



MARRIAGE-- *What If?*

The Marriage Your Heart Longs For. ♥

GROWING TOGETHER. ♥ LOVING DEEPER. ♥ LIVING CONNECTED.

— *Not just good, but truly life-giving.* —



The 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse of Marriage

What if your marriage could become more than simply surviving the demands of life? What if it could become emotionally safe, spiritually alive, and truly life-giving? In this Men's RoundTable series, we will explore God's design for intimacy, healing, delight, and connection through *The Deep-Rooted Marriage* by Dan Allender and Steve Call alongside *Fire and Song* by Carl W. Lehnbauer. This is an invitation for men to move beyond merely "getting along" toward cultivating a marriage that becomes truly life-giving.

RELATIONSHIP SCIENCE

Gottman's Four Horsemen & Relationship Repair

Understanding communication patterns, practical antidotes, repair attempts, and building a strong Emotional Bank Account.

Part 1: The Four Horsemen

Predictors of relationship distress & their evidence-based antidotes
identified by Drs. John & Julie Gottman.

Horseman 1: Criticism

✗ Criticism (Attacking Character)

"You never put your dishes away! Why are you always so lazy and selfish?"

✓ Antidote: Gentle Start-Up

"I feel overwhelmed when dishes stay in the sink. Could you help me clear them tonight?"

💡 Rule: Use "I" statements + state a positive need.



Horseman 2: Defensiveness

✗Defensiveness (Playing Victim/Excuses)

"I wouldn't forget if you didn't nag me! Besides, you forgot the trash yesterday."

✓Antidote: Take Responsibility

"You're right, I dropped the ball on that. I'm sorry, I will go handle it now."

🔑 Key: Accept even a small piece of the responsibility.



Horseman 3: Stonewalling

✗ Stonewalling (Shutdown/Cold Shoulder)

Turning away, ignoring partner, crossing arms, refusing to answer or engage.

✓ Antidote: Physiological Self-Soothing

"I'm feeling overwhelmed right now. I need 20 minutes to walk, then let's talk at 8:00."



Cause: Driven by physiological emotional flooding (>100 BPM).



Horseman 4: Contempt

✗ Contempt (Mockery & Disrespect)

"You're tired? Try running a household for once. You wouldn't last a single day."

✓ Antidote: Build Appreciation

"I know work has been crazy for both of us. I appreciate how hard you push, but I need help."

⚠ **Warning:** Contempt is the #1 predictor of divorce!



Part 2: Repair Attempts

The "secret weapon" of emotionally intelligent couples to hit the brakes during conflict.

Types of Repair Attempts



1. "I Feel"

"I'm starting to feel defensive right now."



4. Stop Action

"Can we take a breath and slow down?"



5. Humor & Touch

Gentle silliness or holding hands to diffuse tension.



3. "Get to Yes"

"I agree with part of what you're saying."



6. Appreciation

"I love you and want to figure this out."

The 100 BPM Rule & Flooding

100

BPM Heart Rate

When Emotional Flooding Hits

When heart rate exceeds 100 BPM, stress hormones flood the body and the prefrontal cortex shuts down. Productive discussion becomes biologically impossible.

🕒 Take a 20-Minute Time-Out

It takes a minimum of 20 minutes for the physiological nervous system to calm down. Always set a specific time to return to the conversation.

Accepting Repairs Mid-Argument

What Accepting Means

- ✓ **Stepping out of fight mode:** Acknowledging your partner's brake pedal.
- ✓ **Validation:** "Thank you for saying that. I'm still upset, but I hear you."
- ✓ **Physical release:** Uncrossing arms or unclenching jaw.

What It DOES NOT Mean

- ✗ **Conceding:** You are not backing down or surrendering.
- ✗ **Instant Forgiveness:** You don't have to pretend you aren't hurt.
- ✗ **Burying Feelings:** You are simply agreeing to talk safely.

Emotional Bank Account

Positive Sentiment Overriding

High Balance: Built by daily micro-deposits (appreciation, listening, affection). During fights, you give the benefit of the doubt and repairs are seen as sincere.

Negative Sentiment Overriding

Low Balance: Caused by frequent unaddressed withdrawals. You view your partner with suspicion and repairs are seen as manipulative or fake.

Putting It Into Practice

Small daily deposits create the foundation for healthy conflict repair.

Key Takeaway

"Every relationship has conflict. Master couples aren't those who never fight—they are the ones who master the art of repair."

Image Sources



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