

# ASKING YOUR SPOUSE TO ATTEND



MarriageHelper



# ESSENTIALS TO REMEMBER

## Three things to DO

1. Be sure you want to come to the workshop. Don't be half-hearted about it when you present it.
2. In asking you must remain calm and rational no matter what reaction you get from your spouse.
3. Understand their emotions. Validate their feelings.

## Three things NOT to DO

1. Don't argue or defend yourself or what you are asking them to do.
2. Don't use any negative motivation such as guilt or threats.
3. Don't expect logic to overcome their emotions.

# PREPARING YOUR REQUEST

This document gives you five steps to prepare your request. It is important that you write these things down rather than only thinking about them. This process of writing your answers leads you to think more clearly. That dramatically increases the likelihood of receiving a positive response from your spouse.

Take your time. Think things through carefully as you write your notes in each step.



# FIRST STEP

## Look into Your Heart

Evaluate your desire to attend the workshop. *Unless you are sold on coming, your request will be easy to ignore.*

Write here WHY you want to attend the workshop. Be specific in your notes. Give every reason that is important to you.

What doubts or fears, if any, do you have about attending the workshop? Be specific. It's better to think those through now than to find yourself vacillating later.

What is your level of belief that the workshop will be of value to you and, hopefully, to your marriage? Assess realistically.

Based on your answers above, how strong is your resolve to request your spouse attend the workshop with you? It's important that you write your answer. Make it clear.

## S E C O N D   S T E P

### Evaluating Your Spouse's Motivations

In the left column write things that you believe would motivate your spouse to attend. Pay special attention to what they want most right now that you can help them get if they attend. (Closure, better co-parenting, you'll give them something in the divorce they want, etc.). Remember, motivation is based on how they benefit, not how you benefit.

In the right column write everything you can think of as to why the item in the left column is important to your spouse.

When you finish, circle the one that could be your spouse's strongest motivation.



**Use more paper if needed. Write everything you can think of.**

## THIRD STEP

### Anticipating Objections

In the left column, write every objection you anticipate your spouse will make. In the other, write your responses to each objection in the first column. If you anticipate the objections and know what you'll say, you won't panic nor fumble with your responses. Make your answers logical but remember that in dealing with each objection you **MUST** demonstrate that you understand and accept what your spouse feels.

Especially consider any compromises you are willing to make to overcome objections.

Do NOT offer any compromise you will later regret.

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**Use more paper if needed. Write everything you can think of.**



## FOURTH STEP

### Anticipating Frictions

In the left column, write every friction you can think of that could hinder you or your spouse attending the workshop. Frictions are things that must be figured out if you are to attend such as childcare, costs, time off work, etc. Write down every friction you can think of, including your spouse's involvement with someone else if that exists.

In the other column, write solutions to every friction. Think these through carefully and have solid achievable resolutions if your spouse brings them up. The solutions don't have to be perfect, but they must be workable. Contact your Client Representative if you need help.



**Use more paper if needed. Write everything you can think of.**

# F I F T H   S T E P

## Putting Together the Request

Develop a “request dialog” as if you were actually speaking with your spouse.

### 1. Start with the specific thing you’re asking.

- Example: *“I’d like to talk with you about a workshop that I’ve been looking into. I’ve researched it thoroughly and strongly believe that it would be good for both of us no matter what we decide to do about our marriage.”*

### 2. Move into telling very briefly what you feel the workshop will do for you personally.

- You may wish to use the thoughts you wrote in **Step One**.
- However, don’t mention anything you wish to gain that you believe your spouse will have a strong negative reaction to.
  - For example, if your spouse is involved with someone else, you would **NOT** say *“I want to attend this because I think it will make you come to your senses about \_\_\_\_.”*
  - Instead, you might say, *“It will help me understand what you feel about \_\_\_\_\_. I need that for my own well-being.”*

### 3. Then briefly tell your spouse what the workshop could do for them. Base your statements on the things you wrote in Step Two.

- Start with the one you circled as likely being your spouse’s strongest motivation. Be sure to calmly and clearly explain it – **making sure you focus on what they want or need rather than on what you want or need.**





- Be ready to explain if they ask questions. If appropriate, mention any other benefits to your spouse that you feel they'll react well to. Skip the ones you feel aren't.
- (NOTE: If they ask questions about the workshop itself, try NOT to give too much information. If you do, they may wind up focusing on that rather than on your request.)

#### **4. Anticipate objections. You are much better off if your spouse gives objections than if they ignore you.**

- When they object, listen carefully, and feed it back to them in enough detail that they know you understand.
- Do NOT argue about their objections. Instead, let them know that you're truly listening and aren't pushing. When they know you are "hearing" them, you then can calmly reply with the solutions that you wrote in **Step Three**.
- Keep this as a conversation, not a sales pitch. Take your time and don't rush to the next point.

#### **5. Anticipate frictions. There are always obstacles in life that interfere with plans or potential plans.**

- When your spouse brings up difficulties that would prevent attending a workshop, do **NOT** react with frustration or impatience. Treat these comments as their valid concerns even if you think that they're excuses.
- Continue the conversational atmosphere that you established as you talked about your spouse's objections. Communicate to them that you, too, have thought about these frictions. Discuss as two people looking for a solution rather than as one person trying to talk the other into something.
- Offer the solutions that you developed in **Step Four**. Don't be alarmed if your spouse doesn't immediately buy into your solutions. Talk about them with an open mind. Ask your spouse to help think of solutions to the frictions.



## 6. Don't push for an immediate answer. Allow your spouse time to think it over.

- If it feels appropriate, ask them what they think about what you've talked about but **NOT** in a way that appears to be pressuring them to make a decision right now.
- If they offer an affirmative answer on the spot, thank them calmly and then book the very next workshop available. Don't wait. Answers can change if too much time passes.
- If they don't provide an answer, ask if you can bring the subject up again in a few days to find what they're thinking. If they agree, wait a few days and when the environment is right, gently bring it up again. *"Just wondering what you're thinking about our conversation the other day about the workshop."*
  - If they aren't ready to talk about it, wait a few more days.
- If they give a negative response, don't react. A "no" right now doesn't mean that it will always be no.
  - Do NOT push or pressure. Allow time to pass.
  - When the time feels right, gently bring it up again. If they're willing to talk about it, go through the entire process of this outline again from the beginning, modifying the discussion based on where your relationship is at the moment.

## READY TO GET STARTED?

It is better to write out an entire conversation based on the outline above. Yes, even anticipating what your spouse will say and how you will respond. If your nature won't allow you to be that detailed, at the very least write an outline of the conversation, the more detailed the better. Make bullet points to help you remember the order in which to talk about things and to remind you of the responses you've already thought through and written down in Steps One through Four.

Become comfortable and confident with your dialog. When you are, make the ask when you and your spouse are both calm and reasonable.

### **Remember!**

Don't push. Listen nondefensively. Do not argue. Remain calm and understanding no matter what your spouse says. Because you've thought through and written your responses to the objections beforehand, you can do this without anxiety.



# BEGIN YOUR DIALOG OR OUTLINE HERE

Use more paper if needed.



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