for assessing and examining their own relationships.

Instructions to participants. We’d like to spend some time examining what brings people together, and what it is they hope to get out of their relationships.

[Discuss questions such as the following with the group. Encourage group members to brainstorm and come up with many possible responses. On newsprint or large pieces of paper affixed to the wall, catalog their responses.]

- What draws people to a relationship?
- Why do we try to make ourselves attractive?
- Do we need different things at different times from relationships?
- Why do we keep trying to change a relationship?

V. Exercise: Identifying Your Needs [15 minutes]

Purpose. To encourage participants to begin reflecting upon their own experience in relationships, and to identify what they need most in a relationship. To consider the same question from their partner’s perspective.

Instructions to participants. On the paper we have provided, we’d like each of you to list which four reasons for being in a relationship are most important to you—i.e., what four things do you need the most in a relationship? And we’d like you to rank them in terms of importance. Also, we’d like you to consider what 4 things that you think are most important to your partner? In what order? For now we’ll ask you to keep this information to yourself; we will be making use of it in the following exercises, in different ways.
Break [5 minutes]

VI. Exercise: Active Listening [30 minutes]

Purpose. To allow partners to share with each other information about what they as individuals need most in a relationship. To build general communication skills. To foster a tolerance of and appreciation for differences within their relationship.

Instructions to participants. For this exercise we’d like you to use the lists that you came up with in the previous exercise. First, divide up into couples. Each member of the couple should take a turn telling the other person what four things are most important to him or her about being in a relationship. The other person should listen quietly. After your partner has finished, you may ask questions for clarification, but don’t offer any comments or criticisms. This is an exercise in listening and understanding.

Processing exercise. Have group members come back to the large group, so that they can share their reactions to the exercise. Coleaders can guide the discussion with the following questions:

- Were there any surprises?
- Did you feel heard by your partner? What was that like?
- What was it like to listen without offering your opinion or discussing your concerns?
- What was it like to hear your partner describe having different needs in the relationship?

VII. Minilecture: Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love [10 minutes]

Purpose. To provide participants with a conceptual framework that will offer them insight into the nature of their relationship and help them clarify their needs in the relationship.
Content. In popular culture, in poetry and in literature, as we all know, the fascination with love is boundless. For example, the only word with more entries in Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations* than love is man. Social scientists are not immune to this appeal. One theorist, Robert Sternberg, has developed a triangular theory of love that looks at relationships in terms of the relative degrees of each of three primary types of love: intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment.

Intimate love is about feelings of emotional closeness. If we feel intimate love toward someone else, we may say simply that we like them, or that we like being with them, or even that we are “in like” with them.

Passionate, or infatuated, love is the fun kind. It revolves around romance and sexual attraction and is often at the center of dramatic portrayals of love. We are most likely to be talking about passionate love when we speak in terms of being “in love.” Passionate love feels thrilling when it is good and devastating when it goes wrong. It is the type of love that sometimes leads people to describe themselves as being on an emotional roller coaster. There may be no tomorrow for a relationship based exclusively on passionate love.

Finally, Sternberg characterizes a third type of love in terms of decision and commitment. For him, this type exemplifies the fact that, to some extent anyway, we are able to make intentional decisions about whether or not it is in our best interests to “follow our hearts” and then to act on those decisions. It is also this type of love that, in the form of commitment, can carry people past the rough spots in their relationships in the hope that they will again feel good toward one another. Relationships based on pure commitment may continue even long after that hope has evaporated. In this instance, we may hear the emotional component of the relationship described as empty love.

Sternberg describes various blends of these three fundamental forms of love. Romantic love involves high levels of both passionate love and intimate love. Commitment is lacking, or almost so. Passion, physical attraction, openness and sharing
are prominent. Companionate love is how Sternberg describes a situation in which there are high levels of intimacy and commitment but low levels of passion. This is often the state toward which romantic love evolves. Fatuous love is a blend of passion and commitment in the absence of any real feelings of intimacy. As with passionate love, there may be no future for the relationship once the passion has quieted. Consummate love is the situation that prevails when all three forms of love are emphasized, not necessarily equally, but sufficiently that there are not glaring gaps.

VIII. Exercise: Examining Your Relationship Graphs [35 minutes]

Purpose. To allow partners to share with each other their own unique understandings of the history of their relationship. To build general communication skills. To foster a tolerance of and appreciation for differences within their relationship.

Instructions to participants. For this exercise you should pair up again with your partner. And you should refer to the relationship graph that we gave you at the pre-group interview. What we would like you to do is to compare your two graphs. Note the similarities and differences between them. If you find major differences between them, we'd like each of you to explain to the other your rationale for that part of the graph—i.e., what made you draw it in the way that you did. You should not try to change each other's minds, but just try to understand each other's perspective. So as in the exercise you did earlier, you need to focus on listening and understanding.
Processing exercise. Have group members come back to the large group, so that they can share their reactions to the exercise. Coleders can guide the discussion with questions such as the following:

Were there any surprises?
Did you feel heard by your partner?
What was it like to listen, once again, without offering your opinion?
What was it like to find that you might have different perceptions of the history of your relationship?
Did you find yourself thinking about the different phases of your relationship in terms of Sternberg’s theory about the different kinds of love?

IX. Exercise: Setting Goals [20 minutes]

Purpose. To encourage participants to define goals for themselves, both for the workshop and for the relationship in general.

Instructions to participants. By now you’ve had a chance to think about what’s important to you in a relationship, and you’ve had a chance to examine the history of your relationship. You’ve also had a chance to share your perspectives on these subjects with your partner, and to hear his or hers. Now we’d like you to look ahead, and spend some time thinking about where you would like your relationship to go. What would you like your relationship to look like in the future? Are there any changes that you would like to see happen? Did Sternberg’s theory about the different kinds of love give you any ideas about areas of your relationship that you would like to enhance? We’d like you to divide the paper we’re handing out into two columns, leaving some space at the bottom. On one side we’d like you to list your dream goals (what would be ideal) and on the other we’d like you to list your practical goals (what you can live with). At the bottom we’d like you to identify what you hope to accomplish in this workshop.
Homework Assignment

Purpose. To continue building general communication skills. To allow partners to begin a conversation about goals for their relationship.

Instructions to participants. Some time during the coming week we’d like you to practice listening to each other, as you have done several times in today’s session. We’d like you to talk to each other about the practical goals for your relationship that you have just identified. As before, don’t try to convince each other or change each other’s minds, but just try to understand each other’s perspective. The other person should focus on listening and understanding, asking questions for clarification, but not offering any comments or criticisms.
Session 2: Relationship as Process: Identifying Patterns of Interaction

I. Introduction [10 minutes]
Coleaders welcome members back to the group, mentioning their awareness that returning may not have been easy for some of the members. At this point, they check in with each individual group member to see how it has been for them over the past week to realize that they are members of this group and that they were to be returning to it tonight. They then give a brief overview of the work to be done during this session, focusing on the likelihood that couples sometimes find themselves caught up in patterns of interaction that recur in similar ways in a variety of contexts. After a reminder about ground rules, coleaders open a discussion of the homework from session 1.

II. Couple Sculpting Exercise [125 minutes]
Purpose. To heighten the level of trust felt among group members and to help members to reflect on the ways in which their relationships are structured and organized.
Instructions to participants. [This is a variation on family sculpting in which couples sculpt their own relationships. Coleaders explain the way in which the exercise is carried out, including a brief demonstration of a fabricated couple relationship.] Now we would like you to devise sculptures of your relationships, one couple at a time. The way this is done is for one member of a couple to position both members in such a way that the resulting arrangement of the two of you captures as well as it can the way the relationship feels to you. Later your partner will do another sculpture of the two of you from the other perspective.

We will show how one couple might do this. [Coleaders demonstrate. One coleader assumes the role of sculptor, arranging the two of them in a way that captures a theme known from the pre-group screening interviews to be common among the member couples. This is done with no discussion of the dynamics or the emotional content.
Instructions are limited to requests for such physical movements as adjustments in the distance between the two or in the angle of gaze of the partner.]

Now that we are arranged the way (name of coleader doing sculpture) wants us to be, we would like for you to tell us what comes to mind about the relationship this sculpture represents. [Discussion of coleaders’ sculpture. Coleaders encourage awareness of the possible meanings of distance, posture toward the other, apparent openness to interaction, direction of gaze, etc.]

Now we would like each person to take a turn sculpting the relationship between you and your partner. Once you are finished, the entire group will try to understand what is being represented by your sculpture.

[Allow approximately 10 minutes per participant for sculpting relationship and then getting feedback from group. Also, in order to highlight possible gender patterns, coleaders may choose to have all the women go first, followed by the men, or vice versa.]

Processing exercise. Ask group members to share their general reactions to the exercise. Coleaders can guide the discussion with the following questions, which are aimed at enhancing awareness of the stances the partners characteristically experience in one another.

How were your partner’s sculpture and yours alike? How were they different?
Were there any ways in which your partner’s sculpture surprised you?
What did you learn from other group members’ reactions to your sculpture?
What did you learn from other group members’ sculptures?

[Allow 25 minutes]
IV. Minilecture: Relationship as Process

*Purpose.* To provide participants with a conceptual framework for understanding patterns of interaction in their relationship and help them begin to identify strategies for change.

*Content.* We mentioned in the first meeting that we look at relationships as processes, or sequences and patterns of interactions. By that we mean that a relationship is more than just the sum of two—it's a whole that is greater than its parts, a system. In a relationship people tend to fall into habitual ways of interacting. Together they create typical patterns, to which both contribute—or familiar dances, in which each has certain steps. That is, it takes two to tango. The psychologist Harriet Lerner has written about the "dances" that people carry out with important people in their lives. She talks about how in these dances, the behavior of each person maintains and provokes the other person's behaviors. This pattern isn't necessarily a problem when things are calm in the relationship, but under stress couples tend to get stuck in rigid patterns, with each person taking more extreme positions, so that the two become polarized. People often try to get the other person to change their steps, while failing to see that they can change their own steps, or refusing to do so because they think it's the other's fault.

One common pattern discussed by Lerner is the emotional distancer-emotional pursuer pattern. Emotional pursuers are persons who tend to share feelings and seek a lot of emotional contact, while emotional distancers tend to be emotionally reserved and to withdraw. It's no coincidence that in our culture emotional pursuers are usually women and emotional distancers are usually men. Women are raised to be more emotional and more expressive, to be more comfortable with closeness, and to take care of other people's emotional needs. On the other hand, men are taught to be rational, self-
controlled, and independent. So it's understandable that a lot of women might want more emotional intimacy, while a lot of men might be uncomfortable with it.

Another common pattern described by Lerner is the overfunctioner-underfunctioner pattern. Overfunctioners typically assume a lot of responsibility, automatically making decisions for the couple, always presenting themselves as assured and competent, and rarely asking for the other's help or advice. In contrast, underfunctioners feel incompetent or unmotivated, space out when they are faced with a decision, and rely on their partners to make decisions and take over. This pattern can play itself out in many domains—in the public world of work and school, and in the private world of the house and relationships. One person can underfunction in one domain and at the same time overfunction in another domain. Our culture has typically taught men to overfunction in the public domains of school and career, while women typically overfunction in the home and in relationships. Thus men may behave in a very assured way at school and work, perhaps making decisions about the couple's financial affairs, while women may express their competence in the emotion work of the relationship and the housework at home.

Processing lecture. Ask group members to share their general reactions to the lecture. Coleaders can guide the discussion with the following comments and questions:

Think back to the sculpting exercise we did before the break. Imagine putting the sculpture into motion.

Do any of the patterns we have just talked about fit as a description of some of the interactions in your relationship?

What needs of yours are being met by engaging in this pattern, or dance?

What needs cannot be met through engaging in this dance?

What do you think would happen if you were to abandon your customary role in the pattern, and take a different step?
Homework Assignment

Purpose. To help group members begin to think more calmly and reflectively about problematic issues in their relationship. To help them begin to look at the patterns of interaction in their relationship.

Instructions to participants. We would like each of you to identify a particular problematic issue that seems to surface regularly in your relationship—e.g., conflicts over house chores, amount of time spent together, determining what to do together. If that issue comes up during the week, you should observe what happens during the interaction, and identify who does what, and when—i.e., what are the steps that each person takes in the dance. Ask yourself what role each person plays in the interaction. If the issue doesn’t arise during the week, then you should spend some time thinking about previous interactions around this issue, with the same questions in mind. Please write down your conclusions, using neutral, nonblaming language to describing what happened. [Coleaders give examples of neutral language and of blaming language.]
Session 3: Differences and Conflict

I. Relationship Diagrams [50 minutes]

Purpose. To foster awareness of similarities and differences between partners, and to explore how participants feel about this issue.

Instructions to participants. We would like each of you to think about the ways in which you and your partner are alike, and the ways in which you are different. List all that you come up with on the paper we have provided. [Provide paper.]

[Allow 15 minutes.]

Now we’d like you to do take the similarities and differences that you identified just now and incorporate them into a visual representation of your relationship. [Provide paper, magic markers, and crayons.] Draw two circles on the paper, one representing you and one representing your partner. Place them any way you choose—overlapping, separate yet close together, far apart—whatever best seems to characterize your relationship. Then write into the circles the similarities and differences. One possibility is that if you draw overlapping circles, you might want to list the similarities in the overlapping part, and the differences in the separate parts of the circles. After you’ve done this, we’d like you to use the crayons to color your diagram/picture, in any way you want. You might color it all with one color, or you might give different colors to different parts or items, or you might even draw something.

[Allow 35 minutes.]
II. Exercise: Listening and Mirroring  [20 minutes]

*Purpose.* To build general communication skills. To foster a tolerance of and appreciation for difference within relationships.

*Instructions to participants.* Now we’d like you to divide up into couples. Each of you should describe and explain your diagram/picture to your partner. Think of it as a show-and-tell exercise. Your partner should listen carefully, asking questions for clarification as needed, and then “mirror,” or summarize, what you said, to indicate that he or she has understood you. Then you should reverse roles.

III. Group Discussion: Differences and Conflict  [60 minutes]

*Purpose.* To explore how participants have perceived and experienced differences within their relationships. To foster an understanding of some of the factors shaping people’s expectations and behavior in relationship. To begin to examine and to normalize participants’ experience of conflict within their relationships.

*Instructions to participants.* Now we’d like to you all to gather together, so that we can process these last few exercises. [Coleaders can guide the discussion with the following questions.]

What did you discover about yourselves and your partners from the relationship diagrams?

How do you feel about identifying/encountering/recognizing differences?

Did you notice these differences when you were first together? How did you feel about them then? Do you feel differently now?

[Weave into the discussion the theme of how differences can attract and repulse—though often delightful in the first stages of relationship, they can later become discomforting or frustrating.]

What do you think accounts for these differences? Personality, family, culture, gender roles?
Do we have to be exactly alike to be together? Do we even want to be alike?
What would that be like?

[Weave into the discussion coleaders' reflections about gender and myths of romantic love: how culture often conveys the notion that we should be one and live together in blissful harmony, and yet teaches us different ways of being, according to our gender.]

How do these differences relate to conflict?

[Emphasize that all relationships must negotiate a balance of sameness and difference, and separateness and togetherness, and that intimacy is not equal to sameness. Difference often leads to conflict; conflict a normal part of being with another person.]

Break [5 minutes]

IV. Exercise: Expressing Differences/Negotiating Conflict [45 minutes]

Purpose. To provide couples with initial practice in discussing differences and negotiating conflict. To continue building general communication skills.

Instructions to participants. We'd like you all to get some more practice in active listening/mirroring. But here we're going to ask you to start conversing with each other about your differences, and about your conflicts. If you can learn to talk about your concerns calmly, in such a way that your partner is encouraged to listen, and if your partner can listen and take it in, and indicate that he or she has understood, then the two of you will have gone a long way toward learning how to negotiate conflict constructively. So using last week's homework assignment, we'd like you to take turns talking about your experience of this problematic pattern. How do you perceive this pattern? What do you see to be the typical sequence of events, or steps of the dance, that occur? As before, the other person is to listen, asking questions for clarification, and then reflect back to the speaker the main points that he or she just made. Then you should switch roles.
Processing exercise. When about twenty minutes are remaining, have group members come back to the large group, so that they can share their reactions to the exercise.

Homework Assignment

Purpose. To help group members think calmly and reflectively about problematic issues in their relationship. To help them identify their needs and priorities in regard to these issues.

Instructions to participants. We would like each of you to spend some more time thinking about this problematic pattern of interaction that you’ve just been describing to your partner. This time, however, we want you to use your frustration—or anger, if that’s what you’re feeling—with this pattern as a guide to help you define more clearly what you need in the relationship. We encourage you to start with the frustration and then move past it to thinking calmly about what’s going on. Instead of focusing on what your partner is doing to you, or not doing for you, try to come up with a clear, nonblaming statement of what you are needing. It might be helpful to distinguish between what you want—what seems desirable—and what you need—what seems truly essential.
Session 4: Consolidation and Summary

I. Exercise: Listening and Mirroring [60 minutes]

*Purpose.* To provide couples with further practice in discussing differences and negotiating conflict. To continue building general communication skills.

*Instructions to participants.* We'd like you to get some more practice in conversing with each other about your differences, and about your conflicts. As we've said before, if you can learn to talk about your concerns calmly, in such a way that your partner is encouraged to listen, and if your partner can listen and take it in, and indicate that he or she has understood, then the two of you will have gone a long way toward learning how to negotiate conflict constructively. You should regard this exercise as a rehearsal, however. We don't expect you to resolve difficult issues in one conversation—think of it as practice in learning new ways to talk to each other.

So using last week's homework assignment, we'd like you to take turns talking to each other, and listening and mirroring what you have heard. First you might want to remind your partner of the issue that concerns you. Then you should talk about the thoughts and ideas that the homework assignment triggered for you. As before, your partner needs to listen carefully, asking questions for clarification as needed, and then “mirror,” or summarize, what you said, to indicate that he or she has understood you. Then you should reverse roles.

*Processing exercise.* Have group members come back to the large group, so that they can share their reactions to the exercise.

II. Exercise: Modifying the Dance/Learning New Steps [60 minutes]

*Purpose.* To encourage participants to take responsibility for their part of a pattern of interaction, and to allow them to explore how they can take different steps to create a more satisfying pattern.
Instructions to participants. Although we think it’s very important to be clear with yourself and your partner about what you are needing in the relationship, we also think it’s useless to demand change from your partner, and that the best place to start if you want to change something is with yourself. Thus for this exercise we’d like you to focus on new steps you might want to take help create a more satisfying pattern of interaction. We would like each of you to think again about this problematic pattern you have been discussing with your partner. Using the paper we have provided, brainstorm and write down all possible options or moves you could make. What can you do to start the process of change? How can you move to meet your needs, as you have defined them? Processing exercise. Have group members come back to the large group, so that they can share their reactions to the exercise.

II. Group Discussion: Wrapping Up and Saying Good-bye [60 minutes]

Purpose. To bring the group to a smooth close in as sensitive a way as possible. To consolidate the experiences of the last four weeks so that participants are best able to remember them and benefit from them after the culmination of the group itself.

Instructions to participants. We’d like take this time to allow you to share any reactions, thoughts, or feelings you have had to both the group, and to the ending of the group. [Coleaders can guide the discussion with questions such as the following.]

What have you learned? What will you take from this group?

How would you like your relationship to develop after the group’s end?

Are you satisfied with where your relationship is now?

If not, what do you think you are needing?

[Coleaders should be prepared to refer couples for further couples counseling and/or individual counseling, if participants express such needs.]
Instructions: Graph the history of your relationship, recording its high and low points, its plateaus, and its periods of conflict (by using a jagged line), set the time line in either months or years, depending on the age of your relationship.

Age of relationship (in months or years)

Quality of relationship

More satisfying

Less satisfying

Pregroup Worksheet: Relationship Graph

Men and Women in Relationship