

MARRIAGE IN MOTION

Transcript: Module 1, Lesson 1

ZACH

Hey there, and WELCOME. Thank you for joining us for MARRIAGE in MOTION. I'm Zach Brittle and this is my colleague and friend Laura Heck. I'm the kind-of overly serious, occasionally funny, very experienced, but not that great on camera one. She's the wise beyond her years, super friendly, did she really say that, born for this whole thing one. We're both couples therapists. We're both married.

I, personally, cannot wait to share stories of my own marriage. Rebecca and I have been happily married for 18 out of 19 years and, despite my training and experience, most of what I know about marriage comes from my life with her.

But officially, Laura and I are both really excited that you've chosen to join us for MARRIAGE in MOTION.

LAURA

Indeed. Putting this course together has been an incredible experience. Zach and I started dreaming about working together almost 4 years ago. Since then, we've learned a ton. Not only through our practices, but also from our own relationships. My husband, Ryan is my biggest fan, but also my biggest critic. That he is encouraging me to chase this dream is pretty cool, but also terrifying.

It's a strange thing, getting relationship help from the internet. Meeting with another human face to face and experiencing real empathy and intimacy is obviously better than staring at a screen. But we're going to do our best to provide you with a powerfully meaningful alternative.

So, let's acknowledge together, the fact that you're joining MARRIAGE in MOTION is strange and it should feel a little bit weird. But honestly it's not that different from walking into a therapist's office, sitting down and waiting for something, anything, to happen.

ZACH

When new couples come to me, I always ask the same first question. "How can I be of help to you?" So that's my question for you right now. How can I be of help to you?

You need an answer to that question. Often I hear from clients, we're just "stuck". Hearing this over and over, I began to ask, "What does it take to get moving?" This is super easy when you're actually moving...or when you're going on a trip but it's much more problematic and overwhelming for couples in pain.

This is why you need a clear idea of where you're going. You need to plan how to get there. You need to take actual steps. You have to buy the new house or sign the new lease or get a plane ticket. You have to pack. And you have to go.

LAURA

This lesson is about getting you to “go”. We’re going to try and do two things over the next few minutes. We’re going to orient you to the process of this course, just to make your journey more predictable and clear. AND, we’re going to give you practical, actionable insights into your relationship that will help you achieve the marriage you desire and deserve.

We might be wildly successful and your life will be changed for better for ever, or we’ll totally blow it and you’ll claim your money back guarantee in approximately 12 minutes. Most likely, we’ll land somewhere in the middle. In that case, our goal is simply to get you to move.

We chose this MARRIAGE in MOTION metaphor on purpose because we wanted to emphasize that no matter where you are in your marriage, even small steps are part of the overall journey. And the absolute worst thing you can do is stay still.

In this first lesson we’ll focus pretty tightly on what is required to get you moving. You’ll learn:

1. To begin to name the main reasons you’re feeling stuck.
2. To own what you are responsible for in the relationship.
3. To define your current position.
4. To name your desired location.
5. To map the major turns in your relationship.
6. To become clear about your “next step”.

As you go through the course...you’ll notice that the last step is always to become clear about your next step. Every single thing you learn becomes irrelevant if you don’t actually have and enact a plan.

So, buckle up...

ZACH

Just to orient you a bit: As you go through the course, you’ll notice that each lesson has a focus sentence designed to help you orient yourself through the lesson. Today our focus is simple:

Getting unstuck begins with a commitment to moving.

I recently joined a new gym to help get “camera ready” for this series, but also just to strengthen my core, increase my cardiovascular endurance, and basically feel healthier. Our gym has signs all over the wall, and the trainers are constantly reinforcing this one main motto. “Remember why you came in here today!” That’s the “answer” to the question I asked a little bit earlier. Why did you come to MARRIAGE in MOTION?

We’re going to be asking questions like this throughout these videos, so get a pen and a journal or something that you can use to take notes. Don’t be afraid to press pause and come back. We’ll be here and I think you’ll appreciate having a place for your own thoughts to land.

One more thing about MARRIAGE in MOTION. You’ve heard the metaphor “marriage is a marathon, not a sprint.” I actually hate this one. Marriage is not a marathon. There’s no halfway. There’s no crowd cheering you on. There’s no finish.

Marriage is just running. Til one of you dies. That’s what “til death do us part” means. You could feel stagnant and stuck because you’re running the wrong kind of race. Or you’ve just stopped running. Let’s dive into why.

LAURA

As I mentioned earlier, there's a huge disadvantage to teaching through the internet. Namely, that we can't tell what you're absorbing and what you're not. We hope to mitigate some of that through the comments section and our office hours. Also, we really want to emphasize again: Take notes. Write down questions, observations, ideas.

The most important interaction that you have through this course isn't between you and me. It's between you and your partner. We want to start conversations that will help you move your marriage in the direction that you desire and deserve. So whether you're sitting alone right now, or whether the two of you are sitting there together, what you do with this material is really about what you do.

This entire module, Module One, is focused on you, the individual. This is a generally unorthodox approach in the world of couples help. So linger with that for just a moment...MARRIAGE in MOTION is different in that we will ask you to turn your attention inward before we ask you to focus on the couple.

"Couple" is the opposite of "Individual". But you must start with you. The main reason is pretty simple: You don't actually have any control over your partner. None. Zero. You have some influence, but not control. If you want to wield a positive influence, you have to do it from a place of personal maturity, integrity and responsibility. That's why we're starting with you.

ZACH

Let's get moving then...

The first step in getting you moving is to actually name all the things that are holding you back.

Humor me for a second: You probably already have a list of all the things that are going wrong in the relationship. I mean, we all have lists, right? So what's on your list? What's wrong with your relationship? What are the top 3-4 things that you feel are 'wrong' in your relationship? What is keeping you from moving forward?

Now -- this might be uncomfortable -- but again, humor me. What if you were responsible for that list? What would it mean for you to be responsible for those issues?

Here is what this module is about: We want you to actively begin to assume responsibility for your role in the relationship. This is a critical life skill if you're going to make your marriage last a lifetime.

Whatever you had on your list, whether it's a personality trait, a financial constraint, a lack of desire or knowledge: These represent what we call Resistance. Resistance is anything that keeps you from making progress...at least the progress that you expect to make.

Here is the interesting thing about resistance. Most therapists will say that resistance is a client's unwillingness to grow or change. The good news is that you're showing a willingness by even showing up here. Also, whether you know it or not, you are actually already making progress against resistance by making a list of your barriers. That's movement.

LAURA

Ok. Now that you've begun to name resistance. Let's talk about the possibility that you feel justified in allowing your areas of resistance to exist.

I know how tempting it is to want to blame all your problems on your partner. The most common thing in the world, when you're struggling, is to want to blame something, or someone. I see it all the time in my practice.

But blame, in and of itself, does not get you unstuck. Blame is not fuel to get your marriage moving. On the contrary. What DOES create motion in a partnership is when a couple can both see their own role in the struggle, and begin to own it.

We don't know where you're relationship is, or exactly what your set of struggles are. But for now, just hold on to this one idea: the areas you're are struggling with are areas of resistance, and there's no path to dealing with them without personal responsibility and personal integrity.

When I talk about integrity, I don't mean moral integrity. I mean architectural integrity. The kind that is more about your spine than your choices. Knowing and owning your own role is critical.

ZACH

This next set of learnings is really about the map: defining where you are, where you want to go, and charting the path so far...

Healthy couples have competencies in 3 main areas. First they have a strong friendship. They know and like each other and they display a fundamental regard and respect. Second, they have an ability to manage conflict. It's not that they don't fight. It's that they fight well. Finally, they have an ability to create meaning and chase goals together. They are able to craft a future legacy together.

Take a quick minute to self-assess. What grade would you give yourself in each of these competencies. A+, C-, F? In the MARRIAGE in MOTION journal, make a few notes about your strengths and weaknesses in each area. This is the "You are Here" reality on the current map.

One more thing to help us plot your current position. There's a specific reason you went looking for help? What is that? In therapy, we call that the "presenting problem". It's the thing that's causing you the most pain, the most trouble. Here's a secret from a marriage therapist, the presenting problem is rarely the real issue, but it does give us clues to deeper roots.

Finally, let's map the overall sentiment of the relationship: In general, are things more positive or negative. On a scale of 1 to 100 where 1 is a disaster, I can't believe I married this person, we have zero connection, in fact, I HATE him, and 100 is I've never been more in love, I cannot believe how wonderful this whole thing, and the sex is out of this world...where are you at?

Speaking strictly in mathematical terms, if your average is below 50, your "movement" process will be much tougher. But if it's over 50, This makes a huge difference in the relationship.

Now that we know where you are, let's give a name to where you're headed.

If we stick with the moving metaphor, there's a presumption that we know where we're going. Imagine again, moving to a new home or going on vacation. The destination informs the process.

Imagine a fairy comes in tonight...and sprinkles "It's All Better" dust on you. When you wake up, what has changed? Exactly?

Presumably, your grades in your competencies will come up. Your presenting problem will be less painful and you'll drive your number up, but specifically, what will change in your relationship? Let's imagine it. Again, use your MARRIAGE in MOTION journal to answer these few questions

But what's your Tuesday night like in the new "Everything's Better" marriage? What are you like? How have you changed? How has your partner changed? What does it feel like to experience an intimate weekend together? What will be the three most notable and measurable changes to your overall relationship? Fewer arguments? More sex? 5 dinners at the table instead of 2?

Finally, in order to know where you're going, it's helpful to know where you've been. We're literally going to map the major turns in your relationship.

One way to do this is to literally draw a map. Start with the months before you met your partner. Was your life at a 10 (meaning it was as amazing as amazing could be)? Was it a 1 (meaning you were at the bottom of the barrel?)

Start from there and draw a line to the day you met your spouse? Does the line go up or down? Presumably it goes up...or you wouldn't have married in the first place. What about after?

Can you plot the ups and downs? Through the course of your relationship you will find that there are significant turns for Better and for worse. What are those junctures? What can you learn from them?

This is important work...to name the "befores" and "afters". There is a before and after you got married. There may be a before and after you had kids. There isn't a before and after you went to the grocery store. We need to draw those lines and those turning points in order to help us understand what's next.

LAURA

Ok, again by way of orientation, remember...we're going to end each lesson with an invitation to become clear about your "next step". Some obvious next steps will ALWAYS be to reflect on your notes, connect with your spouse, watch the next video and to complete the worksheet.

Let's talk a minute about the worksheets. We're still searching for a good name for them, for now, we're calling them "activity sheets". Specifically, with regard to this lesson, the activity sheet is called, "Getting you to Go".

Your next step is to decide to believe in the thing you're imagining. Decide to hope in the destination that you've articulated. To believe in magic fairy dust...but with a caveat. The fairy is you. The dust is the work that you put into the relationship.

We have focused a lot on YOU this lesson. This lesson is intended to get you thinking about your relationship, where you have been and where you are going. Our goal is to get you unstuck and build momentum toward the relationship you deserve and desire.

You have to help. You need to actually do the exercises on the worksheet. Without completion of these action items, it's like watching an exercise video from your couch. You learn how to build muscle and lose fat, but never lift a finger. And never lifting a finger won't get you unstuck...just smarter. Thus, I can't stress enough on the importance of you downloading the activity sheet for this lesson and spending focused time on the action item. Did I make that clear?

ZACH

We're rooting for you. We know you can have a marriage that is for better. If you do this initial work of getting your own house in order, you'll find the rest of the process goes much more smoothly. In the next video we'll talk more about how you can take responsibility for your role...especially in conflict.

See you then...