CODE WORD EXERCISE

PREMARITAL COURSE

CODE EXERCISE

This exercise is connected to conflict resolution. Giving you tools to navigate conflict in a healthy manner.

What is a code word?

- A code word is a term that couples use to establish healthy conversation while respecting each other's individuality. Like positive habits and improvements in life, the code word exercise creates a system in the relationship that promotes change, self-control, evaluation and respect.

FRIENDLY REMINDER

Make it a priority to commit time to this exercise. The important factor to remember is that you are working to create a meaningful experience while showing your significant other that they are valued, needed, and loved.

Couples who use the code word system benefit through the following core areas:

- **Positive change.**
  - Positive change takes place through the evaluation process. Couples take time to pinpoint why the interaction took a wrong turn and how to do it better next time.

- **Self-Control.**
  - Self-Control helps couples learn how to stop. This is often the catalyst that leads to hurt words and demeaning actions.

- **Respect**.
  - Respect is one of the most important components in successful relationships. Conflict and tension in relationships often blurs the line of the respect. The code word system helps couples learn how to nourish and strengthen respect during the good and difficult interactions.

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Before engaging in the 4-step sequence to effectively utilizing the code word system, it is vital to create a definition/purpose for the code word.

I recommend couples to utilize code words that share the following components:

- Mutually agreed upon.
- High level of mutual meaningful connection.

WALKTHROUGH TO DEVELOPING A CODE WORD

Case Study:

Partner A and B have been in a relationship going on 4 years. They met during undergraduate school and connected over their love of pets. Partner A and B, last year found their baby 2 years ago at the local pet shelter. His name is Max. He is a beagle with a loud bark. Partner A and B have been growing and connecting with Max ever since.

- Partner A and B mutually agree to use their pets name "MAX" as the code word.

- Partner A and B mutually show a high level of emotional connection for "MAX".

Partner A and B mutually develop the following definition/purpose for the code word:

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- *MAX is a word that reminds us of love, fun, laughter and compassion. The word is filled with beautiful experiences from the moment we found him at the shelter to each positive experience. MAX helps us calm down, gain control and remember that our love for each other is far more important than the interaction taking place.*

In the example above, you can notice how partner A and B share a common love and connection for their pet Max. The utilization of "MAX" as the code word can be beneficial to partner A and B as the name itself holds value and shared experiences.

It is vital to utilize a code word that encourages each partner to focus on the word and not the interaction taking place.

By using a word like "MAX", partner A and B, can transition out of the interaction and to STEP 1.

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STEPS TO UTILIZING A CODE WORD

Below are clear steps to how you can utilize the code word in your relationship.

Step 1:

Once the code word is said, you and your partner are to acknowledge and respect the code word. Remember the definition/purpose as it impacts your personal self and the health of the relationship.

Step 2:

Take a 30 to 60-minute break to individually disconnect from the escalated interaction. During this step you may want to go for a walk, take deep breathes, or watch a silly show. Overall, the goal is to disconnect emotionally from the interaction that required the code word.

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Step 3:

After the break, transition to evaluate the interaction **individually**. Use the following questions below to evaluate the interaction:

- What led to the escalation of the interaction?
- How did I react?
- How could I have reacted better?
- How did my reaction impact my partner?
- What triggered my reaction?
- How should I support my partner post the interaction?
- How can I focus on the issue versus allowing the issue to create distance and tension between myself and my partner.

Step 4:

Together review each other's answers to the questions in step 3. As you review practice kindness, understanding, and respect. After reviewing, explore the following questions together:

- What can we do to improve our interactions in the future?
- What words of kindness can provide each other?
- What acts of kindness can we provide each other?

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The goal during step 4 is to explore each other's manner of interaction and to gain an understanding of what can be done better next time. Every interaction in the relationship, provides an opportunity for improvement and nourishment.

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