

The Mission of PAIRS

The Mission of The PAIRS Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is to create a safer, saner, more loving world.

PAIRS Foundation has been an industry leader in relationship-skills education for more than a quarter century. PAIRS offers innovative, evidence-based programs for creating and sustaining relationships. PAIRS education provides tools that become lasting resources to foster love, happiness, pleasure and fulfillment. *PAIRS Essentials*, the Foundation's 9-hour flagship program, is designed to create positive, enduring shifts in the quality and resilience of marriages, families and other intimate relationships.

PAIRS Essentials focuses on practical, usable skills that help couples and singles:

- o Connect heart to heart
- o Experience the transformative power of empathy, mutual respect and compassion
- o Express, listen to and understand emotions
- o Create a shared environment of emotional openness and honesty
- o Reveal hidden expectations to avoid assumptions and misunderstandings
- o Resolve conflict constructively, and
- o Bond through emotional openness and physical closeness.

Independent research has shown that *PAIRS Essentials* results in:

- o Restored, renewed, revitalized relationships
- o Higher levels of relationship satisfaction
- o Reduced symptoms of distress and anxiety
- o Greater commitment to a shared vision of healthy relationships, and
- o Increased resilience built on improved quality of marriages, families and relationships.

A Transformative Learning Model

PAIRS training is focused on:

- o Experiential learning
- o Transforming couples' and singles' understanding of keys to healthy relationships, and
- o Exploring and experiencing emotional, empathic communication in depth as foundational for wellbeing.

The Program's Format—Experiential Learning

PAIRS Essentials is delivered in a group setting, with a PAIRS Instructor, often over a Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday, or in several class sessions. PAIRS Instructors are skilled, perceptive, effective, certified facilitators from various disciplines. They have been trained and certified by PAIRS Foundation to deliver *PAIRS Essentials* workshops. Since 1984, PAIRS programs have been successfully delivered throughout the United States, Canada, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Australia and the Middle East.

PAIRS Essentials is conducted with respect for the lived expertise of the participants. The general format is straightforward: the PAIRS Instructor introduces an evolving body of principles, tenets, and "tools" developed by PAIRS Foundation and invites dialogue with participants (usually 30-60), who offer their unique contributions. Often many participants identify with the contributions of one.

New Possibilities for Relationships

As the *PAIRS Essentials* Retreat proceeds, participants internalize their experiential learning. New perspectives emerge through a process of thoughtful inquiry and reflection. A deliberate sequence of experiential exercises provides safety for vulnerability, personal growth, and self-discovery and gradually expands the participants' ability to confide and listen with empathy, resulting in new ways and new perspectives from which to relate. Dialogue develops into thoughtful inquiries and discovery of "ways of being" that may have been unconscious. Those "ways of being" are highlighted for their potential to limit confiding, connection, understanding and empathy, which are the foundations for healing and growth within intimate relationships. Participants are guided to integrate new skills with "conscious competence." New possibilities for closeness, problem-solving, and love emerge. Throughout the process, participants are encouraged to recognize that they can choose behaviors that greatly determine the joy, pleasure and happiness they experience in relationships, a recognition woven within each aspect of the workshop.

Friday Evening

I. Arrival and Welcome:

Participants should plan to arrive at Retreat site at least an hour before the start of the program to check-in at hotel (for those staying overnight), receive name tags, materials, schedule and sign-in.

II. Group Dinner:

Dinner with other retreat participants offers an opportunity to begin new friendships and share common experiences.

III. Orientation and Introductions:

Staff introductions followed by a program overview, informed consents, research description, and ground rules, as well as tips and ideas to get the most value from the weekend. Participants are invited to share their name, where they are from, what they'd like to get out of the weekend, and answer the question: "Something you might not suspect about me is ..."

The weekend schedule is reviewed and there is an opportunity to ask questions.

IV. A New Paradigm for Relationships:

Through an introduction to *Levels of Learning*, *Stages of Relationship*, *Three Hopes/Three Fears*, and *The Relationship Roadmap*, the stage is set to rapidly begin to engage with the process, concepts and exercises.

The Evening Session closes with an invitation for the group to share insights, discoveries and ask questions.

Ground Rules

1. Respect Each Other's Privacy
2. Sharing with Others is Voluntary
3. Speak Only for Yourself
4. Check With Your Partner First Before Sharing Personal Relationship Issues
5. Safety, Learning, and Fun through Community
6. Be Respectful of Others – Turn Off Cell Phones
7. Be Present

PAIRS Essentials Retreat Key Concepts, Tools and Exercises:

Levels of Learning

Stages of Relationship

Three Hopes and Three Fears

Relationship Roadmap

Stress Styles of Communication

Leveling Style

Daily Temperature Reading

Invitation Rule

Empathic Listening

Good Talking, Good Listening

Talking Tips

Logic of Love and Emotions

Caring Behaviors/The Love Bank

The Emotional Jug

Emptying the Emotional Jug

Dirty Fighting

Emotional Stages of Development

Fair Fight for Change

Fight Style Profile and Evaluation

Rules for Coaches,

Scoring a Fair Fight

Relationship Agreements

Powergram

Decision-Making Worksheet

Love Knots

Emotional Allergies

Letting Go of Grudges

PAIRS Essentials Tool Box

30/60-Day Preventive Maintenance Plan

Saturday

I. Breakfast:

Participants are invited to enjoy breakfast with other group members an hour before the program begins.

II. Group Daily Temperature Reading:

The morning session begins with a group Daily Temperature Reading, offering a chance to share: Appreciation, New Information, Puzzles, Concerns with Recommendations, and Wishes, Hopes, Dreams.

III. The Relationship Roadmap:

PAIRS Relationship Roadmap is fully unveiled as a new paradigm for understanding relationships. The conversation begins with an exploration of the root causes of pain and pleasure, considering symptoms and signs of happiness and unhappiness and their connection to the deprivation or fulfillment of biologically-based needs, including the human need for bonding.

In this session, the group explores communication *Stress Styles*, defensive behaviors and positions that cause relational distance. Positive attributes of *Stress Styles* are also considered. A role-playing exercise offers a chance for participants to connect with other group members before returning to their partner to explore the *Leveling Style*, which promotes clarity and understanding.

IV. Confiding is the Heart of Intimacy:

The group considers how we regularly care for, or neglect, relationships as the foundation of our lives. *PAIRS Daily Temperature Reading* is reviewed as a process for confiding. Intentionality is a key theme throughout: a focus on the value of inviting versus inflicting, the impact of *Empathic Listening* as opposed to defensiveness, filters or interjections that frequently discourage or limit emotional openness.

Qualities of *Good Talking and Good Listening* offers a backdrop to introduce *PAIRS Talking Tips* as a tool for *Confiding a Concern* and embracing the value of listening with empathy. Participants practice *Talking Tips* with their partners to refine clear communication and listening skills.

V. The Logic of Love and Emotions:

Understanding the *Logic of Love and Emotions* includes considering early messages about feelings.

Was it okay to be angry, scared, worried, or sad?

Participants consider the impact of early decisions about emotional expression, and the impact on bonding, as the concept of *The Emotional Jug* is introduced.

The conversation about emotions explores behaviors that may interfere with the ability to experience feelings such as love, pleasure, desire, tenderness, and relief, including ways of dealing with those emotions that may be helpful in some areas of life, such as work, while damaging in others, such as marriage/family.

Emptying the Emotional Jug is introduced as a tool for beginning to uncover and release pent-up emotions and improving the capacity to listen with empathy as a valuable gift to intimate relationships.

VI. Lunch and Afternoon Break:

Participants are invited to enjoy lunch with other group members before an extended afternoon break to relax, connect, and share new learnings and insights.

VII. Filling the Love Bank:

The group reconvenes to consider the concepts of *Caring Behaviors* and *The Love Bank*, as a means of regularly nurturing those relationships that are most important in our lives. Participants are exposed to the idea that it is necessary to openly communicate what behaviors and expressions make us feel cared about and loved. Emphasis is given to recognizing that those behaviors and expressions change as circumstances change over a lifetime. Time is provided to make a list of six to 10 specific behaviors from a significant other that leave each participant feeling valued, cared for, and loved.

The day closes with an invitation for the group to share insights, discoveries and ask questions before a short break followed by dinner with the group.

Sunday

I. Breakfast:

Participants are invited to enjoy breakfast with other group members an hour before the program begins.

II. Group Daily Temperature Reading:

The morning session begins with a group Daily Temperature Reading, offering a chance to share: Appreciation, New Information, Puzzles, Concerns with Recommendations, and Wishes, Hopes, Dreams.

III. Emotional Stages of Development:

In this session, the group explores the impact that emotional attitudes have on our ability to navigate differences that are a natural part of close relationships. In examining these *Emotional Stages of Development*, participants begin to recognize their own contribution to ongoing conflict and consider a range of new possible behaviors that may lead to greater closeness and relationship satisfaction.

IV. Dirty Fighting that Fuels Conflict:

Dirty Fighting Styles, or actions that make things worse, are identified as the group prepare for constructive conflict techniques. The conversation about ways that people fuel conflict brings added awareness to actions that sabotage relationships.

The group continues to examine their own behaviors and recognize that behaviors learned earlier in life may no longer be useful or productive.

V. Fighting for the Relationship:

The Fair Fight for Change is introduced. Participants experience a new model for conflict resolution as they begin to see themselves and their significant others as being on the same side of an issue and not against each other. Discussion examines aspects of a "Fight" that would be considered fair or unfair. The coaching process is introduced as a means for support.

Group practice ensues with all participants having an opportunity to be in the role of "fair fighter" as well as coach. Lessons are integrated through recognition of mutual concerns, styles and strategies. Fair Fight practices are scored and *Relationship Agreements* are introduced.

VI. Lunch Break:

Participants are invited to enjoy lunch with other group members. For those staying in the hotel, an opportunity is provided to check-out.

VII. You, Me or We:

The Powergram is introduced as a tool for considering how decisions are made. A *Decision-Making Worksheet* offers the opportunity to reflect on areas of autonomy, influence, and mutual decision-making.

VIII. Uncovering Hidden Expectations:

Love Knots, or hidden assumptions and expectations that appear to be true but are not, are examined. The group explores the impact and price that is paid when we operate with these hidden assumptions and is offered an opportunity to untangle these love knots, making way for greater understanding, compassion and support for participants and within relationships.

IX. Discovering Emotional Triggers:

A comparison is drawn between physical allergies and strong emotional reactions based on past experiences. This type of reaction is identified as an *Emotional Allergy*. The group examines the tendency of one person's emotional allergy to trigger an emotional allergy in one's partner. Discussion focuses on identifying what may be hidden from awareness. Participants are helped to see that they are often holding people in current relationships responsible for unfinished emotional work in past relationships. Exercises and role plays illustrate the emotional allergy loop and transform it to a loop of vulnerability and empathy.

X. Letting Go of Grudges:

Through guided letter writing and/or empathic sharing regarding the full range of emotions, participants learn that letting go of grudges is truly a gift that we can give to ourselves.

XI. PAIRS Essentials Tool Box:

The retreat draws to a close with a review of the PAIRS Essentials Tool-Box, 30/60 Day Preventive Maintenance Plans, and an opportunity for each participant to share insights, new discoveries, and wishes, hopes, dreams as they celebrate new possibilities for life and love.