

# IMPACT

 University of Idaho  
Cooperative  
Extension System

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## Married and Loving It! in Bonneville County

### *The Situation*

Engaged couples not affiliated with a religious organization are hard pressed to find pre-marital instruction. Couples married a few years are wondering where the “love” has gone. When the empty nest occurs, many couples are finding that they are living with a stranger. The divorce rate is another indicator that there is a need for marriage education.

### *Our Response*

Married and Loving It! was developed to address the growing need for marriage and couple education. Through a series of five classes, Married and Loving It addresses the issues of: communication; finances; anger; conflict resolution; and daily habits in the marriage relationship. PowerPoint presentations, class note pages, handouts, and video clips were used in each 90-minute class.

The first class, communication, laid the foundation for the series. Keys to communication and love languages were discussed. A vignette from the video “Vive la Difference” introduced to participants just how easily it is to go from “We are going to be so happy!” to “You’re driving me crazy!”

During the second class, “Finances: Freedom or Fiasco?” tools for building a strong financial situation were introduced. The couples were given an opportunity to set up a budget using beans as currency. They were given 20 beans that were to be

distributed among 14 budget categories with each category containing choices that “cost” differing amounts of beans. We also discussed pooling paychecks, money brought to the marriage, and other issues directly related to marital finances.

The third class, “Madly in Love”, discusses sources of anger. Through this class participants learn to identify the root cause of their anger issues. The three main causes of an anger response include: self-worth has been brought into question; essential needs are not met; and basic convictions have been violated.

“Conflict: For Better or For Worse?” is the title of the fourth class. During this class, anger management and conflict resolution skills are presented. This class is a continuation of class three so the purpose is to help participants understand what to do with anger now that it can be identified.

The last class, “Marriage...A Daily Affair”, emphasizes the impact of our daily habits. We discuss the decision making process, time management, roles, and the in-law relationships.

### *Achievements*

Married and Loving It! drew 94 participants during 2000 in Bonneville County. Attendance records indicate that 42% had perfect attendance and 32% only missed one class so a total of 74% either had perfect attendance or missed just one class. The participants ranged from 17 - 60 years, engaged to

be married, married 40 years, single, divorced and from all educational levels.

Comments from the participants include:

- ♥ *“It gave us specific things to work on and at the same time helped us both to realize we both want this marriage to work.”* Married 8 years
- ♥ *“We have a good marriage. It has made us stronger. It has helped us deal with spouse’s parents’ divorce.”* Married 12 years
- ♥ *“It has given me the tools to work with for making a better marriage.”* Engaged
- ♥ *“Since taking Married and Loving It, I can’t tell you the number of times I have said to my spouse, “This is what you said...is that what you meant?”* Married 2 years
- ♥ *“I am trying to be a better listener as a result of Married and Loving It.”* Married 22 years, currently separated
- ♥ *“It has helped me with my communication.”* Married 40 years.

At our class reunion the following number of participants stated that they had made changes in these areas:

Communication – 30  
Finances – 10  
Anger/Conflict - 18  
Daily Habits - 12

Married and Loving It! drew national attention when it was highlighted on a national satellite broadcast for extension educators and was presented as a workshop at the national meeting of NEAFCS. The University of Idaho published the curricula to be sold to others interested in marriage education.

## ***The Future***

Married and Loving It! will continue to be offered in Bonneville County and in other counties throughout Idaho. To date the curricula has been sold to educators representing 10 different states for use in marriage education classes and for use with 4-H conflict resolution projects.

## ***For More Information***

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