COVENANT MARRIAGE BLUEPRINT

Mini-Course Workbook

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SESSION 3

Reading Your Cycle

What Happens When Blueprints Meet Under Pressure

Reading Your Cycle

What Happens When Blueprints Meet Under Pressure

Before this session: have your Blueprint Map from Session 2 nearby. The goal of this session is to see your cycle from the outside; the shape of it, not just your side of it. This may be the most practically useful session in the course. It may also be the most uncomfortable.

✦ You Cannot Change What You Cannot See

Most couples who have been running the same conflict cycle for years have never once stepped outside it long enough to observe what is actually happening. They are fighting each other. What they are actually fighting is the _____.

> *The cycle is not a sign that the marriage is broken. It is a sign that two people, each trying to _____ themselves, have not yet found a way to interrupt the loop.*

✦ *The Structure of Every Conflict Cycle*

Regardless of which blueprints are involved, the structure is always the same. Fill in the sequence:

A trigger activates a _____.

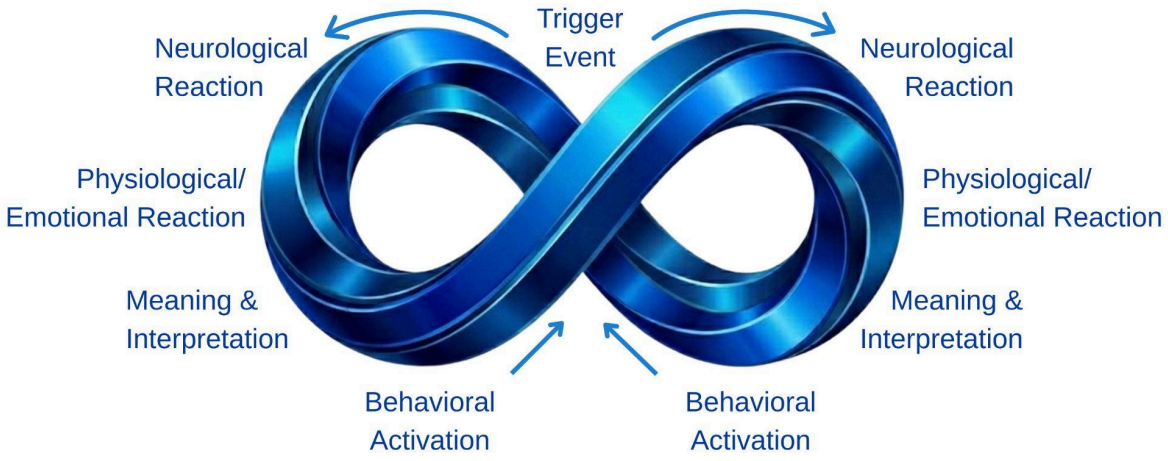
The fear produces a _____ response.

The blueprint response activates the spouse's _____.

The spouse's fear produces their _____ response.

Which activates the first fear _____.

The cycle feeds itself. Neither person is the villain. Both are people, formed by history, operating under pressure.



✦ Conflict Reveals the Blueprint. It Does Not Create It

Conflict introduces pressure. And pressure, in the domain of attachment, activates the blueprint, the old fear comes online. The learned response deploys in the _____ before the mind has finished naming it.

The Distance Keeper goes quiet not because he has decided to go quiet. His nervous system, under threat, executes the program it has been running for forty years. The Closeness Seeker pursues because the fear of _____ moves faster than any conscious decision.

Romans 7:19, 'For I do not do the good I want, but the _____. I do not want is what I keep on doing.' The good news of Romans 8 is not that the patterns disappear. It is that there is no _____.

✦ Three Common Collisions

THE PURSUIT AND THE WITHDRAWAL: CLOSENESS SEEKER AND DISTANCE KEEPER

The Closeness Seeker senses distance and _____. The Distance Keeper experiences that pursuit as pressure and reduces contact.

Marcus and Diane, the kitchen moment was not the beginning of this cycle. It was the _____ iteration of it.

For Marcus, the interruption looks like _____ at the study door. For Diane, it looks like pausing the pursuit long enough to name what she actually needs.

For Diane, the interruption looks like _____ the pursuit long enough to name what she actually needs: not 'Why won't you talk to me?' but 'I'm feeling far from you, and I miss you. Can we find some time this weekend?'

THE COLLISION OF MIRRORS: TWO CLOSENESS SEEKERS

Both partners carry the same core fear. When both blueprints activate simultaneously, neither can offer the _____ the other needs because both are waiting to receive it first.

To what extent have we made each other responsible for providing the security that only _____ can sustainably give?

THE BROKEN GROUND: TWO DISTANCE KEEPERS

Two Distance Keepers produce a cycle easy to mistake for _____. Both blueprints are executing the same self-protective strategy: needing less, expressing less, requiring less.

The conflict here is not explosive. It is the slow, quiet _____ of connection. Someone has to go _____.

✦ The Cycle Is Not the Marriage

The conflict cycle and the marriage are not the _____.

This reframe changes the question. Instead of: 'Why does my spouse keep doing this to me?' the question becomes: 'What is my spouse afraid of that produces this response?' And more crucially: 'What am I afraid of that produces mine?'

The cycle is not the marriage. Keep saying that to yourself and to each other until it becomes available in the moments when it is most _____.

✦ *Four Practices for the Cycle*

Fill in the name of each practice as it is introduced.

1. Name the _____ before you name the conflict.

2. Ask the _____ question.

3. Make one _____ move.

4. Repair before you _____.

The content can wait. The covenant cannot.

Individual Reflection

Work through these questions privately before sharing with your spouse. Describe your side of the cycle, not your spouse's behavior. Be as specific as possible.

1 Describe the shape of your most common conflict cycle, not the content (what it is usually about) but the shape (what happens, in sequence, every time). Start with what your spouse does or doesn't do that triggers you, then trace what happens next.

2 When your blueprint is activated in conflict, what happens in your body first, before you say or do anything? Where do you feel it? What does it feel like? Be specific about the physical experience.

3 The session says the cycle reveals the blueprint; it does not create it. The old fear comes online before a conscious decision is made. What is the oldest fear that your conflict cycle is actually about? Not the surface issue, but the fear underneath it.

4 Romans 7:19 describes the gap between what we intend and what we do under pressure. Describe a recent conflict where you did not do what you actually wanted to do, where the blueprint ran the program before you could choose otherwise. What would you have chosen, if you could have?

5 Of the four practices in the Teaching Notes-naming the cycle, asking the underlying question, making the counter-instinctual move, and repairing before resolving-which one feels most accessible to you right now? Which feels hardest? Why?

Couple Discussion

This conversation requires unusual care. You are describing cycles that have caused real pain. The goal is to describe your own side, not to explain your spouse's behavior or correct their perception. Use ‘I’ language throughout.

1 Take turns describing the shape of your cycle from your own side only: what you feel, what you fear, what you do. Listen to your spouse's description without interrupting. When both have shared, describe together what the full cycle looks like from the outside, as if you were watching two other people.

2 Share your answers to Individual Reflection question 3-the oldest fear underneath your most common conflict. This is significant. Receive your spouse's answer as a disclosure, not an explanation. What does hearing it change about how you understand their behavior in conflict?

3 The session distinguishes between the cycle and the marriage. When you are in the middle of a conflict, does it feel like a contained event or does it feel like a verdict on the whole relationship? Share honestly. How does your spouse experience it?

4 Together, draft one specific repair sentence for each of you-words that could be said in the middle of the cycle that would communicate, ‘I am still here. I have not left.’ Make it short. Make it yours. Write both sentences below.

Solo Track: Reading Your Cycle

What Happens When Blueprints Meet Under Pressure

> *Couples map what happens between two specific people. Your half of that-your trigger, your fear, your blueprint response-is entirely yours to observe regardless of who you are relating to. Use whichever close relationship is currently most active for you: family, friendship, or dating.*

Individual Reflection: Solo Version

1. Describe the shape of your most common relational pattern under stress in that relationship-not the content of what it is usually about, but the shape: what happens, in sequence, every time.

2. When that pattern activates, what happens in your body first, before you say or do anything? Where do you feel it?

3. What is the oldest fear underneath that pattern-not the surface issue, the fear underneath it?

4. Describe a recent moment where you did not do what you actually wanted to do relationally, where the old pattern ran the program before you could choose otherwise.

5. Of the four practices-naming the cycle, asking the underneath question, making the counter-instinctual move, repairing before resolving-which feels most accessible to you right now? Which feels hardest, and why?

Peer Activity: Together Time Replacement

Pair up. Take turns describing the shape of your cycle from your own side only (question 1). Listen without interrupting, diagnosing, or offering a fix.

After both have shared, draft one repair sentence you could each say the next time you notice yourself inside this pattern-with anyone, not only a future spouse. Write both sentences down.

Practice Exercise

This exercise has three parts. Parts 1 and 2 are done individually. Part 3 is done together. Part 1 should be completed before Part 2. Return to Part 3 before Session 4.

✦ Part 1: Map Your Cycle (Individual, 15 minutes)

Using what you know about your blueprint and what you observed in this session, complete the Cycle Map below. Write from your own experience, not your interpretation of your spouse's.

MY CYCLE MAP

1 The trigger: What specific thing-a tone, a silence, a word, a behavior, a look-most reliably starts our cycle?

2 The fear: When that trigger fires, what do I immediately fear is happening or about to happen?

3 My blueprint response: What do I do? (Be behavioral and specific, not 'I get upset' but 'I go quiet / I raise my voice / I leave the room / I ask more questions.')

4 What I imagine my response does to my spouse: How does my blueprint response likely land for them, given their blueprint?

5 What I actually need in that moment: Not what I want my spouse to stop doing, but what I need from them.

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✦ *Part 2: The Counter-Instinctual Move (Individual, 10 minutes)*

The cycle is interrupted when either partner makes one deliberate choice against their blueprint's default response. This part asks you to design your response in advance, before you need it.

MY COUNTER-INSTINCTUAL MOVE

1 My blueprint's default response in conflict is:

2 The counter-instinctual move for my blueprint, the thing that runs against the pattern, would look like:

3 In practical terms, the specific thing I could do or say differently the next time our cycle starts is:

4 What makes that move hard is:

5 What would make it easier-what would I need to believe, or what would I need from my spouse-in order to make that move?

✦ *Part 3: The Cycle Debrief Agreement (Together, 10 minutes)*

Agree together on a simple debrief practice to use after your next conflict. The goal is not to process the conflict endlessly; it is to step outside the cycle together and observe what happened, within 24 hours, while it is still fresh.

The debrief has three questions only:

- What triggered you? What was the fear that came online first?
- What did your blueprint do?
- What did you need from me that you didn't get, and what can I do differently next time?

Agree on when and where you will do the debrief. Write it below.

OUR DEBRIEF AGREEMENT

We will do our conflict debrief within _____ hours of a conflict, and we will do it:

The signal we will use to initiate a debrief-something either of us can say that means 'I want to step outside the cycle and talk about what just happened'-is:_____.

Session Notes

Use this space for anything from the session you want to capture: questions that came up, things that surprised you, or observations about yourself or your marriage that you want to return to.

Contact Wade

Scan the QR Code below and add me to your contacts.

