

MARITAL FIRST RESPONDERS

DETAILED FACILITATOR GUIDE

9:00

Welcome, Brief Words About The Purpose Of The Workshop, Logistics

“Purpose is to help people who others open up to with concerns about their marriage do a better job in those conversations.”

[Any logistics you need to share.]

****Assume a five-minute late start****

9:10

Introductions And Why People Came

“Now, I’d like to hear from a few of you about why you came to this workshop. So, if several people could introduce themselves and say why you came today, that would be great.”

[This assumes the size of the group is too large for everyone to answer the question. So, you are doing a sampling of the group, say 5 people.]

****If someone gives a reason for coming that is inconsistent with what will happen, you can thank them for sharing and clarify the purpose of the workshop, for example, that you will not be giving direct advice about how to handle a particular situation but that the principles and skills might be useful in a number of situations.****

9:20

Introduction

“We are going to begin with watching a video presentation by Dr. Bill Doherty, the creator of Marital First Responders, at a live workshop. Bill developed the program while teaching at the University of Minnesota. He will describe the origin story, the basic idea behind Marital First Responders, and what we will doing in the workshop.”



[Show the video - 01 Introduction to Marital First Responders (Facilitator)]



Challenging Scenarios Already Encountered

“Now we will have a conversation about challenging situations we’ve faced when someone came to us as a confidant about a relationship problem. Here are the directions: Think of a situation where you felt challenged in responding to someone in your life who confided in you about a marital/committed relationship problem? Here are some specific questions to help guide your reflection:

- *What was your relationship to the confider and the partner?*
- *What was the problem?*
- *Why was it a challenge to you?*

So, again, I’m asking you to think of a challenging situation when you were a confidant to someone with a relationship problem. What was your relationship to the confider and their spouse or partner? What was the problem, and why was this challenging to you. Don’t focus mainly on their problem but on why them bringing it to you created a challenge for you.

I’m going to give you a moment of reflection on the question, and you can take notes if you like. Then I’m going to have you pair up with someone to share the challenge. Ideally you will pair up with someone of your same gender because the research indicates that’s where most confiding goes on—women with women and men with men. Is everyone clear about what I am asking you to do? Okay, let’s begin ONE MINUTE reflection and writing.”



[Time for 1 minute]

“When I give the signal to ‘go,’ I’d like you to find someone of the other gender, introduce yourself and take four minutes to share your stories. To make it easier to find a pair partner, I’d like you first to stand if you are able. [Everyone stands.] When I say “go,” find someone you did not come with today. You have just four minutes to share, so let’s make sure we have only pairs, not larger groups. However, don’t leave a third person alone if we don’t have even numbers, so you could have three people in your group. Are you ready? GO.”

****Help people find their pair partner if you see someone without a partner. If you see multiple groups of three, help them break down into pairs.****



[Time for 4 MINUTES (sharing within their pairs)]

“Now I invite some sharing with the whole group of a challenging situation. Let’s make sure we don’t use names or identifying information. Again, the focus is on what was challenging for you as a confidant.”

- Pull examples from the group
- Offer empathy for the challenge they faced, and if needed, ask what was challenging to them if they are focused on the relationship problem itself.
- You might conclude with a challenging situation you faced.**

10:00

Marital First Responder Relationship Assessment

“Now I am going to show a video of Bill Doherty discuss basic assessment for Marital First Responders. What do we need to be listening for when someone opens up to us?”



[Show the video - 02 Assessment Questions(Facilitator)]

“Now we’re going to discuss the role of the Marital First Responder. Please look at your handout on page one and I’ll walk you through what’s here.”

10:10

Your Role As a Marital First Responder

“Now we’re going to discuss the role of the Marital First Responder. Please look at your handout on page one and I’ll walk you through what’s here.”



[Show the video - 03 Your Role As a Marital First Responder (Facilitator)]

10:20

Common Mistakes

“We have one more topic before we go to a break: common mistakes made by Marital First Responders. I’ll share a video on this topic from the workshop we’ve been watching. The outline of the mistakes is in your handout. And then we’ll have a sharing exercise.”



[Show the video - 04 Common Mistakes (Facilitator)]

“Now, I’d like you to look at the list of common mistakes in your handout and think about which one you are most likely to make when you are not at your best as a Marital First Responder. Nobody gets this right all the time, and it can be helpful to know we were go with we’re not on our game. So, take a minute to reflect on which mistake you are most prone to make when someone confides in you about a marital problem. After the reflection, you will go back to the pair you were in before to share your responses.”



[Time for 1 minute for self-assessment of most common mistake]



[Time for 4 minute for sharing within same pairs they were in before]

Pool responses (have fun with it, share your own)

10:45

Break



[Time for 15 minutes]

Level One Skills: L.E.A.P (Listen, Empathize, Affirm, offer Perspective)

“There are four basic skills for Marital First Responders. Now we will teach the first three: Listen, Empathize, and Affirm. We will begin with Bill Doherty explaining these skills and then we will practice them.”



[Show the video - 05 Leap Skills (Facilitator)]

“Now we will practice Listen, Empathy, and Affirm. We will do it this way. I will describe marital complaints that researchers have found are among the most common that women confide about concerning their husbands and that men complain about concerning their wives.

Of course, there are lots of variations of couple relationships and couple problems, but here we’re going to practice on scenarios that come up quite often in marital first responding.

Problem 1, something what wives often complain about with their husbands: He doesn’t participate, listen, and emotionally connect with me enough. (Repeat)

Problem 2: a common complaint of husbands about their wives: She is on my case all the time. I can’t do anything right. (Repeat)

We’re going to practice in pairs of women with women and men with men because that’s how these conversations most often go, women confiding in other women and men with other men. So, before I give the practice directions, I’ll ask you to stand and when I say ‘go,’ find someone to practice with. Really try to keep to pairs but if necessary, a group could have three. Okay, stand if you are able and ‘go’—find a practice partner and sit down again if you like.”

****Help them find pairs avoiding three’s unless there is an odd number of women or men. Consider having one of your workshop helpers pair up in order to avoid threes.****

“Okay, you will both get a chance to be the confider and the confidant/ marital first responder. I will get into the practice specifics in a minute. For now, your first step is to decide who will go first as the confider, the one with the problem.”

****Give me a few seconds to decide, and look around for who seems confused.****

“All right, now I’m going to give you directions for the practice. Look at the complaints on your handout on page four, the ones I just described. The confider will start by paraphrasing the complaints in your own words—what’s bugging you about your spouse.

Try to get into the role, show some feelings but don’t be over the top (you are not considering divorce). Don’t talk for more than 30 seconds or so to start with so that your practice partner can get into the conversation.

You will do two rounds of three minutes each, so don’t take too much time to set up your problem. You want to give the confidant a chance to use the skills.

The skills the confidant will use are Listen, Empathy, and Affirm. Listening and showing empathy are the key ones to focus on. In role play it may not work to share an affirmation because you have no background knowledge of the other person. So: listen and show empathy skills.

To get you into marital first responder role, take a look at the description of Listen and Empathy on your handout. The main thing is to show that you are hearing and tracking what the confider is saying and feeling, showing support and empathy. For now, do not get into sharing your perspective or offering advice or input.

Part of the challenge of this exercise is to spend three whole minutes listening, empathizing, and (if appropriate) affirming—without a single additional perspective or offer to help solve the problem! Also, don’t spend time asking a bunch of questions. The confider should keep the conversation going by adding material that the confidant can respond to.

You will have two rounds of three minutes apiece. When I say ‘go,’ the confide will open up about their concerns, and then the two of you have a supportive conversation for three minutes. At that point, I will say ‘switch,’ and reverse roles. Do that immediately so that the other person has a chance to practice the skills.

Last thing: help each other out in this exercise. If the confidant goes off task and starts to interrogate or offer perspective, the confider can gently say, ‘I think you’re supposed to stay with empathy for now.’ Okay, before we start, does anyone have questions about what you are going to do?”

[Check for Questions]



“Ready? Go for three minutes.”

[Walk around checking to see if pairs need help as they start and do the practice.]

[Time for 3 Minutes, then shout out, “Switch. Switch.”]

Make sure they are doing this by intervening with a pair who keep going in the first round.

Harvesting Learnings From The Practice: First, What Went Well, And Then Challenges

“We’ll process this practice exercise in two parts. First is the question of what went well in the practice: that can be how you felt you used the skills well, or how your practice partner used them—and what felt good about that.” Then we will shift to what challenges you experienced in using the skills: what was hard.

So, to start: ‘What went well?’

[Take responses from the group.]

If someone gets into a challenge, gently stop them and say that’s coming next.

“Now we’ll switch to what was hard or challenging. On this one, let’s all agree that it can be challenging to do a role play with a stranger, so let’s assume that challenge and only share what was difficult in other ways. In other words, let’s not focus on the artificiality of the situation but on what you learned is hard about using listening, empathy, and affirming.”

11:40

Research Teaching Points 1: Normal Problems

“The last thing we’ll do before lunch is watch of video on research about common marital problems. This is in the training curriculum to help improve your knowledge about relationship problems, particularly normal ones that many couples face but some people think are signs of more serious trouble. We’ll hear Bill Doherty talk about them. You can follow along in your handout if you like.”



[Show the video - 06 What Research Tells Us About Common Couple Problems (Facilitator)]

12:00

Lunch



[Time for 40 minutes]

1:00

Perspective Skills

“Now we’re going to work on the fourth skill: sharing your perspective. I want to underline that it’s almost always best to do the first three skills before this one. You “earn” the right to share your perspective on the other person’s problem if you’ve first joined them in a supportive way through listening, showing empathy, and affirming them. A lot of time that’s all you need to do. Sometimes, though, it can be helpful to share something you’ve learned or observed—but at this point, not offering advice, just sharing a perspective for the other person to take or leave. We’re going to begin with Bill Doherty’s presentation on the perspective skills and then we’ll practice it. You might want to follow along with the handout.”



[Show the video - 07 Perspective Skills (Facilitator)]

“We’re going to practice in the same pairs as last time. Now you will have a chance to offer a perspective on the concern the other person has brought to you. I’d like you to think about the same problem that you practiced the L.E.A. skills with, and look the handout material on perspective to come up with a perspective you’d like to share in the practice.

Take a moment of silent reflection as you decide what perspective you’d like to share.”



[Time for 1 Minute, for silent reflection]

If anyone starts to talk to someone they are sitting near, politely remind them that this is a silent time for reflection. It’s really distracting to have someone talking during this time.

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“Okay, the best way to get into this practice is for whoever went first last time, to do so again. They will set the stage by talking about the problem for 30 seconds or so. If you are practicing as the confidant, begin as you did before with some empathy and then after you’ve connected with the confider, bring up your perspective. From there, the two of you can go back and forth, with the confidant using all four of the skills.

To summarize, you will be in the same pairs, talking about the same issue, using all four of the LEAP skills, while making sure you have time to bring in a perspective statement. The person who went first confiding last time will do so again. After three minutes, I will ask you to switch roles.”



[Time for 3 Minutes, then shout out, “Switch. Switch.”]

*** Process with whole group in the same way as before: what went well and what was challenging. Focus on the use of the perspective skill rather than on the content of the perspective. ***

1:45

Research Teaching Points 2: Marital Conflict and Divorce

“Before the break, we’re going to hear Bill Doherty talk about what research can teach us about marital conflict and divorce. Again, the goal is to add to your knowledge base as a Marital First Responder. You can follow along on the handout if you like.”



[Show the video - 08 Research on Marital Conflict and Divorce (Facilitator)]

2:15

Break



[Time for 15 minutes]

Level Two Skills: C.A.R. (Challenge, Advise, offer Resources)

“Now we get to the advanced skills, labeled as “C.A.R.” (Challenge, Advise, and offer Resources). These are skills only for particularly difficult situations rather than for regular use. The video presentation will start with ,when you might want to use these skills. Afterwards we will practice the challenge and advise skills with a new twist on the relationship problems you’ve been practicing on.”



[Show the video - 09 Challenge and Advise Skills (Facilitator)]

Practice Challenge and Advise

“As I mentioned, we’re going to add two elements to the story the confider is offering up in the practice: the confider has an emotional affair going on with a coworker. The confider is meeting with someone for coffee in the afternoons where the confider reports feeling much better understood than at home, and the meetings are a secret from the spouse.

I’d like you to look at the handout on Challenge and Advise, and think about what you would like to say to the confider that moves beyond support and perspective into more directly raising your concerns about what they are doing. Try to do it using the skills you see in the handout.

In terms of how to set this up in the practice, the confider can start with two items: that you have not told your spouse how unhappy you are and then about the very understanding person you are having secret meetings with during work hours. For practice purposes, let’s assume the confidant has been using the LEAP skills and can right to challenge and advise. Let’s switch who starts this time. The person who confided first before can go second this time.

You will have just two minutes each on this round because this is a focused conversation.

Before we start the one minute of reflection on what you want to say to the confider, does anyone have questions about this practice exercise?”



[Time for 2 Minutes, then shout out, “Switch. Switch.”]

****Make sure they are doing this by intervening with a pair who keep going in the first round.****

3:15

Resources: Recommending Help: Present the Material

“The last things we will do in this workshop are a video on how to recommend someone get help, and then a final video on maintaining good boundaries. I will show them back to back, and then we will finish up.”



[Show the video - 10 Offering Marital First Responders To Your Community (Facilitator)]

3:30

Maintaining Boundaries



[Show the video - 11 Boundaries (Facilitator)]

3:45

Reflections and wrap up:

“I’d like to have everyone think about what you are taking with you from today’s workshop that you might find useful in the future. We’ll do this starting with 30 seconds of personal reflection on what you are taking with you from our time together that might be useful in the future. Then you’ll go back to your pair partner to share for a couple of minutes.

Again, what are you taking with you from our time together that might be useful in the future?”



[Time for 30 Seconds of personal reflection]



[Time for 2 Minutes, in pairs]

Pull several responses from the whole group, depending on how much time remains.

4:00

Dimissal