

MARRIAGE EXERCISE #7 - SELFLESSNESS

EMOTIONAL BANK ACCOUNT

Rationale

Married people live in a bubble together. You share almost everything. In the day to day of life, it's easy to lose sensitivity for your wife because it's all about 'getting it done.' Gaining an understanding of the tasks that give her energy as well as those that drain her gives you a cheat sheet on how to selflessly serve her . . . to take things off her that drain energy. Some of those things might actually *give you energy!* How cool would that be?

Challenge Assignment

You and your wife are to work through the list of activities described on the following handout and note which make deposits' and which make 'withdrawals' in your wife's emotional bank account. Then you'll pick the top and bottom three and talk about them, increasing your understanding of each other and what makes life bitter and sweet. Come ready to report on the top and bottoms three's and what happened as a result of the exercise.

Debrief

Every human being wants to know someone and be known by someone. As couples, spouses are the subjects of this knowing. This exercise gave you an opportunity to peel the wrapper back on some stuff you may or may not have known about your wife *and* gave you a chance to tell her some things about yourself without sounding like you're bragging or complaining. Lead the guys to share both their and their wife's top three and bottom three and especially what happened as a result of the exercise. Leaders go first!

Emotional Bank Account

The purpose of this exercise is to increase you and your wife's understanding of each other and what makes life bitter and sweet. Every day, we do things that feed us . . . that give us energy and add to our lives. But we also do things that drain us . . . that take away energy and wear us out. If we are going to "live with our wives in an understanding way," we need to know what she does that adds and subtracts to her emotional bank account. And since all of us want to know and be known, it's helpful for her to know the same thing about you.

The goal of this exercise is to *increase understanding*. It is *not* to shift tasks around, make your spouse feel guilty or grateful. It's intended to be an exercise in communication where both of you open up about what's fun and what's hard in your daily lives.

Below is a list of 61 activities. Some of these likely give you and your wife emotional energy . . . others take it away. The purpose of this exercise is to learn which is which, and how they affect balances in your emotional bank accounts.

There are two copies of the list . . . one for you and one for your wife. Sit down together but work through this independently. Put a D (for deposit) by the activities you enjoy . . . that give you emotional energy, and a W (for withdrawal) by those that drain you emotionally.

From the list of activities you marked with a D, pick your top three . . . the three things that give you the biggest deposit in your emotional bank account.

Do the same thing with those you marked with a W, pick your bottom three . . . the three things that take the largest emotional toll when you do them.

Don't worry as much about the activities failing in the middle. Focus on the top few and bottom few. The rankings don't have to be exact, just categorize deposits and withdrawals and then look for the biggies.

Just because an activity takes away emotional energy doesn't mean you can't or won't do it . . . sometimes you have to. But you and your wife will gain a better understanding of each other by knowing what fills you up and what drains you down.

After you've finished sit down together and talk about them. Don't argue or debate. Don't try to fix anything, take anything away or add anything to. Just listen and try to understand. Share your top three and bottom three with each other. If it's a good conversation, keep going until you've shared your whole lists. It may be painful and/or discouraging to hear some of the things your wife classified as withdrawals from her account, but it's better to know than to not know. And as you discipline yourself to "love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her," you can move toward helping her through those things she finds emotionally draining.

Come to your next session ready to share what happened.

WHAT RADICAL HUSBANDS DO

Husband's list of activities and their effect on your emotional bank accounts:

- | W or D | Activity |
|---------------|--|
| _____ | 5 Feet for 5 Minutes - Reunite at the end of the day and talk about how it went |
| _____ | Shop for groceries. Make up the shopping list |
| _____ | Cook dinner, bake |
| _____ | Clean the house |
| _____ | Do the laundry |
| _____ | Shop together for gifts or clothes (for self, kids, family or friends) |
| _____ | Go out (no kids) for brunch or dinner, or to your favorite haunt |
| _____ | Read the morning paper together |
| _____ | Help each other with a self-improvement (e.g., a new class, weight loss, career) |
| _____ | Plan and host a dinner party |
| _____ | Call and/or think about each other during the workday. |
| _____ | Stay overnight at a romantic hideaway. |
| _____ | Eat breakfast together during the work week |
| _____ | Go to church together |
| _____ | Do yard work, shovel the walk, do home repairs, car maintenance, and washing |
| _____ | Perform work in the community (e.g., volunteering) |
| _____ | Exercise together |
| _____ | Go on weekend outings (e.g., picnic, drives) |
| _____ | Spend 'everyday' time with kids . . . bedtimes, baths, homework |
| _____ | Take the kids on outings (e.g., zoo, museum, dinner) |
| _____ | Attend school functions (e.g., teacher conferences, PTA meetings) |
| _____ | Stay in touch with/spend time with extended family |
| _____ | Entertain out-of-town guests |
| _____ | Travel together |
| _____ | Watch TV and/or a movie |
| _____ | Order take out |
| _____ | Double-date with friends |
| _____ | Attend sporting events |
| _____ | Engage in an activity (e.g., bowl, bicycle, hike, jog, ride horses, camp, ski, swim) |

WHAT RADICAL HUSBANDS DO

- _____ Listen to music
- _____ Go dancing or attend a concert, nightclub, jazz club, or theater
- _____ Host your child's birthday party
- _____ Take your child to lessons
- _____ Attend your child's sporting events or performance
- _____ Pay bills
- _____ Write letters or cards
- _____ Deal with family medical events (take kids to the doctor, dentist, or hospital)
- _____ Work at home, but still be together in some way
- _____ Go to a church or community event
- _____ Go to a party
- _____ Drive to or from work together
- _____ Celebrate milestones in your children's lives
- _____ Celebrate milestones in your lives
- _____ Play computer games, surf the Internet
- _____ Supervise your children's play dates
- _____ Plan vacations
- _____ Plan your future together . . . dream
- _____ Walk the dog
- _____ Read out loud together
- _____ Play a board game or a card game
- _____ Do errands together on a weekend
- _____ Engage in hobbies
- _____ Talk over drinks
- _____ Take time to talk without interruptions . . . to really listen to your spouse
- _____ Philosophize
- _____ Attend a funeral
- _____ Help out other people
- _____ Hunt for a new house or apartment
- _____ Test-drive new cars
- _____ Other: _____

WHAT RADICAL HUSBANDS DO

Wife's list of activities and their effect on your emotional bank accounts:

- | W or D | Activity |
|---------------|--|
| _____ | 5 Feet for 5 Minutes - Reunite at the end of the day and talk about how it went |
| _____ | Shop for groceries. Make up the shopping list |
| _____ | Cook dinner, bake |
| _____ | Clean the house |
| _____ | Do the laundry |
| _____ | Shop together for gifts or clothes (for self, kids, family or friends) |
| _____ | Go out (no kids) for brunch or dinner, or to your favorite haunt |
| _____ | Read the morning paper together |
| _____ | Help each other with a self-improvement (e.g., a new class, weight loss, career) |
| _____ | Plan and host a dinner party |
| _____ | Call and/or think about each other during the workday. |
| _____ | Stay overnight at a romantic hideaway. |
| _____ | Eat breakfast together during the work week |
| _____ | Go to church together |
| _____ | Do yard work, shovel the walk, do home repairs, car maintenance, and washing |
| _____ | Perform work in the community (e.g., volunteering) |
| _____ | Exercise together |
| _____ | Go on weekend outings (e.g., picnic, drives) |
| _____ | Spend 'everyday' time with kids . . . bedtimes, baths, homework |
| _____ | Take the kids on outings (e.g., zoo, museum, dinner) |
| _____ | Attend school functions (e.g., teacher conferences, PTA meetings) |
| _____ | Stay in touch with/spend time with extended family |
| _____ | Entertain out-of-town guests |
| _____ | Travel together |
| _____ | Watch TV and/or a movie |
| _____ | Order take out |
| _____ | Double-date with friends |
| _____ | Attend sporting events |
| _____ | Engage in an activity (e.g., bowl, bicycle, hike, jog, ride horses, camp, ski, swim) |

WHAT RADICAL HUSBANDS DO

- _____ Listen to music
- _____ Go dancing or attend a concert, nightclub, jazz club, or theater
- _____ Host your child's birthday party
- _____ Take your child to lessons
- _____ Attend your child's sporting events or performance
- _____ Pay bills
- _____ Write letters or cards
- _____ Deal with family medical events (take kids to the doctor, dentist, or hospital)
- _____ Work at home, but still be together in some way
- _____ Go to a church or community event
- _____ Go to a party
- _____ Drive to or from work together
- _____ Celebrate milestones in your children's lives
- _____ Celebrate milestones in your lives
- _____ Play computer games, surf the Internet
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- _____ Plan vacations
- _____ Plan your future together . . . dream
- _____ Walk the dog
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- _____ Do errands together on a weekend
- _____ Engage in hobbies
- _____ Talk over drinks
- _____ Take time to talk without interruptions . . . to really listen to your spouse
- _____ Philosophize
- _____ Attend a funeral
- _____ Help out other people
- _____ Hunt for a new house or apartment
- _____ Test-drive new cars
- _____ Other: _____