



GROUP LEADER GUIDE

a practical guide for leaders of classes and small groups

Do you lead small groups of engaged or newly married couples? How about classes? If so, you will love using the SYMBIS Assessment in these settings.

You're probably familiar with how you can use the SYMBIS Assessment in one-on-one sessions with couples, but it's also designed with small groups and classes in mind. In fact, some distinct advantages can be found when using it within these kind of peer group settings.

So whether you have just two or three couples in a group or a classroom with dozens of couples, this guide provides practical tips for helping you do it with excellence.

THE BASIC STEPS OF A SUCCESSFUL GROUP UNPACK

STEP #1: INVITE ALL COUPLES TO TAKE THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT

You can do this easily from your Dashboard. You just need each person's name and email address (one for each person in the couple).

STEP #2: DETERMINE WHO PAYS

You can have each couple pay for the Assessment when they receive their invitation, or you can pre-pay for the couples and your invite will provide them with a code so they are ready to go. It's up to you.

STEP #3: SET A COMPLETION DATE

Make sure your couples know that they need to complete the questions (takes them 30 minutes) by whatever time you require.

STEP #4: PRINT REPORTS FOR YOUR SESSIONS

When a couple completes the assessment, you will receive their report in your Dashboard. You'll want to print out each report (in color).

STEP #5: DISTRIBUTE PERTINENT PAGES

You'll only want to provide your couples with the particular pages of the report that you'll be covering in a specific session. In other words, don't give them their entire report all at once. You'll want to pace the information based on the number of sessions you are doing. See the section in this Guide on how you might schedule your sessions and topics.

STEP #6: UNPACK PERTINENT PAGES

Once you determine which specific pages you will cover in a particular session, you'll want to unpack them together in a way that engages every couple. There are numerous ways to do this. The most popular is to do a brief bit of teaching on the topic that's covered on that page – just to set it up. Then highlight a portion of the page results and have them discuss the results as a couple. You can then bring them back together as a group and have a larger discussion, asking group members to share what they learned. See your Dashboard for helpful slide decks and video tools for doing this.

DISCOVER THE TREASURES OF YOUR DASHBOARD

In your Dashboard you will find that we've provided you with a slide deck (in both PowerPoint and Keynote) so that you have a tremendous resource for unpacking the pages in a compelling way. Not only that, but we've also provided you with a scintillating brief video for each page of the report. These are ideal for setting the tone of each session and pulling your couples into the content. You'll find a Leader's Guide for both of these power-packed resources in your Dashboard.

USING THE SYMBIS VIDEO

The *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* video kit is ideal for group and classroom settings. And, as you would predict, each session corresponds to a page or two of the SYMBIS Report. The video sessions not only contain compelling content from Les and Leslie, but also humorous or poignant interviews with real-life couples. This helps pull your couples into your sessions as they explore the results of their own SYMBIS Report. The 7-session DVD includes a Leader's Guide that outlines a suggested series of sessions to follow that tie the Assessment and video teaching together. A separate 9-session DVD and corresponding *Leader's Guide for Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts* is available. Learn more: store.LesandLeslie.com

If you have
knowledge, let
others light their
candles at it.

-MARGARET FULLER

A LITTLE HOMEWORK DOESN'T HURT

If you are using the accompanying book, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*, and his/her workbooks, you may want to consider assigning the relevant chapters to read and workbook exercises to do. Why? Because it draws the couples deeper into insight and application of their SYMBIS Assessment results. At the bottom of each of the SYMBIS Report pages you will see a small indicator of which chapter is most relevant to it. And, of course, each chapter has corresponding workbook exercises within it. Take a look and you'll quickly see how easy it is to make these connections.

TYPICAL SCHEDULES OF SESSIONS

While you are free to conduct the number of sessions that works best for you and your setting (SYMBIS is nothing if not nimble), here are a couple of popular scenarios for group sessions lasting about an hour each. The first is an 8-session series incorporating the SYMBIS book and his/her workbooks along with the SYMBIS Assessment. The second scenario is a 5-session series for using the Assessment on its own.

8-SESSION SCHEDULE WITH BOOK, DVD, WORKBOOKS & ASSESSMENT

This model gives your couples every advantage possible. You may choose to have them read the book chapter before or after the meeting, that's up to you. The same is true for the workbook exercises. You can have them do these in preparation and to discuss within the meeting and/or as homework following the meeting.

Session One

Book:

Chapter 1 - Have You Faced the Myths of Marriage With Honesty?

DVD:

Session 1 - Have You Faced the Myths of Marriage With Honesty?

Assessment:

Page 3 "Marriage Mindset"

Page 4 "Wellbeing" (NOTE: See "Word of Warning" about page 4 below)

Page 5 "Context: Social Support"

Page 7 "Context: Expectations"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 1 - Your Personal 10 Commandments

Exercise 3 - From Idealizing to Realizing Your Partner

Exercise 4 - Exploring Unfinished Business

Exercise 5 - Assessing Your Self Image

Session Two

Book:

Appendix - Discovering Your Personality Dynamics

Assessment:

Page 8 "Dynamics"

Page 9 "Dynamics"

His/Her workbooks:

Option: carry-over unexplored exercises from the previous session

Session Three

Book:

Chapter 2 - Can You Identify Your Love Style?

DVD:

Session 2 - Can You Identify Your Love Style?

Assessment:

Page 10 "Dynamics: Love"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 7 - Getting Your Sex Life Off to a Great Start

Exercise 8 - Your Changing Love Style

Exercise 9 - Cultivating Intimacy

Session Four

Book:

Chapter 3 - Have You Developed the Habit of Happiness?

DVD:

Session 3 - Have You Developed the Habit of Happiness?

Assessment:

Page 11 "Dynamics: Attitude"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 10 - Listening To Your Self-Talk

Exercise 11 - Avoiding The Blame Game

Session Five

Book:

Chapter 4 - Can You Say What You Mean And Understand What You Hear?

DVD:

Session 4 - Can You Say What You Mean And Understand What You Hear?

Assessment:

Page 12 "Dynamics: Communication"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 13 - How Well Do You Communicate?

Exercise 14 - The Daily Temperature Reading

Exercise 15 - I Can Hear Clearly Now

Session Six

Book:

Chapter 5 - Have You Bridged The Gender Gap?

DVD:

Session 5 - Have You Bridged The Gender Gap?

Assessment:

Page 13 "Dynamics: Gender"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 16 - Couple's Inventory

Session Seven

Book:

Chapter 6 - Do You Know How to Fight a Good Fight?

DVD:

Session 6 - Do You Know How to Fight a Good Fight?

Assessment:

Page 6 "Context: Finances"

Page 14 "Dynamics: Conflict"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 19 - Money Talks And So Can We

Exercise 20 - Mind Reading

Exercise 21 - Sharing Withholds

Session Eight

Book:

Chapter 7 - Are You And Your Partner Soul Mates?

DVD:

Session 7 - Are You And Your Partner Soul Mates?

Assessment:

Page 15 "Dynamics: Spirituality"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 22 - Your Spiritual Journey

Exercise 23 - Improving Your Serve

Exercise 24 - Study Your Spouse

5-SESSIONS SCHEDULE USING JUST THE ASSESSMENT

The most common SYMBIS Assessment schedule is five sessions of about an hour each. This is ample time to cover all of the content. But keep in mind, every couple is unique and you'll find that time on a particular topic is not enough for some and more than enough for others. That's where your own judgment as a SYMBIS Facilitator comes in. The times you see below are merely general guidelines – not prescriptions.

If your group is focused on the SYMBIS Assessment as a stand-alone tool, without the *Saving Your Marriage Before It Stars* book or his/her workbooks, this schedule is a common model. Of course, you can easily expand or contract the number of sessions to fit your needs.

If you're using this schedule in a group or class of couples, consider adding an icebreaker or game at the start of each session (you'll find examples to use in the Slide Deck in the Resources tab of your Facilitator Dashboard).

Session One

About Us (5 minutes)

Marriage Momentum (5 minutes)

Mindset (10 minutes)

Wellbeing (30 minutes)

Session Two

Context: Social Support (10 minutes)

Context: Finances (20 minutes)

Context: Expectations (30 minutes)

Session Three

Dynamics: Personality (30 minutes)

Dynamics: Love (30 minutes)

Session Four

Dynamics: Attitude (20 minutes)

Dynamics: Communication (40 minutes)

Session Five

Dynamics: Gender (15 minutes)

Dynamics: Conflict (30 minutes)

Dynamics: Spirituality (15 minutes)

By all means, make the schedules fit your needs. You may want fewer sessions. If so, simply double up on some of the pages and content into a single session. Or feel free to drop a content area or two if you like. And if you'd like it to cover more sessions, simply extend the content areas (especially from the first three areas noted above). Of course, the actual length of each session will determine how much content you cover in each one, too. If your sessions are 90 minutes or 2 hours, you'll make adjustments to this schedule accordingly. SYMBIS is flexible. Bend it to work best for you.

Also, if you are leading a group or class of second marriages and/or blended family couples, you can easily add a session or two and incorporate page 7A (Context: Remarriage and Blending a Family) of the report as well as Chapters 1 (Are You Ready For Remarriage?) and 8 (Do You Know How To Blend a Family?) from *Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts*.

GETTING CREATIVE

In addition to teaching your class the content of each session and helping them process the content of their personal SYMBIS Report, you may want to consider some of these proven ideas:

- *Use icebreakers to get started.* A quick 2-5 minute icebreaker at the start of each session can help set a positive tone and create a warm environment for groups. The slide deck in your Dashboard contains several ideas for doing just that.
- *Interview a “real-life” couple for 10 minutes or so in each session.* Bring in couples at various stages of married life. Interview them about that session's subject matter.
- *Role-play some skills.* If you are giving out information on conflict or communication, for example, consider showing (if your spouse is game) – not just telling.
- *Use video clips.* Whether it's just for fun (showing a sweet or humorous proposal) or to illustrate a serious point, consider showing a brief clip to your class (YouTube is chock-full of them).
- *Highlight a couple.* You may want to give each couple in your class 2-3 minutes to share their story (how they met and got engaged) throughout your sessions together. They'll not only enjoy telling their story but hearing from their peers, too.
- *Debrief homework.* If you elect to assign some reading and/or workbook exercises in the SYMBIS material, be sure to come back around to it in the next session. Ask them how they experienced it and what new insights they gained.
- *Engender conversation.* A fatal error in small groups or classes of couples is to only focus on teaching. You probably wouldn't do that, but just to be safe we want to underscore how important it is to get your class talking – with each other as a couple, with the other couples, and with you. Create a tone for sharing and plenty of opportunities for conversing. Allow them to ask questions, too.

THE SECRET TO SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUPS AND CLASSES

Vulnerability begets vulnerability. Couples typically don't want a “know-it-all” facilitator who simply tells them what to do. They want your stories – the good, bad and ugly. So risk a little vulnerability from time to time. You don't need to over-share your story, but don't ignore it altogether. They will remember your stories as much as your teaching points. And your vulnerability will get them to open up and discuss issues more openly in the group.

IMPORTANT CAUTION ABOUT WELLBEING PAGE

Almost every piece of every page of the SYMBIS Report is appropriate to share in a group setting – with one exception. Page 4, Wellbeing, may be particularly difficult for a minority of individuals. Why? Because it reveals potential “caution flags.” For example, it may be that

Let the wise hear
and increase in
learning.

-PROVERBS 1:5

one of them is struggling with an eating disorder or depression. For this reason, it's imperative that you review this page (along with all others) before you distribute them. Use your intuitive judgment and err on the side of caution.

If a person has a caution flag that may be a surprise to their partner, be sure to meet with them privately to cover this sensitive topic before distributing the page within a group setting.

Some SYMBIS Facilitators actually elect to not use the Wellbeing page in their group sessions. Instead they meet with each couple privately to not only get to know them more personally but to cover the Wellbeing page within this private context. You may want to do the same thing.