



# THE MARRIAGE MEETING

**THE PERFORMANCE  
PROJECT**

# THE MAGGIAGE MEETING

The following are some of the guidelines for implementing and carrying out a marriage meeting:

- Meet weekly. Doing the meeting at the same time each week can help make it a habit, but schedules change, and it's fine to adjust the time as circumstances dictate.
- Meet as just the two of you. This is a private meeting. No kids. If you're already doing a weekly family meeting, that's great; one does not supplant the other, but rather complements it. Meeting as husband and wife will ensure you're on the same page when holding council with your kids.
- Minimize distractions/interruptions. The best place to do a meeting is a comfortable, quiet spot in your home. Schedule a time when the kids are napping on the weekend, or after they go to bed during the week. Turn off the TV and your phones if you can. If you need your phone for scheduling, exercise self-control in not looking at distracting apps, or let an app exercise the control for you.
- Sit together I'd advise *against* sitting across a table from each other, as that can feel confrontational, sitting side-by-side instead, though I haven't had a problem with face-of-face marriage meetings (then again I practice every day with our business meetings!). However you position yourselves, I would suggest sitting "close enough to feel like partners handling a project together."

- Jot down notes during the week. It's useful to jot down notes in the days leading up to meeting on things you'd like to talk about. But you don't need to have a set agenda at the meeting, unless you're the uber-organized type. It can be free-flowing.
- Bring your organizational devices/notebooks/apps to the meeting. You're going to be scheduling stuff and will want to write down dates and to-dos. So bring your paper or digital planner, or use other apps to keep track of these. I use To do List for both our business and personal to-dos, as well as Google calendar.
- Keep the meeting to about 30 minutes. A half hour is long enough to cover the 4 stages of the meeting, but short enough to keep it focused and productive. The meeting might be a little longer when you first start out and are getting the hang of it, or when you have more than usual to discuss. But err on the side of shorter over longer, so it doesn't feel like a drag.
- Cultivate a positive atmosphere. Each spouse is responsible for coming to the meeting in a good mood and with an upbeat, patient, positive attitude. Each spouse should try to use a supportive tone throughout the meeting and abstain from any griping or criticism. (Constructively working on issues is okay — but not snark or empty complaining.)

*“A good goal for each meeting is that it should inspire you to want to meet again a week later.*

- both of you should feel ownership in the meeting. The more verbal partner should allow the less verbal partner to speak first at times, and should actively solicit feedback, instead of dominating the meeting.

While some of these guidelines, like keeping a positive attitude, are essential for the success of your marriage meetings, others can be tweaked and experimented with. See what works for you as a couple.

## **The 4 Parts of a Marriage Meeting**

Experimentation can continue with exactly how you run your marriage meetings, but I'd recommend keeping to the 4 parts, done in this order; it has been structured in a deliberate way.

### **Appreciation**

Appreciation kicks off each marriage meeting, and it consists of a simple, and yet surprisingly encouraging exchange of gratitude. Each person says "everything you can think of that you specifically liked or admired about your partner during the past week."

### **Chores (Including To-Dos/Finances)**

Chores are 'the business part of the meeting'. Each of you says what you think needs to be done. You agree on priorities, timelines, and who will do each task. Teamwork is promoted and jobs get handled.

You don't have to talk about chores for which you've already established a routine and division of duties that's working well. Instead, discuss chores that aren't getting done, and are occasional rather than re-occurring.

Negotiate and brainstorm ways to get neglected chores done more effectively and consistently. One spouse can volunteer to take on a task, or you can decide to take turns, or delegate it to one of the children in the family or to outside help (like hiring a housekeeper).

## **Plan for Good Times**

Cultivating a loving partnership isn't just about 'working on the relationship'; it's also about co-creating experiences that bring pleasure and happiness into each spouse's life.

In fact, I'd say happy marriages have almost nothing to do with "working on the relationship", and about 99% to do with striving to be an excellent, interesting, well-balanced person yourself, and doing things with your spouse that solidify your friendship and promote flourishing.

The "Plan for Good Times" portion of your marriage meeting helps you take concrete steps to do just that.

## **Problems & Challenges**

The Problems & Challenges part of the marriage meeting comes last by design. By this time the two of you are feeling appreciated, are confident that chores will get done, and are already looking forward to the fun things you've planned to do together. You should hopefully be feeling upbeat and have the confidence to tackle any challenges you may be facing with each other, or from life in general.

In this part of the meeting, "each of you can bring up any concern — money, sex, in-laws, parenting, changing schedules, or something else."