

FIRST AIDING MARRIAGE TRAINING



Practical help and guidelines on how to hold a training session.

Introduction

It would be amazing if we could go through life without needing some medical First Aid. We don't think about it because it's so obvious. First Aid is usually given in the everyday walks of life, in the home, workplace, anywhere, by friends etc. It can at times prevent something going horribly wrong, and will nearly always mean a more rapid recovery. However, there are other kinds of First Aid. Every marriage inevitably goes through times of strain and adjustment and at these times simple knowledge, and actions that can help, can be of crucial importance.

Most people with marriage difficulties confide first in a relative or friend. A survey carried out by Family College showed that 51% would do so, whereas 40% would go first to a professional (Doctor, Counsellor or Minister of Religion). This finding is in line with other research and suggests that a large number of ordinary people are being asked for advice or help. In addition, married people turn to their friends for help before the problems get so severe that they think they need professional help.

So it would be good if as many people as possible, Christian or otherwise, married or single, can give some First Aid to a marriage in difficulties.

You will find here a seminar, which is straightforward to run and will equip people to give marriage First Aid to their friends when necessary.



Planning

It is probably best for a Church or similar group to arrange this training event for their own members and friends, rather than trying to combine with another Church, which can result in neither Church really owning the event and a small attendance.

It could be run at any time of day, but many will find the evening best. If it could take the place of a normal weekly or monthly meeting, a good attendance should be guaranteed. It could be called a Seminar, a Workshop, a Training Evening or whatever is appropriate in the local situation.

Publicity

As this is a fairly new idea, it requires all the publicity that you can arrange, spelling out the reasons behind it as in the introduction above. It may attract people if you emphasize that the only qualifications needed are a bit of common sense and the ability to listen.

Booking

As you will be obtaining booklets or printing it to hand out, you need to know roughly how many will be coming. Hence a small booking fee of £1 - £2 would be helpful in covering that cost and coffee and would even contribute towards the cost of accommodation and any advertising

Preparation

You will need somebody to organise the evening, somebody with experience of helping with marriage problems to lead it and to give the talk (maybe the organiser, a guest speaker or a married couple), a few other people for drama(s), and a coffee maker.

The First Aid for Marriage booklet/web page

You need to hand out copies of the First Aid for Marriage booklet to those attending. It is a page on this website, but copies in booklet form can be ordered while stocks last from The Rev. E. Pratt, 7, Bay Close, Swanage, Dorset BH19 1RE for the cost of postage. State the number you need.

The Talk

The purpose of the talk is to emphasise the most important points from the First Aid booklet. The speaker can expand on them and add further materials as desired, including personal examples from their own marriage. There is a sample talk on a separate page on this Marriage Resource website.

The Dramas

The dramas can also be copied for those participating. They do not have to be learned by heart, except perhaps Scene 1 of the Man to Man drama.

Postscript

In the pilot First Aiding Training Evening that was run, somebody asked how they could help friends whose marriage was obviously in difficulties but who had not sought their help.

One way to do that is to invite the friend of the same sex around for a drink. Then during conversation, they could say something like "I can't help noticing that (mention some feature of the marriage they feel able to speak about) I hope you won't mind me mentioning but I am concerned for both of you. If you would like to talk to me about it I would be pleased to try to help. Maybe you would like to think about that and let me know."

Programme

An evening to start at 7.30pm could run like this:

7.30 pm	Welcome and explain format
7.40 pm	Dramas, with introduction
8.10 pm	The Talk
8.30 pm approx	Questions and comments
8.45 pm or later	Closing remarks. Hand out First Aid for Marriage booklets.
9.00 pm or later*	Coffee and an opportunity to chat and look at any books.

*Alternatively, coffee may be served at the beginning.

At a Church organised meeting

You might like to take the opportunity of mentioning your next course for those interested in learning more about the Christian faith.

It may be appropriate to close with a prayer.

Edward Pratt

MARRIAGE FIRST AIDING DRAMAS

You could use one drama or both of them but you may feel that you could write a better one yourself.

The dramas have been designed to involve a minimal amount of learning by heart. Only the first scene in the 'Man to Man' drama needs to be learnt. For the remaining scenes the actors can have their scripts on their knees.

Before the performance please explain –

The purpose of the following dramas is to help give the listeners the confidence to help friends with their friends' marriage difficulties.

Due to time constraints both dramas illustrate only short periods of listening to a friend's problems. (Ideally, you would hope to discuss problems at length)

The dramas only illustrate two encounters with each of those in need. During later encounters, further help may be suggested. It is wrong to make all the suggestions we can think of at once. People will not remember them anyway. It will take time for any marriage to be restored, so proceed a step at a time.

The dramas are designed to be suitable for use in a secular situation. If they had been written for a specifically Christian situation, the dramas might have included an offer by the helper to pray with or for the couple being helped.

Properties

The Man to Man drama will need:

2 football scarves, of the local club if possible, for the first scene

2 telephones

1 kettle

Milk jug, 2 mugs, coffee spoons and

2 comfortable chairs for the second scene. Only the chairs are absolutely essential.

The Woman to Woman drama will need:

2 chairs throughout

2 cups or mugs for the first and third scenes.

Newspaper for the second scene.

Printing

The dramas have been set out below so that each scene begins on a new page when printed

MAN TO MAN DRAMA

By Edward Pratt

Scene 1: (Jim enters from one side. Stops centre stage as if coming to a bus stop. Looks at his watch and looks in the direction from which the bus will come. Bill enters from other side)

Bill: Hello Jim.

Jim: (grunts)

Bill: Waiting for Number

Jim: Yeah

Bill: Going to the match?

Jim: Yeah

Bill: Not sure of our chances today! Still you never know – miracles can happen!

Jim: (grunts)

Bill: (puzzled) You feeling okay? You're not your usual self.

Jim: Bit rough actually.

Bill: What's wrong?

Jim: (pause) It'll blow over.

Bill: I hope so.

Jim: (pause) Actually, its Tracey.

Bill: Oh?

Jim: I can't do a thing right these days.

Bill: (sympathetically) I'm sorry.

Jim: (emphatically) So am I.

Bill: (sees bus) It's coming.
(pause) Suppose you come round my place after the match to warm up? If you want you can tell me a bit more.

Jim: Okay (both step on bus and exit)

Scene 2 - Bill and Jim enter together

- Bill: Coffee? (takes off jacket and scarf)
- Jim: Yes please – milk but no sugar (takes off jacket and scarf)
- Bill: (while making it) Would you like to give Tracey a ring to tell her where you are?
- Jim: She won't be bothered. (Pause) You can, if you like. 642531.
- Bill: Okay (dials)

Tracey enters at side – picks up phone.

- Hello – is that Tracey?
- Tracey: Yes
- Bill: Bill here. I met Jim on the way to the match. He has come back to my place for a cuppa. Thought we ought to let you know.
- Tracey: Thanks. It doesn't make much difference. He would just be in front of the box if he was here. But thanks. Bye.
- Bill: Bye. (makes coffee, half fills mugs and serves)
(encouragingly) How it is at home?
- Jim: Well, it's nag, nag, nag and she won't be interested in me when I go home.
The dog will give me a welcome. He'll be pleased to see me. But then I will go into the kitchen and say "Hi!" She will just say "Oh, it's you".
- Bill: When did things start to go wrong?
- Jim: (pause) Gradually really. We started off all right (pause) – but she likes to talk so much when I prefer to relax.
- Bill: Most women like to talk more than men. Mary sometimes says to me when I am quiet "What do you think, chatterbox?"
I am trying to learn to talk about what I am thinking, rather than just thinking my own thoughts.
Men and women are different – not just in the obvious ways but in the ways they think and speak as well.
- Jim: Yeah – and they get worked up, don't they? Tracey said the other day we never go out. Well, I took her out once last month (pause) – and once the month before that, (pause) I think.

Bill: She's expressing how it seems to her. She thinks you don't go out nearly enough. Women express their feelings more freely than men.

Jim: (emphatically) I'll say.

Bill: (pause) What d'you think we can do to help them enjoy being married to us?

Jim: (glumly) Wish I knew

Bill: Could you go out together more? She'd obviously like to. (pause) Could you find a sitter?

Jim: Not sure. (pause) Perhaps.

Bill: Great. Will you ask her where she'd like to go? I don't expect it will be Wednesday night's match?

Jim: (smiles) No!

Bill: (pause) Something else. I've not been good at it. I've had to learn.

Jim: Go on.

Bill: It's the simple thing of saying 'Thank you'. We all like to be thanked but when we get used to each other we forget to do it. It took me a long time to learn to thank Mary more for everyday things like a meal, or taking trouble with her appearance. We often take those things for granted.

Jim: Yes, I suppose I'm not very good at that. I'd better start slowly. She'd wonder what was up.

Bill: Yes- and it's probably easier to keep on - rather than starting with a bang and then forgetting again. (Pause) Another thing you could start slowly is doing more things she would like you to do - whatever they are.

Jim: But what about me? She might nag even more.

Bill: Well things may not change quickly. But we all appreciate it when people show they care for us by helping us. It's fun giving surprises too.

Jim: (long pause) Well I'm willing to give it a try.

Bill: If you think it would help if Mary dropped in for a chat with her, I could ask Mary.

Jim: Let's leave it a bit. I'll let you know. Thanks (pause). Best be off.
Thanks for the coffee.
(stands up and picks up jacket and scarf).

Bill: (stands, shakes hands) I'm glad we met. (pause) Let me know how things go.

Jim: Yeah - I will.

WOMAN TO WOMAN DRAMA

By Elizabeth Caush

Scene 1 - Two women talking over a cup of coffee

- Jean: Well how are you then, Ann?
- Ann: Oh, fine. (sounding depressed)
- Jean: Fine? Doesn't sound like it! What's up then?
- Ann: Oh, I don't know, a bit of everything I suppose. I'm just so fed up having to do everything all the time.
- Jean: You mean you don't get much help?
- Ann: Well, yes. I mean it's all right John saying that I shouldn't work full time if I can't manage it. But I love my job – it's what I'm good at – and I can manage, if only I had a bit of help around the house. John is really so unreasonable.
- Jean: Do you ask him for help?
- Ann: Well, I shouldn't have to! He can see, just as well as I can, when the kitchen bin needs emptying. I'm sure if I never did it we'd be up to our ears in rubbish!
- Jean: You know, sometimes we don't communicate our needs clearly to other people. Have you actually said to John, "Please would you empty the kitchen bin?"
- Ann: Well, not exactly like that – but I said last night that I couldn't fit any more rubbish into the bin, and all he did was grunt and seemed more interested in the football on TV than what I was saying!
- Jean: Sometimes, it's the words we use which aren't always appropriate. Your request wasn't direct, was it?
- Ann: WellI suppose not.
- Jean: It sounds as if you might have upset him rather than ask for his help.
- Ann: Yes, I see what you mean. Perhaps I should be more direct, no harm in trying is there?
- Jean: That's right, and how about thinking about the timing of a request, too? If John was watching the Cup Final last night no wonder he only offered you a grunt, it was an exciting match! The rubbish bin would have been very low on his priority scale. Do you see what I mean?

Ann: Yes, I suppose I do. So what I need to be aware of is the timing of my requests, and to ask him directly for what I want.

Jean: Yes, that's right. Why don't you try it?

Ann: I will – I'll do that. (pensively)

Scene 2 – John and Ann’s house. John sitting reading a newspaper.

Enter Ann.

Ann: Hello darling! Anything interesting in the News?

John: Not really, same old things going on. Burglaries, muggings, traffic jams, redundancies – quite depressing really. Nothing changes.

Ann: Mmmm. (sits down beside John)

John: Just having a look to see what’s on the box tonight – there’s a good film on at nine.

Ann: Oh, good. Darling

John: Yes, what – what’s wrong? (puts paper down)

Ann: Nothing’s wrong! I just wanted to thank you for making the bed this morning – it’s such a help to me when you do things like that.

John: Oh, that’s OK (sounds surprised) – all part of the service! (laughs)

Ann: Darling, would you empty the kitchen bin, please?

John: Yeah, sure. (gets up and goes off to do it)

Scene 3 – A week later. Ann and Jean talking over coffee.

Jean: Well, how are things?

Ann: Actually, much better! You know, I've tried the "direct approach" with John and it actually worked!

Jean: Good

Ann: I've started with a small thing – the dreaded kitchen bin! – and have started asking him to help me with a few other things as well. It's not that I want to change him – I love him dearly – it's just his help and support I want. And it's right what you said about using direct language. You know, only the other day, I thought about what I was going to say before I said it.

Jean: Oh, yes, what was that?

Ann: Well, I was about to say something like, "The back garden is a real mess" and then I thought how that would sound to John.

Jean: Yes, not very positive is it? It sounds as if you're blaming him for the state of the garden.

Ann: Yes, exactly, so I thought how I could re-phrase it – using your "direct" approach to get something done about it!

Jean: And?

Ann: Well, I chose my time – no football, no TV etc. and I simply said, "Would you work on the back garden tomorrow?" I didn't justify the request and I wasn't demanding. Don't you think I did well?

Jean: Yes, well done. What happened then?

Ann: We went to the Garden Centre together (quality time and all that!) and when we got home, John dug and planted the whole of the flower bed – you know, the one that runs along by the fence.

Jean: Brilliant!

Ann: Yes, this approach from me seems to have changed his attitude to other things as well. We're much better now. It's not easy, though, having to keep on thinking what you're saying.

Jean: No, you're right – it's hard going to keep on working at marriage but you get a lot out of it as well. I'm sure you'll find that in due course.

Ann: Yes, you're right. Well, I must be going (Ann gets up)