

# MARRIAGE IN MOTION

## Transcript: Module 1, Lesson 2

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### LAURA

Hey...welcome back. So...when Zach and I were imagining this course, we imagined you. We imagined how old you were. How long you'd been married. How many kids you had. We imagined your complaints and your dreams. We imagined what it must be like to feel stuck. Truth is, I didn't have to imagine much, because I mostly imagine you're me. Your life is mostly great, but your marriage is not quite what you signed up for. I want to tell you, that's ok. It can be forBetter.

Before we get rolling today, let me ask you a question. In the first video, we asked you to explore where you are, where you're headed and the road so far. After watching that video and doing the exercises. How do you feel?

Do you feel better, worse, or the same?

While I know you can't answer me directly, it's also not just a rhetorical question. It's actually pretty important that you have a read on whether or not things are changing. The more important question is why do you feel better worse or the same?

### ZACH

Some of the most important observations that Rebecca and I have made about our relationship are these kind of "why" observations.

Let's imagine it this way: You and your spouse are talking about money. It's your end of the year budget meeting. Maybe you're prepping your taxes. You'll discover that you're better or worse off than last year. Why better? Did you get an inheritance or a new job? Did you pay off a debt? Why worse? Did you put your kids in private school? Did you have an unexpected medical payment? Did you get fired?

Wherever you were, my guess is that you'd want to know what led to the surplus or the deficit or the stagnation. And, in the areas where you could control it, you'd want to repeat the things that led to gain...and you'd want to reduce the things that led to loss.

Bottom line is that you want to be able to draw lines between your "better" and your "worse" so that you can repeat the things that lead to forBetter and avoid the things that might make it worse.

If you're the same - well, then it's time to keep moving. I always say, there are two ways to get from Point A to Point B. One is to move toward point B, where B stands forBetter. The other is to move away from Point A.

This lesson is about how to move away from Point A, which for our purposes is "A divorce". So, in this video, you'll learn:

1. To understand the real story of divorce.
2. To spot the signs that your relationship is headed for trouble.
3. Your role in busting the prediction.
4. To understand the power of perseverance.
5. The secret to changing your narrative.
6. And, again, to become clear about your “next step”.

**LAURA**

Our focus for today is this:

Changing a Prediction, Requires a Change in Perspective.

**ZACH**

In other words, it's Easier to get from Point A to Point B by focusing on Point B.

**LAURA**

A lot of what we know about how to repair a marriage comes down to mindset. I'm a huge believer that you should have a mindset of being for something rather than against another thing. This is a subtle but profound difference.

As we go through this course, we'll ask you to be forBetter. But in this lesson we want to help you understand what you're moving away from.

Here's what we know about divorce: It sucks. It's painful. Traumatic. Expensive. And...it doesn't just affect you...it affects generations beyond your reach.

But it can also be a relief. Knowing my parents now, as separate individuals, I find it hard to imagine the two of them married to each other. They decided to end their marriage before I even had memory of them together and honestly I thank them for that.

I'm not advocating divorce...especially where kids are involved. The research is clear:

Psychotherapist William Doherty has noted, “the academic literature has arrived at this consensus: children do best in stable, reasonably low-conflict married families.”

At the same time, I definitely don't think you should stay together “for the kids”. You might disagree, and that's okay. I just think for now, we should raise the bar a bit about what it means to be forBetter...especially in a culture that's becoming increasingly familiar with divorce.

So, let's get to work...

**ZACH**

Remember, this entire module, Module 1, is about your own personal mindset. I actually don't care who you are...whether you're a husband or a wife. Whether you have kids or not. Whether you've been together 4 or 40 years. What I care about is that you take responsibility for your part of the relationship.

If you do not do this, you cannot possibly expect your partner to. It's just not fair. And it won't be effective. A relationship needs two responsible adults showing up for one another on a daily basis.

Do you know what responsibility is? It's response-ability. You have that. You. Have. That. An ability to respond

to your situation. One phrase that changed my life is, "It may not be your fault, but it is your responsibility." I want you to separate two things for the purpose of this lesson. I want you to separate "finding fault" from your own power to respond and move.

So here's the thing about divorce. Everything we know is probably wrong. The most popular divorce statistic on the planet...that 50% of marriages end in divorce...is deeply flawed once you take a deep dive into the research.

### **LAURA**

Here's what's not in dispute, ½ of marriages that do end in divorce do so within the first 7 years. The most common year is year 4. We also know that less than ⅓ of these marriages that do end, end without the couple ever asking for help.

But who cares really, about statistics. They just create context if they're accurate. But the real story is your story...and the stories of those around you. None of those stories are absent pain, suffering, grief, loss. but if you could skip that part, wouldn't you?

### **ZACH**

Ok. Well, remember how I said, Rebecca and I have been happily married 18 out of 19 years? Well, year 6 was really tough for us. In hindsight, we weren't that different than most of the statistics. Not that different. Year 6 started with a miscarriage...ended with a wake up.

At one point Rebecca came to me and said, "I don't want to do this, like this, anymore. So we got moving. I'd say we're the poster children for what Feldhahn suggests as the story of "through". We'd trade the first 6-7 years of our marriage for the last 10 or so anytime. It's because of "through".

If Laura and I could tell you with some accuracy whether or not your marriage was headed down the road to divorce, would you want to know? Would you want to change everything you could about your path? When Rebecca and I were facing that, we spent every dime we had to get through. I'd encourage you to do the same.

### **LAURA**

Fortunately, we have access to some really clear signs that the relationship is headed for big trouble and that's the second main focus of this lesson.

The clearest signs that you're heading toward relationship demise is the presence of what Dr. John Gottman calls the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Let me pause for a second to "orient" you again. You're going to hear us say one name - Gottman - over and over again throughout this course. There are two reasons for this. The first is that Zach and I are both highly trained in what is called the Gottman method. It's our area of expertise when it comes to treating couples and it's the first place our brains go when helping couples.

### **ZACH**

The second reason is that it's the right thing to do. There simply isn't a meaningful approach to couples health without a consideration of Dr. Gottman's work and the work of The Gottman Institute. Dr. Gottman, and his wife Dr. Julie Schwartz Gottman, have dedicated their lives to understanding "what makes marriage work" and we're grateful and glad to be able to share that research through Marriage in Motion. This includes the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse".

### **LAURA**

When these toxic behaviors show up in conflict, they destroy the foundation of the relationship. They are criticism (including blame and character attacks in your complaint), defensiveness (indignation or even whining in response to a complaint), stonewalling (shutting your partner out) and contempt (an expression of superiority over your partner).

If these are present - especially during conflict - then you need to reign them in. For a review on the Four Horsemen, go back and watch the "Four Horsemen" video.

But the Four Horsemen aren't the only predictive features. You'll want to keep your eyes open for a few others characteristics including:

An inability to repair conflict. Again, not the absence of conflict but an inability to recover. (This will be a primary focus in the next Module.)

Also a lack of awareness about your body - I know that sounds really strange, but it's true...your body and your body language says a lot about the emotional realities in your relationship. Pay attention to your body and see what it might be telling you.

A final "predictor" divorce is the way you tell your story. This goes back to mindset. If the narrative of your marriage is primarily one of struggle and strain, you're already headed down an unproductive path.

But even if all of those things are present in your relationship, you can make a difference. This is the third focus of today's lesson. You have an important role in busting the prediction.

I cannot emphasize enough, that real change will not happen until you own your part of the equation. This is true for both of you. Couples often enter my office with the goal of fixing their partner. Just like in the last lesson, our goal for you is to set that desire on the shelf for a bit and let's instead focus on what your contributions to this relationship are...for Better and for worse.

When it comes to the Four Horsemen, you need to be really honest about which one you're using against your partner. Which one is your favorite? And which one will you need to work the hardest on reigning in.

## **ZACH**

Your awareness of your role now requires you to do the slow and steady work of moving. You need to keep going to push through this scary, difficult phase of the relationship. Because, it's just a phase. I promise.

Let me talk a bit about phases (Zach ad libs on marriage as a mountain metaphor).

As we finish up, this lesson, I want to you consider what story you're telling and more importantly, to consider telling a different story altogether. This is the most important part of the entire lesson: You must begin to change your narrative.

You're telling yourself a story. In that story you are both the main character and the narrator. The secret is re-framing that story where your partner is the the main character and the narrator. In that story, you're also the judge, jury, and executioner in terms of trying and sentencing your relationship. What is the sentence you've given your relationship? I want to suggest that maybe you're due for a retrial.

Or at least that you need to consider the possibility of a new ending for you. Think about every single movie you've ever seen...If you stopped watching the movie 20 minutes before you were supposed to, the overall narrative would be completely different. But that last 20 minutes is actually the most important part. It chang-

es the meaning of everything that comes before it.

That's where you are now. You're in a movie about a couple that's stuck and not sure where and how to go. But the movie isn't finished. It needs a next step...

## **ZACH**

So, let's get clear about your next step. I'm operating under the assumption that you're committed to moving, because, let me be super clear: If you don't decide to move, you have no reason to expect to get unstuck. You simply don't.

Clearly we have been talking to you and about you - the individual And we'll DEFINITELY do a lot of work on the partnership, but our starting point is to have you focus on your responsibility in the state of your relationship. If you want the relationship you deserve and desire, the change starts right here..with YOU.

In order to move away from the pain, hurt, shame, loneliness and toward a relationship that is forBetter, you have to commit to the discomfort involved in accepting fault, flaws and the destructive behaviors that are keeping the relationship stuck.

So...I want you to download the Activity sheet titled "Response-Ability". You will be writing a letter to yourself. The letter is for your eyes only, so we'll want you to dig down and be real about the areas that you personally can improve on.

This is a tough module. We are asking you to shine a bright light on some of the dark sides of yourself. Bravo for leaning into the dark places and staying focused on yourself. An even bigger bravo to you for continuing on this journey toward creating a relationship that is forBetter.

We'll see you in the next video.