

MARRIAGE IN MOTION

Transcript: Module 3, Lesson 1

LAURA

Hello and welcome to Module 3. We've thrown a lot of information at you in the last few weeks. I know it can be overwhelming. But don't worry. The process of improving and moving your marriage is still a "slow and steady wins the race proposition" and there is no replacement for consistency over time.

The good news is that you have lifetime access to these modules and lessons, so don't feel like you need to master everything right now. In fact, please don't try to master everything at once. We want you to focus on getting small wins ... lots of them. We want you to make changes where you can and let your success beget success.

In the Module 2, we focused on conflict management. We started with conflict because we wanted to give you a way out of your pain and frustration. The strategies in Module 2 were designed to help you alleviate pressure, avoid trouble, escape stagnation.

ZACH

But, maybe conflict isn't your issue. Maybe you've learned some good skills, or your personalities are just more complimentary. Or maybe you've just learned how to avoid the struggle. Maybe things are perfectly pleasant, but just not quite as intimate as you'd like.

You know there's a word for people who choose to live together in relatively low conflict and relatively low intimacy. The word is "roommates". I hear that word all the time, "We just feel like roommates, living parallel lives."

"Roommate syndrome" happens when couples settle into the comfortable, convenient rhythms of their lives. It's safe, but boring. I don't have to tell you what it looks like, but I will...

It looks like waking up in the same bed, maybe, and heading out into the day in polite disinterest. Maybe you kiss on the cheek. During the day, you'll check in once or twice, mostly about details. What are we having for dinner? Who is driving to soccer practice? Did you make that appointment to get your oil changed? When you get home from work, maybe you rattle through the details of your day, maybe you listen to your partner. Maybe you don't. You get dinner on the table, unless it's a special night and you have some takeout. You share a bottle of wine. Or maybe two. If you have kids, you take care of homework, soccer practice, bath and bed. Then maybe you sit down to some quality time in front of the television until one or both of you pass out. Rinse, repeat.

LAURA

As we said in Module 1, a Marriage in Motion isn't about moving away from something. It's about

moving toward something. Module 2 is all about a movement toward intimacy...but remember, we're talking about holistic intimacy. The kind that touches your mind, your heart, your body, and your soul. Doesn't that sound amazing. There's NO REASON that you need to settle for being room-mates. You deserve so much more.

Let me say one more thing...THIS is the most important Module. It's the one that requires you to be most Vulnerable. Most Hopeful. Most Intentional.

Chew on those three words for a minute: Vulnerable. Hopeful. Intentional. Those are big words, loaded with meaning, but today we're going to look specifically at how to make them smaller.

ZACH

This lesson is about how you don't have to make big changes to create big change.

YOU'LL LEARN:

1. The power of a "small wins" approach to marriage.
2. How to reframe "the game".
3. How to achieve small "intellectual" wins.
4. How to achieve small "emotional" wins.
5. How to truly cherish your partner and your marriage.
6. To become clear about your "next step".

For the record, just in case you missed it, the focus of this video is: ***Small wins create big change over time.***

LAURA

There is a ton of evidence of the power of a small wins approach to life. I just read Charles Duhigg's book groundbreaking book *The Power of Habit*. He says, "A large body of research has shown that small wins have a lot of power and great influence. Small wins convince people that larger accomplishments are achievable."

This is true all over the landscape of our lives. It's true in finance, if you just consider the power of compound interest. It's true in sports. Consider batting average in Major League Baseball. The difference between an average hitter and the true greats is just 18 hits a season. Over a 162 game season, that's just one extra hit every 17 games. That's the difference between being a really good hitter and being one of the greatest of all time. 18 hits.

It's true in relationships. Have you ever seen that movie "What about Bob"? It's an oldie but goodie with Bill Murray. Anyway, the theme of that whole movie is "baby steps" as a pathway to health. Marriage is no exception. In fact, one of the Gottman's main mottos is "small things often".

- If your marriage is STRUGGLING - small wins can help you turn the corner
- If your marriage is STUCK - small wins can get you moving forward
- If your marriage is STABLE - small wins can take you to new heights

You may not be able to imagine a transformed marriage 5 or 10 or 20 years from now. You may only have the energy to imagine today - then tomorrow - then the next day.

But I want you to do that. If you want to see transformation, you have to start with change. Even just

one change, today. We'll ask you to try it for just one week and see what happens. "Small wins" can create new patterns of hope, momentum, confidence, and contentment in the midst of this game called marriage. You might start by re-examining the rules.

ZACH

I am a huge "game" guy. This is another way of saying I'm pretty competitive. I once had a friend tell me, "I feel like you're constantly trying to win a game that I don't even know I'm playing." At first I thought that was cool, then I realized I was being super annoying.

But I realized then that he was right. I was playing all the time. Everything was a game. Including my marriage. This, was also super annoying, especially for Rebecca.

Here's the thing about games...they're meant to be played. Karse says, "if you have to play, you can't play." Couples who are thriving have an ability to play. They frolic and laugh. They forget about winning and losing. They just have fun.

LAURA

Remember we posed five avenues for intimacy. Let's focus today on the first two, intellectual and emotional. One problem with the word intellectual, is that people confuse it with intelligence. When I introduce this to clients, I often hear "Oh he's way smarter than me....or he thinks he is."

But intellectual intimacy isn't about who's smarter. It's about connecting at the level of thoughtful exploration. In order to achieve intellectual wins, you need to prioritize exploration. Not of knowledge, but of knowing .

So, how about this for a "new rule" to "prolong the game": Be curious on purpose. You do that by asking (and answering) questions.

In this lesson's activity sheet, we've listed a handful of questions that can get you started, but here are two ideas just to get your imagination rolling...

- Get in the habit of saying, "What do you think?" This is a really powerful question, especially if you're giving your partner things to think about. Forward an article, have an opinion about your summer vacation, worry - out loud -about a problem you're trying to solve at work.

- The noun game. It's the easiest game there ever was. Pick a noun. Maybe..."bench" or "giraffe" or "Paris". Tell a story about that thing. Just share information with one another. Again, this isn't about knowledge , this is about knowing.

These small intellectual wins, will help you chase larger emotional wins. Let's talk a bit about those.

ZACH

If intellect is located in the brain, then emotion is located in the heart. Some might argue that it's located in the body. In any case, there's a journey from "thinking" to "feeling" that requires vulnerability, hope, and intention, and one key skill: Asking for what you need, on purpose, with the belief and expectation that you'll get a reasonable response.

Remember, we want to stay in the realm of desire rather than demand. So... How you ask for what you need is important as that you ask for what you need.

Believe it or not: Learning to ask for what you need is gift to your partner. It's like giving them the answers to the test. A great way to achieve emotional wins.

Another way to achieve emotional wins is to respond to your partner's needs with clarity and intention. This is the playing field for emotional wins. It is the way to prolong the game. The mutual give and take of questions and answers, desires and responses, vulnerability and intention creates a beautiful cycle that ultimately draws you closer.

This always makes me think of movie Jerry McGuire when Jerry begs Rod to "help me help you".

Emotional wins are about mutual give and take. Attention and intention. This idea of "help me, help you" ... of asking and getting is at the heart of "prolonging the game". But there's still the question of what you do with all these wins once you have them.

LAURA

The answer seems pretty simple...at least to me. What do you do with any gift that enriches your life. You cherish it.

It's an odd little word, "cherish". Have you ever REALLY thought about what cherish means? It kind of sneaks into the marriage vows from time to time. I think it's important that we pay attention to it. To cherish something is to protect it, nurture it, appreciate it. To fix it when it breaks. The failure to do these things is a failure to cherish. There's no way around it. If I give you something, and you don't take care of it, it dishonors both the gift and the giver. Doesn't matter if it's a family heirloom, a hand painted card, or a compliment.

Your partner and your marriage deserve your appreciation. The wins, the questions, the responses, these are all gifts. BE THANKFUL. There is a big difference between saying "thank you" and being thankful. Practice gratitude in abundance. If nothing else, it'll just feel good. For you both. I promise.

ZACH

One other aspect of cherishing that I think bears emphasis is this: You absolutely must protect your partner and your relationship from external stresses. This is your partner's boss, your cell phone, your kids, your mother, your finances.

Set aside time just for you...168 hours in the week...it's a good start that you've given your time to this course. But how will you continue to protect and nurture your relationship after this?

In order to create a habit in your relationship you need to schedule it and do it over and over and over until it simply becomes thoughtless, second nature. We want to help you build in small wins on a daily basis that become second nature to you and your relationship.

I want you to pull out your cell phone and set an alarm to alert you to a time of day where you can spend four minutes on your relationship. Maybe this time is during a lunch break at work or during your bus commute. Your alarm is set for the same time as a reminder to text or call or otherwise turn toward your partner.

When I give this to clients, I always ask "How long do you think it'll take before your partner notices they're getting a text at the same time every day." Another game I suppose. The power is not just in giving and receiving these affirmations, but it is also changing your brain through searching for the positives to affirm. It will become easier and easier as time goes on to recognize the things you love about your partner. But remember, "small wins create big changes over time."

LAURA

I am really excited to think about all the small ways you will be building your relationship up over the next couple of weeks. The activities this week are titled “small wins” will act a lot like a boost of antioxidants to your body.

Antioxidants aid in the protection of damage by unstable molecules. That’s what you are doing... building up a strong relationship to protect from unstable and unpredictable circumstances...able to weather the storm.

ZACH

I hope you enjoy the small wins you create and I look forward to moving your relationship forBetter. See you in the next video!