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FAMILIES TOGETHER

A Couples Strengthening Curriculum

Facilitator's Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Families Together*. We believe you will enjoy learning more about how to help your family be strong, safe, and healthy.

Families Together is based on World Relief's *Families for Life (FFL)*, a couples-strengthening curriculum developed in close collaboration with faith leaders and couples. *Families for Life* began as a training to strengthen couples in relationship to one another, and to strengthen families as a result. This focus on promoting understanding, healthy relational dynamics, and informed decision-making is still at the core of this manual.

Families for Life has now been revised for use in World Relief's [SCOPE project](#), funded by USAID with the adapted version called *Families Together*. **The adapted curriculum aims to strengthen, equip and protect couple relationships and families, especially in making decisions about reproductive health, family planning and the balance of power within families.** The objectives of this revision were to promote healthy relationship dynamics in male-female couples¹, with a focus on family planning and sexual and reproductive health. The revision includes the Evidence 2 Action Theory of Change components and the Passages Social Norms Change theories. These theories consider the social-ecological model, centering gender norms within culture and context, families and peers, the couple dyad, and the individual partners in a couple. This manual also applies evidence-based therapeutic frameworks from psychology (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy [ACT] and Emotionally-Focused Therapy [EFT]), interpersonal communication (social exchange theory and dialectical perspectives), social norms research (specifically integrating the four dimensions: protecting family honor, right to use violence, gender equality, and the cycle of violence, considered from the community, personal, and social perspectives) with factual information about sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and family planning.

Cultural adaptation is an important aspect of the *Families Together* model. In each context where Families for Life has been rolled out, World Relief gathers faith and community leaders for a cultural and contextual review of this manual. Contextualization revisions include changes in names, illustrative activities, and other aspects of the curriculum (e.g., trees, symbolism, types of materials used, etc.) to communicate within the culture of the couples and families.

The manual uses the stories and vignettes of couples in various stages of the lifespan, family members, neighbors, and faith leaders to support the exploration of cultural norms, patterns of inequality, family systems, the nature of couple relationships, trust, values, communication, joint decision making, power, and agency.

We invite you to join in a discussion of these stories. Through the stories, consider your own family and health. Perhaps the stories or discussions will also be a guide to you.

We look forward to learning from you and having your contributions so that couples may build "Families Together"—strong supportive units of society that support the couple and any children they may have across the lifespan.

¹ The audience for this program is long term couples who are male and female. It is possible that sexuality or sexual dynamics within a couple may vary beyond male and female roles, and the principles for relationships, psychoeducation, social skills, and sexual and reproductive

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

Each partner in a Facilitator Couple will receive a copy of this Facilitator's Manual. This Manual assumes that facilitators and participants are all learners and teachers. As adults, we have life experiences that have taught us many things. *Families Together* offers many ways to learn (stories, discussions, brainstorming, group work, individual reflection, etc.) and relies on interactive, participatory dialogue and exploration of values as these are important drivers and barriers for changing behaviors and social norms.

The theory and practice are outlined in call-out boxes within the sessions to provide context for the experienced facilitators who train the Facilitator Couples, and for the enrichment of the Facilitator Couples. The content delivered to couples explores perceptions and beliefs, key influences, supports mutual trust, and builds practical skills for communication and joint decision-making, particularly around family planning.

Facilitation Methods

The program is designed in a way to help participants learn together. This manual uses a participatory, learner-focused methodology, engaging learners as they listen and reflect, discuss and draw conclusions individually and as a group. Invite couples to come. It is very important that both partners attend together. All the sessions are developed to help couples learn together. Couples are provided an opportunity to learn with their peers, share reactions and observations, reflect upon implications and consequences, develop practical and conceptual understanding, and apply this to real-life situations.

The facilitators are not lecturers; they facilitate understanding by guiding learners to receive value and internalize information, ideas and attitudes. This approach is key to true empowerment and serves as a role model for couples to model this approach when they engage with their community members.

In many contexts, women are not accustomed to speaking up when men are present. *Families Together* seeks to transform that norm; therefore, each session encourages both men and women facilitators to lead the session. Sections to be led together by men and women have been demarcated in each session. The main point is that women must also be involved, not only men. If men and women feel more comfortable speaking and sharing their experiences during the session, they will also learn to do it elsewhere in their lives. This has been demonstrated in the implementation of this program throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, both men and women have to see women as leaders.

The curriculum uses a combination of small and large group discussions, stories, case studies, and other structured learning activities to engage participants and support the learning process. It draws on the participants' personal experiences, both past and present, as an important source of learning. The facilitator can adapt stories, case studies and any other activities to make them more appropriate for a specific context. Before presenting the session, the facilitator should review and be familiar with all the content and learning activities. The sessions must be offered in the order they appear in this manual, beginning with Session 1, "The Happy Family," and moving to the next session until all are finished.

COVID-19 adaptation note: The training team must follow any current local guidance for COVID-19 prevention to ensure the health and safety of participants and staff. See Program Implementation Guide for detailed COVID-19 prevention/safety guidance

Preparing for an Individual Session

As the Facilitator Couples, it is important to prepare for each session ahead of time. Read through the session in the Facilitator's Manual and consider what it means to you personally. If you have questions, reach out to the leaders from your training of facilitators. Become very familiar with the session, so you know what to expect. To help you, many of the questions have suggested answers.

Avoid reading directly from the manual, and work to speak from memory, using the manual as a guide. It is best if you can learn what is expected and look at the manual to refer to the questions and be reminded of the story's main points or session to tell it in your own words. It is always best to tell the stories rather than read them. Practice telling the stories in the sessions ahead of time.

It is also important to prepare the venue/room/meeting space and have materials on hand that you will need to facilitate the session.

Session Format

Each session will include:

- an introduction
- a review of key points from the last session
- a story
- discussion questions
- a theme
- application activities and games
- a time for personal reflection, and
- homework.

Each session will include story-telling, discussion questions, and some activities or games.

Materials Needed

Facilitator Couples will need materials/items that are indicated in the session plan. Teaching materials can be adapted to those that are available locally. The facilitator should prepare all materials needed for each session prior to the training. Each facilitator will receive a copy of the facilitator manual.

AGENDA AT A GLANCE






SESSION TITLE	OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED DELIVERY TIME	PREPARATION/ MATERIALS NEEDED
SESSION 1: THE HAPPY FAMILY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be introduced to the facilitators and other participants • Be introduced to the series' themes, structure, and expectations • Reflect on the characteristics of what makes a happy home 	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picture 1: Illustration of the family of Mateyo and Chisomo showing their “happy home” • Picture 2: Illustration of a baobab tree • Picture 3: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo talking while she cooks dinner
SESSION 2: THE HAPPY RELATIONSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how different status and power might privilege certain groups • Learn more about how emotions, our values, and our behaviors interact and can support mutual decision-making • Identify qualities of happy families 	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picture 1: Illustration of the family of Mateyo and Chisomo showing their “happy home” • Picture 4: Side by side illustration on one side, Mateyo at work thinking about Chisomo, on the other side, Chisomo working in the garden and thinking about Mateyo • Picture 5: Illustration of the fallen baobab tree (with a rotten inside) • Picture 6: Two illustrations of hands, one with counting fingers and one with a closed fist
SESSION 3: FRIENDSHIP IN RELATIONSHIPS (PART 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the characteristics of friendship • Consider the meaning of friendship in couples • Identify ways a male and female partners can be good friends to each other • Discuss how women and men are brought up to behave in different ways 	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two baskets, boxes or buckets and some stones/rocks (around 30 or so) • Picture 6: Two illustrations of hands, one with counting fingers and one with a closed fist • Picture 7: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo looking lovingly at each other • Picture 8: Illustration of Mateyo sitting with Rute in his lap, watching Madalitso build a house with rocks • Picture 9: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo talking to each other
SESSION 4: FRIENDSHIP IN RELATIONSHIPS (PART 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ways male and female partners can be a good friend to each other. 	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picture 9: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo talking to each other


SESSION TITLE	OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED DELIVERY TIME	PREPARATION/ MATERIALS NEEDED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the different expectations and challenges women and men face. 		
SESSION 5: THE SATISFIED COUPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on how to increase trust and mutual pleasure in their relationship Identify differences in desire and arousal that are important for consent and contentment 	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picture 7: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo looking lovingly at each other Picture 10: Illustration of Mateyo and Yohane talking
SESSION 6: THE PROTECTED FAMILY (PART 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the importance of protecting the family by deciding together how many children to have, and when to have children. Understand when a woman can become pregnant in her monthly cycle Discuss how we can learn from the different views of others Interact with a local community health worker to learn about family planning 	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 31 dried beans or small stones A community health worker is invited to Session 6 and 7. Please make arrangements ahead of time to invite your local community health worker and provide details on what is expected of them at the meeting according to the instructions in the manual Picture 11: Umbrella or illustration of umbrella Picture 12: Picture with 3 Rows of Circles (7 open circles on the top row, 12 on the second row that are shaded in, and 12 open circles on the third row)
SESSION 7: THE PROTECTED FAMILY (PART 2) (PART 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the importance of protecting the family by deciding how many children to have Learn about different family planning methods Discuss how decisions are made in the household 	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Annex 1 (Family Planning Guidance) and have a printed copy of the one-page illustrations on different methods of family planning for this session Sticks to make two large squares Seven rocks or pieces of cloth Two loaves of bread/ugali mounds/packets of biscuits A community health worker is invited to Session 6 and 7. Please make arrangements ahead of time to invite your local community health worker and provide details on what is expected of them at the meeting according to the instructions in the manual
SESSION 8: COMMUNICATING WITH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the importance of earning a young person's trust so 	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact information for the local community health worker or faith leader who has undergone Family Life Education training.

SESSION TITLE	OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED DELIVERY TIME	PREPARATION/ MATERIALS NEEDED
YOUTH/YOUNG PEOPLE	<p>that they can openly discuss concerns with you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the importance of talking to our young children about puberty, their changing bodies and sexuality. 		
SESSION 9: THE BROKEN RELATIONSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and identify different kinds of domestic abuse and the consequences • Reflect on problems in their families and extended families needing support • Identify the kinds of support needed and available in the local community and from health, legal, and social service providers • Discuss the impacts of violence in the community and the potential for change 	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamphlets or information about health care, social welfare, and legal services that are available for people who have experienced violence in their homes, and others • Picture 2: Illustration of a baobab tree • Picture 5: Illustration of the fallen baobab tree (with a rotten inside) • Picture 13: Illustration of Chisomo comforting Pauline. • Picture 14: Illustration of Yosefe beating Pauline
SESSION 10: THE SUPPORTIVE FAMILY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the meaning of love and mutual trust in a long-term relationship • Discuss what couples wants are with regard to the size of their families • Discuss choosing a family planning method meeting their couple's values • Reflect on how their marriage will be different in the future 	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small snack/refreshment to celebrate the final lesson together • Picture 2: Illustration of a baobab tree • Picture 5: Illustration of the fallen baobab tree (with a rotten inside) • Picture 7: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo looking lovingly at each other

USING THE LEARNING SESSIONS

Each session begins with **notes to the facilitator**, which provides helpful background information and identifies the main purpose of each session. This is followed by the specific objectives for that session. A **preparation/materials** section is included to remind the facilitator what materials or activities should be prepared in advance for the session. At least one hour is needed for good preparation. A suggested delivery time helps the facilitator allocate time during the sessions. Facilitators are also encouraged to be creative in presenting their own illustrations and using local names for the story characters. The sessions follow a specific similar pattern to help facilitators, especially those with limited experience.

FORMATTING OR ICON	KEY
	<p>A square box is placed around key overview information for each session with notes to the facilitator, learning objectives, and preparation/materials.</p>
<p>[Bold]</p>	<p>Bolded text are instructions and reminders to you as the leader, but are not to be read out loud.</p>
<p>?</p>	<p>A question mark (?) indicates questions for discussion or reflection.</p>
<p><i>Italics</i></p>	<p>Suggested responses to questions are in italics. This format provides the facilitator with an easy reference while probing the group during discussions. Remember to allow participants to answer the questions, rather than reading the suggested responses.</p>
	<p>Introduction or Review This is very important. It gives an opportunity to think about what was learned in the previous week and provide a review.</p>
	<p>Story/Activity Here the story is told, or participant activities are described. This is the heart of the session. Try as much as possible to tell this story in your own words. Be expressive in your storytelling.</p>
	<p>Discussion Questions These questions will bring out what is happening in the story. They will also help couples think about their own experience. Each question is very important, so do not skip any. There are some suggested answers to each question but do not expect that these are the only answers. It is good to have participants think about the story and share from their own lives. Sometimes, you will be asked to split into groups, with men in one group and women in another. This may make it more comfortable for women to talk.</p>
	<p>Homework We learn best if we practice something we have just learned right away. Each session will suggest a practical way to apply what the session was about in the coming week. Usually, the suggestion will be that the couple practices something together during the week.</p>

	<p>Personal Reflection This section gives the opportunity to think about what the main points have been and how they apply to individual lives. You do not need to take much time, but it is important for people to think about the session’s story, content, and their own lives. This is a time for individual thinking, not answering out loud in the group.</p>
<p>Annex/ Resources</p>	<p>Resources: At the end of the manual is a resource section to give more information on a specific area, such as discussion on youth and more information about sexual and reproductive health and family planning. Use this section to help you as the facilitator learn more and answer questions that may come up during discussions.</p>

DESCRIPTION OF STORY CHARACTERS

Main Story Characters

Mateyo	Husband to Chisomo and father to Chikondi, Madalitso and Rute.
Chisomo	Wife of Mateyo and mother to Chikondi, Madalitso and Rute.
Chikondi	Oldest daughter of Mateyo and Chisomo
Madalitso	Son of Mateyo and Chisomo
Rute	Youngest child and daughter of Mateyo and Chisomo
Yosefe	Husband to Pauline
Pauline	Neighbor to Chisomo and Mateyo and Chisomo's business partner
Banda	Local religious leader
Jane	Nurse at the health facility who Chisomo and Mateyo visit
Yohane	Friend to Mateyo
Judith	Aunt to Chikondi, sister to Chisomo

SESSION 1: THE HAPPY FAMILY

Notes to Facilitators

Time: 2 hours

A happy home is where families enjoy mutual trust and share common values about how they will care for one another.

Session Objectives

During this session, learners will:

- Be introduced to the facilitators and other participants
- Be introduced to the series' themes, structure, and expectations
- Reflect on the characteristics of what makes a happy home

Materials

- Picture 1: Illustration of the family of Mateyo and Chisomo showing their “happy home”
- Picture 2: Illustration of a baobab tree
- Picture 3: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo talking while she cooks dinner

Contextualization

Please note that materials should be adapted to local context (For example, names and references to trees, etc.).



Introduction (30 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Welcome to the first session in *Families Together!* Today, we are very excited to begin conversations together as couples to focus on building strong partnerships, especially between men and women. During each session, we will learn how we can identify our emotions, consider our values, and let our values guide how we relate as couples and build trust between partners in a relationship.

Female Facilitator – Say:

To start our time together, let us learn more about each other. Each couple should find another couple in the group and introduce themselves to each other. Ask each other how long you have been a couple, if you have children, how many, and how you first met. Then we will come back as a whole group, and you will introduce the couple you met to the entire group.

[After each couple has been introduced, ask that each couple sit together for the session to begin.]

Say: It is good we have been introduced. In this series, we will share with each other our experiences and things we are learning about healthy families. Everyone here should feel free to add to our conversation and share their thoughts and questions so that we can all learn from each other. This is a safe place to share your thoughts and feelings honestly and openly. We can respect one another by not sharing others' comments outside of this group. What we will cover in these sessions in the subsequent weeks, are sensitive topics. Some of you may feel uncomfortable sharing at first – that is okay. We encourage open discussion, but also respect if you're not comfortable speaking up.

Let's begin. First, in groups of two couples, describe what a "happy family" looks like. Share with each other how members treat each other, what their home is like, and how they are viewed in the community.

Possible responses: Their children are healthy and clean. They have a number of children they can afford. They respect each other in public and private.

[Allow each group of four to share their insights. Then continue.]

Each session will have a made-up story about families experiencing situations common to our families or other families in our community. We will hear the story of our main characters, Mateyo and Chisomo. We will be learning with them about how relationships can be built on love, mutual trust, and values-based action. As we hear the challenges the couples face in the stories, we will then discuss how our characters can overcome these challenges.

Say: We will see how they build and maintain a happy home together—their trust for each other, shared values, and kind treatment of each other—so that they can support each other, any children they care for, and ways they interact with their community. **[Show Picture 1 the illustration of the family.]** We will also have pictures and activities to help us learn, like small group discussions, games, and homework assignments.

Male Facilitator – Say:

A happy home is like the baobab tree (malambe tree) with a big trunk. The majestic baobab tree, an icon of the African continent, is a symbol of life and positivity in a landscape where little else can thrive. **[Show Picture 2 the illustration of the baobab tree].**

? This tree has a very wide trunk. What is this big trunk for?

- *Possible responses: to nourish the leaves from the soil; to be strong and protect the tree; to support the size of the branches and to keep it from falling down (very tall), to help the tree to bear fruit.*

That's right. The wide trunk feeds the branches in all seasons of life. The strong trunk protects the whole tree. The trunk brings water from the earth to nourish the tree.

A baobab tree with a strong trunk is not easily destroyed. Elephants may eat the bark. The bark may be stripped to make rope. The tree may even be burned. Still, the tree stands. The bark grows back. The tree grows for a long, long time.

Female Facilitator – Say:

The baobab tree has many uses.

? What are some of the ways the baobab tree is used?

- Possible responses: to make rope; to put beehives in; to provide food through its fruit, leaves, and seeds; to make juice; to provide beauty to the country.

Yes, the leaves provide food. The bark makes rope and string to make baskets. The branches become home for many creatures. Bees love to swarm around hives put high in baobab trees. Birds nest in the tree. The baobab tree is a refuge for many creatures, big and small.

A happy family is like this baobab tree. It is a place of protection and refuge. It is a place for nourishment and growth. It is a place where young and old grow together. This is the place of a strong relationship. They love and help one another for many years.

Like the baobab tree, when a strong family is stripped of things when facing troubles, it is not destroyed. Eventually, it grows back. A strong relationship may face many problems in life, but the family is protected. A strong, trusting relationship ensures the family will continue growing and be protected from all that storm destroys. The leaves will continue to grow.

Say: This work that we will do together in each session is about strengthening couple relationships into a strong trunk. The trunk nourishes and protects as long as the inside is alive and well. Even when the bark is stripped to make rope, the tree stands strong because the inside of the tree is healthy. When the leaves are gone in season, the branches are fed from the big, wide trunk that drinks deeply from the ground.

During our time together, we will better understand what builds trust between couples, learn tools to strengthen our relationships, and address patterns that may stress our relationships. We will need to hear the stories of some unhappy families, ones that hurt each other or even people near the couple.

Say: Now we will be introduced to our first activity.



Introduction for Participants

Male Facilitator – Say

Welcome to *Families Together!* In this series, we will learn about couple relationships and families living together in a household, examples from our lives, and a fictional story about families who face many common challenges in relationships and family life. In each session, we will focus on the importance of friendship, trust, respect, and shared values in marriage.

Encourage participants to come consistently and participate in the homework given at the end of each class. Emphasize that couples will get the most out of the series if they both come to each session and stay engaged.



My Family's Legacy (30 minutes)²

Note to facilitators: It is important to also participate in this activity and share an object and story from your own experience. If you start off as facilitator, it can also help other participants share their opinions. When men share their experiences with fathers or other male authority figures, it is important to know that some of these accounts may be emotional or difficult to share. As a facilitator, you can encourage the group members to

² Adapted from Promundo's "Program P"

be sensitive to each other's stories. You can also be encouraging while sharing stories through your body language, such as nodding your head and making eye contact with the speaking person. If a particularly negative experience is shared, saying something like, "I'm sorry you had this difficult experience," can help ensure the person feels they have been heard while recognizing the challenge they faced.]

Female Facilitator

For our first activity today, we will think about the role that the main male and female authority figures played in our lives.

When we think about our fathers or mothers or a male or female authority figure, there may be people with very positive experiences in this group, but also those who have had negative experiences with our fathers or mothers and male or female authority figures. When we share stories – whether positive or negative – it is important to be sensitive to the others in our group.

Let's do this activity together. For men, take a few minutes and think about your father or another male authority figure in your life. For women, similarly, think about your mother or another female authority figure in your life. If you had to choose one object that reminds of you of this person, what would it be?

This object may be a tool, a book, an item of food, a bottle of Coca-Cola or beer, a strap/stick used for punishment - anything that reminds you of this person.

Let's go around the circle and each share what the object is, and tell us a story explaining why this person is linked to this particular object.

Thank you for sharing these stories.

Let us think again about our fathers or mothers. What is one positive thing that your father/mother or this person did that you also want to do when you relate to your spouse or your children?

What is one thing this person did that you do not want to repeat with your spouse or your children?



Story (15 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

[Show Picture 1 the illustration of family together]

In a small village named Kaludzo, Mateyo and Chisomo are a happy couple. They have been married 13 years and have three children: Chikondi, age 12; Madalitso, age 9; and Rute, age 3. Mateyo and Chisomo do not have much money, but they are grateful for the job Mateyo has. Every day he gets on his bicycle to go to the nearby factory. He makes enough money for his children to go to school, and he dreams that one day they will even do well enough to go to university, something he did not get to do.

Chisomo is a mentor mother who participates in a Care Group and visits neighbor women monthly to share important information about healthy pregnancy, COVID prevention and care at home, caring for sick children, and preventing common illnesses. She is also very busy working their garden, where she grows maize, beans, ground nuts, and pumpkins. Chisomo is teaching her children how to help her with work around the home, and she supports them in doing their school work.

One year ago, Chisomo started a small business with her neighbor and friend, Pauline. Together, they keep bees and sell honey in the nearby market on Saturday. Although Chisomo only completed primary education, she recently was very excited to participate in a business development training held for her savings group because she is interested in business and is good with numbers.

When Mateyo comes home from work, he calls out a greeting to Chisomo. **[Show Picture 3 the illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo talking together]**. Often, the two of them take a few moments to sit together over a drink as they talk about the day and sit together. Let's hear their conversation today.

"How was your day today, Mateyo?" asks Chisomo.

"We had a new worker starting today," said Mateyo. "I helped him finish his work. Since it was his first day, he felt like there was too much for him to learn. I tried to help him understand what to do from my own experience."

"That is kind of you, Mateyo."

"Well, I remember what it was like when I first started. I was grateful to have someone to help me. To this day, we are friends. We can talk about anything together and help each other."

"Yes," Chisomo said. "I know. And it all started with just a little bit of kindness."

"How was your day today, Chisomo?" said Mateyo.

"I visited our neighbor whose baby was born two weeks ago, and I tended to the bees, putting up some honey to take to the market tomorrow," said Chisomo.

"You were very busy today. How could I help?" said Mateyo.

"Would you be able to help gather in the children and bring the beans I harvested today up to the storage for drying? That would help me so much. Then you can call everyone for supper."

"Sure, Chisomo," he said with a smile on his face.

"Thank you, Mateyo. I truly appreciate your support."



Discussion Questions (20 minutes)

Female Facilitator:

[Ask each of the following discussion questions. Allow time for participants to respond to each question, one at a time, and then summarize what has been said before continuing to the next question.]

- ?** Tell us about the family. Who is in the family? What do they do?
- ?** What did you notice about the way Mateyo and Chisomo treat each other?
- ?** What do you think they value? What is something they each did or said to show what they value?
- ?** Chisomo mentioned her roles at home and in the community. What were her roles?

- ? Mateyo talked about the new worker at his job. Describe what happened.
- ? How did Chisomo respond?
- ? How did Mateyo reach out to Chisomo in the conversation?
- ? How did both Chisomo and Mateyo show kindness to one another?
 - o *Possible Responses: The couple listened to each other; they trusted one another; helped each other; they spoke freely with each other; they built a family together; they honored and respected each other; they served each other; they showed kindness to each other; they spend time and do things together*



The Importance of Love and Trust in our Relationships (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

There are many ways to express love and mutual trust, as Mateyo and Chisomo do in our story. Love and trust are central to our marriage and family relationships. When we love one another deeply and build trust between us, our relationships will be strong and healthy.

We will be like the strong baobab tree if we love in this way. **[Show Picture 2 the illustration of the baobab tree.]** Even when strong winds come, we will stand firm. Even when there is drought, we will have green leaves. This kind of love for one another upholds shared values and finds ways to show kindness and respect based on the dignity of each partner.

Think about the baobab tree. The roots are deep. If we love another from deep in our hearts, our roots will also be deep. The trunk is wide and gives food from the soil to the branches and leaves. This means we work hard with our strength and make good decisions together from our shared values to care for each other and for our families well. There will be seasons of change, but the strong roots hold us steady. Leaves may come and go, but our trust, love, and values will hold us together despite any struggles we face. Our faith is one source of strength and values to help guide us.



Review (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator:

[Review the key characteristics of a happy family. Address any additional points that came up in the discussion and activity.]

- One with deep roots of love.
- One that takes action that shows care for others.
- One that is built on mutual trust and shared values.



Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Take a moment to think about your own family.

- ? What roots does your life have?
- ? Who has power and status in the family?
- ? How can power and status be shared more fairly?
- ? Can you think of any couples you know who share power equally?
- ? How do you think they achieved this balance?



Homework (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

As a couple, make a drawing of a baobab tree. Put on the tree the roots, trunk, branches, and leaves. Think together what you will put into your trunk to build trust and list some of your values together. Some ideas for building trust might include talking more often together or making decisions together. Some values might be showing kindness through how you treat one another or mentoring others. Put down some ideas of how you will work together to put these things into practice. If you feel comfortable, bring your drawing and notes back next session to share with the group.

SESSION 2: THE HAPPY RELATIONSHIP

Notes to Facilitators

Time: 2 hours

In the last session we discussed how couples in happy homes have love, mutual trust, shared values, and demonstrates care for themselves and others. It is possible for couples to build strong partnerships together. This session focuses on what it means for couples to practically show love to each other that demonstrates these values.

Session Objectives

During this session couples will:

- Discuss how different status and power might privilege certain groups
- Learn more about how emotions, our values, and our behaviors interact and can support mutual decision-making
- Identify qualities of happy families

Materials

- Picture 1: Illustration of the family of Mateyo and Chisomo showing their “happy home”
- Picture 4: Side by side illustration on one side, Mateyo at work thinking about Chisomo, on the other side, Chisomo working in the garden and thinking about Mateyo
- Picture 5: Illustration of the fallen baobab tree (with a rotten inside)
- Picture 6: Two illustrations of hands, one with counting fingers and one with closed fist

Contextualization

Please note that materials should be adapted to local context (For example, names and references to trees, etc.).



Review (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Welcome back to our *Families for Life* sessions. We are very excited that you returned. When we meet we will discuss our experiences together and reflect on what we know is positive and good in a relationship. Our purpose is to build relationships and families that are healthy and strong.

Last time we talked about the baobab tree. We learned how the big trunk is like a healthy relationship.

? Can someone review for us the value of the strong baobab trunk?

- *Possible responses: nourishes, provides resources like the bark of the baobab, is not easily destroyed, is strong from the inside out, lasts many years.*

That is right. The baobab tree can remind us about mutual trust, shared values, and caring for each other.

Did anyone have a chance to do their homework? The homework was about talking together about ways to build trust and listing some of your shared values. Would anyone be willing to share what you and your spouse discussed? If you haven't done it yet, after today's session, we encourage you to take time to discuss what practical things you can do to strengthen the "tree" of relationship.

[Now remind the couples to sit together and begin the story.]

Let's find out what is happening to Mateyo and Chisomo.



Story (20 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

[Show Picture 1 the illustration of a happy home/family]

Say: Mateyo works hard each day. He is proud that he finished secondary school. He wants to be sure that all his children go to school and finish secondary school. Chisomo did not attend secondary school. Her parents were poor and decided only the boys would attend secondary school. Chisomo stayed at home and helped her mother. She cared for her younger brothers and sisters while her mother worked in the fields. She prepared food, cleaned their home and also worked in the garden. She learned a lot from her mother and her aunties about these things, and she learned from them to avoid conflict with her husband.

Mateyo wants to make sure his family is well cared for and protected. He wants to live honorably, do what is right, and be respected in their village and with their extended families. They live in a small village where everyone knows everyone. Their place of worship is nearby, and their faith leader, Banda, often comes to sit and chat.

Chisomo and Mateyo want to care for each other. Sometimes they do not agree on simple things or bigger things. When they do not agree, Chisomo sometimes goes quiet and makes herself busy. Mateyo dislikes when Chisomo goes quiet, and he will follow her, talking and demanding that she join the conversation again.

Banda married them 13 years ago. Chisomo still remembers that Banda encouraged them to love one another. Banda encouraged their faith to be a shared value. "Our faith reminds us that we are each loved, and that we are to love each other. As you build your family, you can reflect that love in how you care for each other."

[Show Picture 4 the illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo thinking about each other]

Banda came to visit Mateyo and Chisomo for tea. Over tea, Banda mentioned big baobab tree in the village that collapsed. The tree seemed so strong one day, and the next day it collapsed.

[Show Picture 5 the illustration of the fallen baobab tree]

Banda mentioned that the tree is like many couples. Couples all go through ups and downs, but it is important for couples to learn how to face those ups and downs with kindness and respect for each other. If couples cannot go through ups and downs, their family may appear strong, like the tree did, but may suffer on the inside and one day will no longer stand tall.

Mateyo knows how blessed he is to be married to Chisomo. Their family is not like the family he grew up in. Mateyo thought about his childhood. His father never told his mother how much he appreciated her. His father spent time talking with other men, but he never saw him talking with his mother or helping her, even when it was clear that she was tired or unwell. All he saw was his father being served or asking for something from his mother. His father made many demands of his mother. Were they a happy couple?

The more Mateyo thought about his mother, the more different he wanted to be from his father. Mateyo followed Chisomo when she went to get some sugar for Banda's tea. "Chisomo, I would like to share some of the challenges we face together with Banda. Maybe Banda can help us? I know we love each other, and I want to be sure we remain close."

Chisomo agreed with Mateyo. She also wanted to learn from Banda. She felt frustrated at times with Chisomo, and disagreed with him. But her mother and the women in her family taught her to remain quiet. However, she wanted to be open with her feelings with her husband and learn how to express herself well.

When they returned with the sugar, Mateyo asked Banda to help them. He described how Chisomo got quiet during a disagreement and how he pushed her to talk right then or to give in to whatever he said.

Banda nodded. "You are not the only couple to experience this. When couples disagree, there is often a dance, where each partner makes the same kind of move in each disagreement. It helps to notice that you are starting this dance. Mateyo, you may notice you are pushing Chisomo to keep talking or to accept your demands and Chisomo, you may notice that you want to go silent or move away from Mateyo. When you notice these things, try pausing a moment and thinking about what it is you feel."

Mateyo thought a moment, "When Chisomo goes silent, I worry that she will be unhappy with me or that we may not stay as close as we usually are."

Chisomo said, "Mateyo, I am sorry I worry you like that. I go silent because I have many thoughts, and I am not sure what to say, or if I say something you don't like, then maybe we will quarrel, or you will want to leave."

Banda smiled at the couple. "When you notice yourselves getting into the dance, it is good to say what you feel, especially your worries. Then you can support each other. Chisomo, you can let Mateyo know that you are not unhappy with him and that you want to stay close. Mateyo, you can let Chisomo have some time to think about what she wants to say, and you can let her know that it is safe for the two of you to disagree and still love each other."

Mateyo turned to Chisomo and said, "It is ok for you to disagree with me sometimes. You can tell me what you think or feel, and I will listen to you."

Chisomo was glad to hear this. "When we disagree, you sound strong and sure of yourself. My father was also like that, and my uncles were. The women in my family did not disagree with the men out loud. When they were unhappy, they would keep quiet or maybe share with other women

only to complain. Looking back, I see they were afraid to disagree with their partners. Many men leave women they are unhappy with, and that is a scary thought.”

Banda encouraged Mateyo to let Chisomo know that she was safe and that it is OK to disagree. And Banda let Chisomo know that she may want to speak to Mateyo when she needs a moment of quiet, reminding him that she loves him but needs a moment to sort out her thoughts.

Chisomo looked at Mateyo, and he looked at her. This was a different way of handling disagreements. It was a way to care for each other even when they did not agree. It was different from the way they saw their parents handle disagreement.

Mateyo kept thinking about this conversation as he went to work. He had noticed his feelings and shared them with Chisomo. Chisomo shared her knowledge with him, and he made her feel safe enough to be open with him. This is the kind of strong family that he wanted to build. It would be different from the family he grew up in and would not just look strong on the outside but would have roots in love and trust that supported both Mateyo and Chisomo.



Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Ask:

[Ask each of the following questions, one at a time. Allow participants to briefly share their responses to each question and summarize what they have said before asking the next question. Try to keep this discussion moving fairly quickly.]

- ? What is happening in the story?
- ? How do Mateyo and Chisomo act when they are in conflict?
- ? What did you learn about Mateyo and his family growing up?
- ? What did Banda say the couple should do when they are experiencing conflict?
- ? How did Mateyo and Chisomo disagree about Rute? What did each of them notice? What did they do to come together and make a decision?
- ? What does this story tell you about how to have a happy relationship?



Lesson Presentation (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Remember what our respected leader Banda said at Chisomo and Mateyo’s marriage – Couples who love each other can reflect the love that our faith reminds us about. Both men and women are equally loved, and both men and women are equal.

When we learn how to stay connected even when we disagree with one another, we demonstrate the dignity of our partners. Love like this heals.

Let’s consider other ways we can demonstrate this kind of love.

Let us look at this “hand” illustration. **[Show Picture 6 the two hand illustrations and use your hand to illustrate. Count the ways we love others with your fingers. At the end, close your fingers into your palm to illustrate unity and strength.]**

This hand illustration shows us how to love our family.

The palm of the hand refers to all the love that we have. The fingers are the different ways we love.

We show our love for others in the following ways:

- Heart **[Be sure to bring out the need to be open and honest about what we feel with each other.]**
- Soul **[Mention that Chisomo and Mateyo realized they needed to share what they had seen couples do and how that impacted their actions.]**
- Strength **[Mention that it will take time for couples to practice having conflict and making decisions together, but strong couples will work at doing this together.]**
- Mind **[Point out that Mateyo and Chisomo both used their minds to reflect on their past and their own patterns.]**
- Loving our neighbor as ourselves **[Point out how Mateyo and Chisomo expressed love and safety to each other.]**



Small Discussion Groups (15 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Let us break into two groups—men in one group and women in another. Both groups will discuss the following questions. **[Instruct the groups to get as practical as possible]**

- ? What are some ways we can show our love to others?
 - *Possible responses: listening, sharing honestly what we think and feel, showing appreciation, valuing, respecting, expressing that our partner’s ideas are important, not offending, helping and sacrificing for others.*
- ? How do we love our partners?
 - *Possible responses: responses: sharing honestly what we think and feel, showing respect, spending time together, providing for their needs, sharing special times or gifts.*

[Allow ten minutes for this discussion, and then call the group back together and have them share their responses.]

[Summarize the main points, and mention that it is possible to love each other in many ways, including your heart, soul, strength, and mind.]



Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Now in your own life, think about your relationship with each other. We are not sharing our responses out loud; we are just thinking to ourselves.

- ? Do you notice any dance patterns in how you and your partner handle conflict?
- ? What areas need to be strengthened in your life so your relationship will be happy?

[Allow a few moments for silent reflection]



Homework (2 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

As a couple, think this week about how you can show love and safety to each other, especially when you disagree. This week talk about two ways you will strengthen your relationship, perhaps with your heart, soul, strength, or mind.

SESSION 3: FRIENDSHIP IN MARRIAGE (PART 1)

Notes to Facilitators

Time: 2 hours

Friendship is common in every society but friendship between men and women can be rare. Even among romantic partners, men and women may find themselves not trusting each other. This session aims to encourage couples to develop trust and friendship in their relationships with each other, and how a relationship built on trust can help to have a happy and healthy family.

Session Objectives

During this session couples will:

- Reflect on the characteristics of friendship
- Consider the meaning of friendship within the context of a marriage relationship
- Identify ways a male and female partners can be good friends to each other
- Discuss how women and men are brought up to behave in different ways

Materials

- Two baskets, boxes or buckets and some stones/rocks (around 30 or so)
- Picture 6: Two illustrations of hands, one with counting fingers and one with closed fist
- Picture 7: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo looking lovingly at each other
- Picture 8: Illustration of Mateyo sitting with Rute in his lap, watching Madalitso build a house with rocks
- Picture 9: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo talking to each other

Contextualization

Please note that materials should be adapted to local context (For example, names and references to trees, etc.).



Review (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

In the last session, we discussed what a happy couple looks like. Our relationships become stronger when we love our spouse, “walking with two feet,” as equal, faithful and committed

partners. Our relationships grow stronger when we find ways to stay connected when we make a decision or have conflict.

Our homework last week was to think about two ways to show our love to each other and how to improve how we show love and safety to each other even during conflict. Who completed this homework? What are some ways we can show each other our love?

? How can we demonstrate this kind of love when we have a conflict or a decision to make together?

- *Possible responses: by communicating what we are really feeling, by stating out loud that our partner is safe and loved, by listening even when we do not agree*

Male Facilitator – Say:

Make a fist with your hand like when you finish counting. This hand with the fingers tucked inside shows us how strong and united a couple can be.

? We also talked about status and power. Can someone remember what we discussed?

- *Possible responses: Different people have higher status and power than others in society. Men have more status and power than women. Among men, some men have higher status and power, for example, those with more money or higher education. The same is for women: not all women have the same power and status.*



Friendship with a Spouse (10 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Today we will be talking about friendship in our relationship as a couple. This may sound surprising to many because when we say friend, we usually refer to men and women we have known for years – but not our spouses.

? Who are your friends? Think about two or three people in your life who are your friends. Then turn to the person next to you and tell them about these friends. Describe why you consider them to be your friends.

[Allow for five minutes of discussion and then call the group back together.]

Male Facilitator – Ask:

? What are some things that you have heard from the person you were talking to about their friends?

[Ask four or five people to give you some answers. Take a brief time to summarize the answers that are given.]

Friends are people with whom we share something in common. We enjoy their company. We like to be with them and spend time together. We like to discuss things together. We ask our friends for advice sometimes. And friends often help each other out without even asking them for help.

Let us continue with the story of Mateyo and Chisomo as they spend time together as a couple and as friends.



Story (15 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

[Show Picture 7 the illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo holding hands]

Chisomo was cooking the evening meal over the fire in the kitchen of her home. Rute and Madalitso were playing nearby. Chikondi was outside with one of the other girls who lived nearby.

Mateyo came in from working in the factory. He threw his things on the floor and sat down to wait for the evening meal. Chisomo handed him a glass of water.

“Beloved husband, how was your day?” she said.

“I had a lot of work today. Nothing seemed to go right. The boss was not happy with anyone.” Mateyo said.

“I am sorry to hear that, Mateyo,” Chisomo said. “You must be tired. Food will be ready soon, and then you can sleep.”

“Thank you. Mateyo said. Then, turning to face his wife, he asked, “How was your day today?”

Chisomo smiled and said, “I was hoping you would ask. I have some great news today. I got my monthly period today. This means we’re not pregnant!”

Mateyo replied, “Oh. I didn’t realize that you were even worried about being pregnant again. I thought children are a blessing and a gift.”

Chisomo said, “Well, they are a blessing. And I’m grateful for the gifts that we have been given. However, getting pregnant again would prevent me from truly moving forward in the new business venture with Pauline, our neighbor. I would like to take a small loan from our savings group to expand our business to buy a chicken so I can sell eggs on top of our honey business. The money would help us save money for our children’s school fees and help us build a brick house.

Mateyo was quiet and thinking. He looked at his children playing outside. And he looked back at his wife. He was thinking of his friends who have many more children than he does. He thought it was appropriate for Chisomo to bear him more children because he wanted to be like his friends. However, he also wanted his children to go to school and not work around the family vegetable garden. He wanted a different future for his children than his childhood.

[Show Picture 8 the illustration of Mateyo holding Rute and watching Madalitso play]

Chisomo asked, “Mateyo. You’re so quiet. What are you thinking? Are you upset with me?”

Mateyo replied, “No, my beautiful wife. I’m not upset. I’m simply thinking about what you said.”

Chisomo was nervous, but she ventured to ask. “What are you thinking about?”

Mateyo said, “I am thinking about our family. I know you told me that our children enjoy school. I hope they will work hard in life and get a good education. I am also seeing you work very hard to help our family income so we can ensure all three of them get a good education. It’s very expensive to educate all three children. However, I’m also thinking about our other friends with

much larger families than we do. Shouldn't we accept that children are a gift and keep having more children?"

Chisomo is grateful that her husband values their children equally and believes their daughters deserve an education. In her family, only the boys had attended secondary school, and many girls in her village were married when they were Chikondi's age.

"Yes, that's my hope for all of our children," Chisomo said while stirring the dinner pot. "Chikondi is doing very well in school. She has dreams of attending university one day. The money I earn at the market on Saturdays will be a big help in helping her achieve her dream. I was hoping that we could discuss more on this so that we can take good care of these children we already have."

Mateyo replied, "Yes, you are right, Chisomo. That is a good plan. We will do all we can to help each other in our family. Thank you for telling me about your monthly period. Are you in pain? Can I help you a bit more today?"

Chisomo said, "Thank you. I'm almost done with dinner. Why don't you rest and play with the kids? I shall call you soon for dinner."

Mateyo went to the children, pulled little Rute, his daughter, into his arms, and gave her a big hug. He bounced her on his lap and made her laugh as he made silly animal sounds.

Mateyo started singing a song as he continued playing with Rute. He felt happy and satisfied. He looked at Madalitso, who was making a little house with rocks. Mateyo laughed as the rocks fell, "Build it again, Madalitso! One day you will help me build a house with bricks just like this one."

Mateyo thought, "I like this time with my wife and family after a long day of working."

He looked at Chisomo and thought, "I want to make sure I enjoy my family and work together with my wife to have a happy home. Chisomo is a good woman. I know I can always trust her and be honest with her, and I want her to feel safe doing the same thing with me. I want to be sure I can care for each of my children and that my girls and my son have a good education."

Just then, his mind went back to when he first married Chisomo. He looked at her face in the firelight and remembered the counsel of Pastor Banda, "Your spouse is your closest neighbor. As our faith teaches us, we can love our spouse by being a friend to them and care for our partners as we take care of ourselves."

He remembered the hand and the faith teaching about loving others with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. **[Show Picture 6 the illustration of hand that counts]** He remembered hearing the faith teaching that showed husbands and wives could be friends. It says, "This is my beloved, this is my friend."

Mateyo thought about these things as he watched his wife cooking and talking to him while he sat near her and the children played around him. **[Show Picture 9 the illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo talking to each other]**

"This is my wife, and this is my friend," he thought.

Then he decided he needed to see how he could help, as friends do.

"What can I do to help you, Chisomo?" he asked. "I would like for you to rest for a while."

"Oh," said Chisomo with a surprised and delighted glance toward her husband. "That would help me a lot."

Mateyo watched the children and kept an eye on the food on the stove while Chisomo went away to rest. Chisomo appreciated that Mateyo was considering her needs and wanted to give her time to herself. She thought about how also to please her husband. She thought about ideas on how to support her husband financially by investing the money she had earned by selling honey in the market to buy a chicken for an egg business.

Later, as they finished their meal together, Mateyo looked closely at his wife as she came to take his empty plate. She looked beautiful to him, and she had made him feel much better. His day had been difficult, but he had his family to enjoy and his wife to talk to and understand him. He knew his need and desire for her was very deep, and he knew she was his closest friend.

Chisomo could see a change in Mateyo. She felt he valued her for who she was and made her feel loved and happy. She also notices that he appreciates all the work she does at home while he is at work and continues to do after he comes home. He has offered to help her more than once recently. She is hopeful that she can share her hopes and dreams with Mateyo more often. She feels that he is becoming more of a friend to her.



Discussion Questions (20 minutes)

[For this discussion, women and men will be split into separate groups. Allow participants to give brief responses to each question and then summarize what they have said before asking the next question.]

Male Facilitator—Say:

- ?** At the end of the day, what did Mateyo and Chisomo do together?
 - *Possible responses: talking, spending time together, helping each other*
- ?** What did they talk about?
 - *Possible responses: the day's activities, their children, how to help each other, Chisomo getting her monthly menstruation and her expressing her desire to stop having children*
- ?** What did Chisomo do to help Mateyo?
 - *Possible responses: welcomed him home, gave Mateyo water, talked about the day and their dreams for their children, freshened herself before dinner*
- ?** What did Mateyo do to help Chisomo?
 - *Possible responses: came to spend time with Chisomo, provided for her by working, offered to help her*
- ?** In what ways were they showing respect and friendship to each other?
 - *Possible responses: being together, talking about their family, offering to help each other.*
- ?** What are some things that keep a husband and wife from spending time together?

- *Possible responses: traditions of not talking together or not spending time together, being away from home to work or visit friends for long periods, giving time to others but not your husband or wife, not trusting each other to talk about difficult problems, social taboo to be friends as husband and wife, quarreling, drinking alcohol*

? Why is it important for couples to talk together openly about the welfare of their family?

- *Possible responses: to solve problems together, to work as a team*

Female Facilitator – Say:

Sometimes we might think that cleaning, cooking or even caring for children is just the woman's job.

In the story we heard earlier, Mateyo did some of these chores.

? How do you feel about the idea of a husband helping in the kitchen, cleaning or looking after the children? **[Allow for one or two responses.]**

? Respected religious leaders have often acted counter to cultural norms to show women respect. Can anyone share examples of this? **[Allow for one or two responses].**

? **[For men]:** What are some ways we can help our wives this week?

- *Possible responses: offer to clean, let her have a rest and cook dinner, wash clothes etc.*

? **[For women]:** How can we respond when husbands help with chores?

- *Possible responses: respond positively, thank them, ask for help regularly*



Act Like a Man, Act Like a Woman (60 minutes)³

[You will need to be more sensitive when discussing this activity among communities – encourage them to choose what identity they would like to change to. You will need some props for this main activity – two baskets, boxes or buckets and some stones/rocks (around 30 or so). This activity includes prompting questions below – depending on how vocal your group is, you may not need to use all of them. There are also examples of typical responses if your group is quieter and needs some help thinking of examples.]

Female Facilitator – Say:

Before we start our next activity, I would like us to reflect on a scenario. We will need to use our imagination for this activity. Imagine one morning you wake up, and you realize something has changed. You have turned into a woman or a man! Your body is different. Your face is different. You have become the opposite sex. **[pause for a few seconds, so the participants understand what you have explained, then ask questions to generate discussion]**

? How will you respond? What will you do?

- ? Are there things that you are happy about? Are there things you are scared about?
- ? What is your day like now? How has it changed?
- ? Do you have new or different responsibilities, chores or routines? Are you happy about those? Disappointed about those?
- ? How do you think a woman would feel if she woke up and suddenly became a man? Happy or sad? Why?

Today some of our activities will involve putting ourselves in the shoes of others – imagining what it might be like for women.

The different roles men and women play in the family and community are mainly based on what society says about what women and men can and should do. These beliefs are cultural. They are not fixed; they can change over time. They are expressed daily in stories, attitudes, assumptions and ideas that we learn and act on.

Now, let's move on to our main activity.

For this activity, we will discuss how women and men in this community are expected to behave.

Let's start with the expectations of women, which we will place into this basket. The rocks here symbolize these expectations.

If you think of an expectation, take one of these rocks, explain what expectation it represents and place it in the basket.

Male Facilitator (prompting questions):

[If your group is not sure how to respond, these prompting questions can help]

- ? How should women behave in this community? What should they do to “act like a woman”?
 - o *Possible responses: be respectful and quiet, be gentle, be a good example, be obedient, get married, give birth to many children, keep opinions to themselves*
- ? What kinds of tasks are women expected to do?
 - o *Possible responses: clean, cook, look after children.*
- ? How should women act in their relationships or marriage?
 - o *Possible responses: be modest in choice of clothing, submit to their husband.*
- ? How should women act in terms of sex?
 - o *Possible responses: not initiate sex, not suggest using contraception*

Female Facilitator – Say:

[Wait until after generating some responses]

These are society's expectations of who women should be, how women should act, and what women should feel and say. They are taught to us from the moment we are born from many different people and experiences.

- ? Do you know women who act in the ways you have described?
- ? How do women learn to do these things? Who teaches women how to behave?
- ? Is this list of things positive or negative, or both?
- ? What happens if women don't behave this way – if they step outside the box/basket, for example, if they disagree with their husbands or don't have many children?
 - o *Possible responses: name-calling (e.g., 'prostitute'), beaten, shunned, isolated*

Now let's discuss how men are expected to behave. Here are some more rocks. We will place the expectations on men into this new basket.

Male Facilitator (prompting questions):

[If your group is not sure how to respond, these prompting questions can help]

- ? How should men behave in this community? What should they do to "act like a man"?
 - o *Possible responses: be tough, don't cry, provide for the family, protect the family*
- ? What kinds of tasks are men expected to do?
 - o *Possible responses: earn money, be in charge of the money, support the family, make decisions*
- ? How should men act in their relationships or marriage?
 - o *Possible responses: be the boss/leader, protect wife and children*
- ? How should men act in terms of sex?
 - o *Possible responses: initiate sex, have a lot of sex*

Female Facilitator – Say:

[Wait until after generating some responses]

These are society's expectations of who men should be, how men should act, and what men should feel and say. They are taught to us from the moment we are born from many different people and experiences.

- ? Do you do these things you have described, or do you know other men who act in the ways you have described?
- ? How do you learn to do these things? Who teaches men how to behave?

- ? Is this list of things positive or negative, or both?
- ? What happens if men don't behave this way – if they step outside the box/basket, for example, if they cry or find it difficult to find a job?
 - o *Possible responses: name-calling (e.g., “gay” or “woman”), teased, beaten, isolated*
- ? How did you find this activity? Does anyone have any comments or reflections to share? **[Allow time for a few responses, then mention the points below if they do not come up in participant comments]**

Female Facilitator – Say:

The expectations of women and men come from society and the world we live in. Society may tell us that men are superior to women—that they are the rulers, leaders, and decision-makers. Society may tell us that men should be tough and that women are gentle.

We might think these differences are natural because we have become used to them from children to adults as we have grown up. But, these come from the society and the world we live in, which are influenced by culture.

We may believe there is a right and a wrong way to be a woman and a man.

We have learned that women and men experience punishments and negative consequences if they don't act in ways they are supposed to – if they do something different from what society expects.

Women often face more serious consequences than men for stepping outside the box – their behavior is more carefully policed and punished than men's behavior.

Male Facilitator – Say:

The ways girls and boys are raised often influence how they express themselves. We are taught how to appear and behave from a very early age. We learn these messages from the world we live in.

For example, girls are often taught that it is okay to cry and to be gentle, while boys are taught that they should never cry and should always be tough. Sometimes, girls are taught not to be too loud or rough or play sports.

These expectations can limit what girls and boys do, and as girls and boys become adults, they may continue to feel they must follow these. At times, these expectations can harm relationships.

Both women and men must be able to express themselves in a variety of ways. This is important for a healthy relationship.

Women and men might express themselves differently and interpret each other's behavior in different ways. In a marriage, we may sometimes assume how our husband or wife feels, but their experience may differ. For example, a husband might not directly cry but may still be sad about something.

In a couple relationship, being able to express and share our feelings with each other can strengthen the relationship. For example, when women can show strength and men can show

gentleness or care, they become stronger individuals who can more easily relate to each other and the world around them.

We might have been taught that emotions are bad, but expressing them in a healthy way can help us draw closer to each other.



Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Now in your own life, think about your relationship with your husband or wife. We are not sharing our responses out loud; we are just thinking to ourselves.

- ? Are you able to share your emotions openly with your partner? Why or why not?
- ? Is there anything you can do to help your partner feel more comfortable sharing his or her emotions with you?

[Allow a few moments for silent reflection]



Homework (2 minutes):

Female Facilitator – Say:

Next week we will continue discussing how we can strengthen our relationships through friendship. For homework, think of ways you can express your emotions to your husband or wife and try it out this week. Note how it went and what you would continue to like to work towards.

SESSION 4: FRIENDSHIP IN MARRIAGE (PART 2)

Notes to Facilitators

Time: 2 hours

Friendship is common in every society but friendship between men and women can be rare. Even among romantic partners, men and women may find themselves not trusting each other. This session aims to encourage couples to develop trust and friendship in their relationships with each other, and how a relationship built on trust can help to have a happy and healthy family.

Session Objectives

During this Session couples will:

- Identify ways male and female partners can be a good friend to each other.
- Discuss the different expectations and challenges women and men face.

Materials

- Picture 9: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo talking to each other Mateyo and Chisomo talking to each other

Contextualization

Please note that materials should be adapted to local context (For example, names and references to trees, etc.).



Review (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Welcome back everyone! It's great to see you all again.

- ? Who can remember what we discussed last time?
 - *Possible responses: sharing emotions with each other, differences in how women and men are brought up, the importance of friendship in a marriage relationship*

For homework, we were going to think of ways to express emotions to our husband or wife and practice doing it this week. Who was able to practice this? Would anyone be willing to share their reflections on practicing expressing emotions to your spouse?

Today we will continue our discussion on the theme of friendship between male and female partners in a relationship.



Learning Game: What We Have in Common (10 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Let us all stand up and play a game together. I am going to call out different characteristics of people. As I call out a characteristic that you have, please go to the place that I tell you. Remember how many times you are in a different group.

- All those who have been together for more than two years come to the front
- All those who enjoy singing go to the back of the room
- All those who play a sport (example: football, handball) go to the right side of the room.
- All those who are farmers move to the left side of the room.

Female Facilitator – Say:

- Please raise your hand if you found yourself in all four groups
- Please raise your hand if you found yourself in three groups
- Please raise your hand if you found yourself in two groups
- Please raise your hand if you found yourself in one group
- Please raise your hand if you found yourself in the same group as your spouse at least two times

? What do you think will happen if we ask those in four or three groups to sit together and talk?

- *Possible responses: They will have many things to talk about.*

? What do you think will happen if we ask those who were not in any group to sit together and talk?

- *Possible responses: It will be difficult to talk together. They may not have common interests.*

Friendships often begin when we find people with whom we share things in common. In our marriages, we have many things in common but don't always share the joys of friendship.

Male Facilitator – Say:

Our faith values remind us that our beloved husband or wife are our friends. As we look at our families, friendship in a husband-and-wife relationship is important.

You may have friends you spend time with but never thought of your husband or wife being your friend. But our faith values say that they are.

? If this is true, what do friends do together?

- Possible answers: teach each other, encourage one another, share and help each other, discuss the future together



Story (10 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

[Show Picture 9 the illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo talking to each other.]

After eating their morning meal together, Rute and Madalitso went outside to play while Chisomo and Mateyo had a quiet moment to talk together.

“Rute is growing so fast,” Chisomo told her husband. “I love watching her learn new games from Madalitso, ask gardening questions, and practice writing her name in the dirt. It brings me so much joy.”

“I hadn’t thought about it, but you are right,” Mateyo replied. “She is growing up so beautifully. Do you remember how she chased a cricket yesterday and then started calling it by name like it was her little friend? It brought a big laugh to my day.”

Chisomo laughed, remembering the sight of her daughter. “And how she ate more potatoes than her brother that night?”

“She really is growing,” Mateyo replied. “I miss the baby days, when she was a chubby baby.”

Chisomo replied, “I know. I can’t believe that all three of our children have grown up so fast.”

Mateyo said, “I would love to have another baby to experience the baby stage again.”

Chisomo was quiet. She stood up to wash the dishes and started to wonder how to communicate with her husband. She was still thinking about her conversation from the last time she told him about her monthly period. She prayed and hoped her husband would agree to her desire to stop having more children.

With a deep breath, she decided to be brave and share her inner thoughts.

“Mateyo, you know I love our children. I miss their baby stage of life. I really do. However, each new stage of life brings new joy and new things to learn about our children. Look at Madalisto, she’s learning new things every day, and so are Rute and Chikondi.”

“As much I miss their baby stage, I also am thinking ahead to their future years. Their schooling. Their future. I want to give them the things I did not get as a child. I feel like having another baby will make us less financially stable. My health was also very poor with Rute’s pregnancy. It was a difficult pregnancy and birth, and I think I’m getting too old now.”

“These are my thoughts. I hope you are not angry with me. I do wish to respect your wishes, my dear husband. We should make this decision together as it’s not a small decision.”

Mateyo was quiet again and was thinking. Chisomo is right. But his mind was still mulling over his father’s words about what a man should be and that a real man should bear many children. He decided to think about this and pray and talk to his friends.

He said, “Chisomo, thank you for sharing your thoughts with me. I am not angry with you at all. I understand what you’re saying. Let me think about this. For now, let me tell you something, I love the way you prepare those potatoes. Can you tell me more about how you made them? They remind me of my mother’s cooking. I am thankful to have had a mother who was an excellent

cook and now a wife who is an excellent cook as well. I have actually always wanted to learn to prepare some of my favorite dishes. Could you teach me?"

"I would love to!" Chisomo said with a smile. "It would be fun to cook together. And you could tell me some of the new potato-growing practices you've been trying. I am so proud of your success in your harvest." She handed Mateyo a round spoon and said, "I guess we are having potatoes for supper," and they both laughed.

"I am so thankful to be married to my friend and enjoy one another's company," Mateyo thought. Chisomo smiled as she washed the potatoes, thinking the same thing.



Small Discussion Groups (30 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Let us break into two groups—the men talking to men and women talking to women. The question to discuss is,

? "How can my husband or wife be a good friend to me?"

- **[Men]** Responses may include: *if she can supply my daily needs, when she is there to help me in decision making, when she can appreciate when I've done something good, when she comes up with little ways of making me happy in times of disappointment, when she trusts me.*
- **[Women]** Responses may include: *when he is considerate and thinks of my needs, when he appreciates me, when he helps me when I am tired or low, when he compliments me, when he does things that he knows I will like, when he encourages me, when he brings me gifts, when he values me, shows respect by asking what I think and listens to my opinions or thoughts.*

[Allow for 10 minutes of discussion. Afterward, have a representative from each group report to the whole group. Have the group compare any similarities or differences.]

Male Facilitator – Say:

Friendship is important to the success of every couple relationship. It is important to realize that each partner may need different things in a friendship. But there are important parts of friendship that all couples need.

Here is some of what friendship means between each partner in a couple relationship: **[Say each statement slowly and take a moment to pause after each one to allow for the words to sink in.]**

- Couples who are friends talk to each other.
- Couples who are friends listen to each other
- Couples who are friends spend time together. Too often, we don't make time to be together, thinking it is unimportant.
- Couples who are friends talk about everyday things and discuss important things, including healthy timing and spacing of children, hopes and desires for the future, and even problems or challenges in the home or relationship.

- Couples who are friends are considerate of each other's needs and welfare and who use words instead of violence to resolve issues.
- Couples who are friends forgive one another when one has done something wrong.
- Couples who are friends respect, honor, trust and help each other.

All of these things are ways that couples invest in their relationships. Just like putting a deposit in a bank or putting away money in a savings group regularly, these interactions between couples build a strong foundation of love and trust that they can draw upon every single day. Over time, this investment will grow, giving couples a strong trunk to their tree, which can sustain them over the long term.



Fishbowl Activity³ (30 minutes)

[Keep the discussion moving fairly quickly – around 10 minutes for the questions to women and 10 minutes for the questions to men. In some contexts, it might be easier to engage women if the activity is facilitated separately for women and men. Then the group can come together and sit in the same configuration described below and have a few women/men summarize what was discussed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it might be easier to facilitate the groups separately and skip the circle configuration rather than having people sitting close together.]

Female Facilitator – Say:

Women, please sit in a circle in the middle of the room. Men, please sit outside the circle, facing the women.

For this first activity, only the women will participate. Men, you will need to observe quietly and listen carefully.

- ? Women, what is the most difficult thing about being a woman in your community?
- ? What do you want to tell men to help them better understand women?
- ? What do you find hard to understand about men?
- ? Who typically makes decisions in your household? If men, how does it feel to have them making all the decisions?

Now, we will switch places. Men, we will need you to sit in a circle in the middle of the room. Women, you will sit outside the circle, facing the men.

Now, only the men will participate. Women, you will need to observe quietly and listen carefully.

- ? Men, what is the most difficult thing about being a man in your community?
- ? What do you want to tell women to help them better understand men?

³ This adapted from: CARE Malawi (2017) “Working with Boys and Men to Advance Gender Equality and Sexual and Reproductive Health. Training Manual.”

- ? What do you find hard to understand about women?
- ? Who typically makes decisions in your household? If men, how does it feel to make all the decisions?

Let's all return to our normal seats.

- ? What surprised you about this activity?
- ? What did you learn during the activity?

As women and men, we face expectations and challenges. Often our opinions about the opposite sex are informed by stereotypes and assumptions. We can better understand each other's needs and experiences by listening to each other.



Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Let us review what we have learned today.

We have learned that we should love our neighbor more than ourselves. Look at your partner next to you. He or she is your neighbor. Friendship between you and your partner shows love for each other according to our faith values. We have learned that partners may each face different challenges and expectations. Sharing these with each other as friends can help to strengthen our partnerships.

Now in your own life, consider what friendship is in marriage. We are not sharing our responses out loud; we are just thinking to ourselves.

- ? What do you have in common? How are you different?
- ? What time do you spend together?
- ? What conversations do you have?
- ? How do you honor each other?
- ? Can you think of another couple you admire who demonstrates strong friendship with one another? What do they do to show a deep friendship?

[Allow a few minutes for people to think about this.]



Homework (2 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

As a couple, talk together about how to build friendship in your relationship. Then talk about what you might need to do to express this friendship more often. Be patient with each other as you

discuss, understanding that change may take time. Commit to one thing you will work on this week to strengthen your friendship as a couple.

SESSION 5: THE SATISFIED COUPLE

Notes to Facilitators

Time: 2 hours

Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality, not merely absence of disease. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, including having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences that are free of coercion, discrimination, and violence. Couples with a healthy sexual relationship trust each other and prioritize each other's pleasure in their sexual relationship.

Different communities and cultures have their own understanding about sexual health. The information in this session is based on emerging science about desire and arousal. Sometimes science presents something that contradicts the community or culture understandings about desire and arousal.

Sex is never to be grabbed, forced, or harmful. Consent to have sex is important. Sex is not intended to be selfish or for the pleasure to be one-sided.

There is a great cost to a relationship when these conditions are not meant. Sometimes couples don't talk about sex, arousal, or desire. To strengthen our relationships, we can build trust and seek one another's pleasure.

The key ideas about sex that will be explored in this session:

- How arousal works in our bodies and our brains
- How to increase sexual pleasure over a lifetime

Session Objectives

During this session couples will:

- Reflect on how to increase trust and mutual pleasure in their relationship
- Identify differences in desire and arousal that are important for consent and contentment

Materials

- Picture 7: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo looking lovingly at each other
- Picture 10: Illustration of Mateyo and Yohane talking

Contextualization

Please note that materials should be adapted to local context (For example, names and references to trees, etc.).



Review (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Welcome to today's session. We would like to thank you for committing to strengthen your relationship through the discussions and reflections that we have together. In the last session, we talked about friendship. Did anyone complete the homework to commit to one thing to work on to strengthen your friendship? Would any of you be willing to share what you learned from this session as a couple during the week?



Game: Who Has Power? (30 minutes)⁴

Female Facilitator – Say:

In our previous sessions, we discussed the expectations of women and men to behave in particular ways. For example, women are expected to clean and cook, and men should earn financially and not show emotions.

Today we will keep discussing these expectations, but we will start by talking about how these expectations end up with some groups having power and others not having power.

Please close your eyes just for a minute or so.

Now in your own mind, try to imagine power. **[pause]** What does power look like to you? **[pause]** What images come into your mind? **[pause]** Now, please open your eyes.

? What was it that you imagined when you closed your eyes? **[Allow one or two participants to share examples]**

Thank you for sharing these ideas. A good way of thinking about power is that it relates to being able to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.

At some point in our lives, we all have had an experience in which someone had power over us. We will do an exercise to help each of us remember how it feels when someone uses her or his power over us. In this exercise, you will be asked to remember an experience from your past. You will later be asked to share that experience with others, so choose a memory you feel comfortable sharing.

Get comfortable, close your eyes and listen carefully. Try to create pictures in your mind while I read.

Think of a time when you were in a situation in which you felt you had no power. **[Pause]** It could be a time when you were younger, an adolescent, or maybe an adult. **[Pause]** Maybe it was years ago, or maybe it happened quite recently. **[Pause]** It is a time when you felt powerless. **[Pause]** Someone else was using her or his power over you. **[Pause]** It could have been a friend, a parent, a sibling, another community member, or a boss. She or he could have been older or younger, female or male, or even a group of people. Think about what she, he or they were doing to use power over you. **[Pause]** What happened? **[Pause]** What was the situation? **[Pause]** Try to picture yourself in that situation. Where were you? **[Pause]** Try to imagine the person or people who were using their power over you. **[Pause]** Remember the details of that interaction.

⁴ Adapted from CARE's "Model Communities in Eliminating Gender-based Violence. Couple Curriculum Training Module"

Remember what happened. What words were said? **[Pause]** What were the expressions on people's faces? **[Pause]** On your face? **[Pause]** How did it feel to have someone use power over you? **[Pause]** Try to remember your feelings specifically. What were your emotions? Did you feel angry, sad, ashamed, not able to react, something else? **[Pause]** Now, when you are ready, open your eyes.

Now turn to your neighbor and share this experience in which you felt a lack of power. Describe your experience briefly, and explain how it made you feel when someone had power over you.

- ? You have just remembered what it's like to have someone use her or his power over you. How did it make you feel to be in that situation?
- ? Think about our community. Are there particular groups of people who typically use more power than others? Who?
- ? Are men as a group typically able to use more power than women?
- ? How do men use their power?
- ? Do you think women in our community feel the same emotions you had in the situation you imagined?

Power can be used positively and negatively.

We all have power within us, even if sometimes we don't realize it.

Using our power over others often violates their human rights and might not allow them to live out fully as per our faith values. Neither men nor women should use their power over each other in a couple relationship. Couples should use their power to make their relationship better.

We can join our power with others to change our community for the better. We all have power to do something, to act.



Story (10 minutes):

Male Facilitator – Say:

[Show Picture 10 the illustration of Mateyo and Yohane talking]

Yohane was having a problem, and he decided to seek advice from his friend, Mateyo, the friend he trusted most.

“Thank you for seeing me,” Yohane said. “I want to talk to you about something. This is hard for me to tell you, but I need to tell someone, and you’re my closet friend...” He paused and took a deep breath, “My wife and I have some kind of problem with sex,” he paused again, “I want to have sex, and she just lies there like a log. This is nothing like what I had imagined sex would be like.”

“I’m sorry to hear that you’re having problems. And thank you for trusting me with this sensitive information. Have you talked it over with her?” Mateyo asked.

“How do I even start?” Yohane concluded.

"I think it helps to start with what brings you and your wife pleasure. What brings you pleasure or excites you may be different from what brings your wife pleasure or excites her. Sometimes desire comes to us all of a sudden, and other times desire is in response to things that feel good or make us feel special. My wife appreciates when I show her tenderness during the day, or when I listen when she tells me what feels good to her," Mateyo said.

"What do you mean? She is the one who should care about me feeling good. Isn't that how it's supposed to be? That she is supposed to cater to me?" Yohane complained.

"Yohane.. your wife is not supposed to cater for you. You have to cater for each other. To enjoy sex, both people need to feel desire. Think about how tired we both were when we worked on the job last month. We nearly fell asleep riding the vehicle on the way home each day." Mateyo said.

"I was much too tired for sex at that time but my wife is tired all the time!" . She doesn't seem to have any desire." Yohane replied.

"You have three very young children at home. Is she still nursing one of them?" Mateyo asked.

"Yes, she is," Yohane said. "She is up through the night with the baby and the other children. She also works hard at our house and the animals each day."

"It's good that you notice these things, Yohane. When men and women try to understand one another, they take good steps toward learning more about each other. They can learn together what brings each other pleasure."

"That sounds good, but I thought this kind of thing would be easier. Are we normal?"

"Sometimes passion just happens in a moment, but most of the time, desire gets built up between people caring for each other, trusting each other, and caring about their sexual relationship. Sex is a gift intended for couples to strengthen their bond of love. But the gift and beauty of sex gets damaged through selfishness and being inconsiderate. We can make it beautiful again in our relationships by emphasizing trust. Sex is meant to be exciting and enjoyable by both wife and husband." **[Show Picture 7 the illustration of the couple looking at each other]**

"Really? How?"

"Try building up desire. Think about what your wife likes. Does she like to hear you tell her she's beautiful? Does she like to get a kiss from you before you leave for work?" Mateyo continued, "When you get home in the evening, does she like to be embraced? Does she like your help with the children? Listen to her and find out what raises her desire."

"Just like putting a deposit in a bank, we all have a bank in our hearts that needs regular deposits of love. Try to understand your wife's point of view and try to understand how to love her best. Show her kindness and respect throughout the day. Find out what helps her to relax and increase her desire rather than expecting that she needs to cater to your sexual needs all the time."

Yohane doubtfully asked, "You think this will change her attitude to sex?"

"(Laughing) I think this will change both of you. You will learn what brings each of you desire. We are not perfect, but listening to each other and learning what brings the other person pleasure and desire has worked for Chisomo and me all these years." Mateyo continued, "You need to concentrate on giving pleasure to your wife rather than just getting pleasure yourself. Ask her how she would like you to touch her, and encourage her to enjoy the experience with you."



Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

[Break out in gender-specific groups for males and females.]

- ? What was the problem that Yohane felt about having sex with his wife?
- ? What do you think was causing Yohane's wife to respond to sex in the way she was? What might she have been thinking about her sexual relationship with her husband?
- ? What action did he take to get help?
- ? How did Mateyo respond?
- ? What did Mateyo advise?
- ? How do you think Yohane's wife will respond if he follows Mateyo's advice?
- ? What do our faith values say when respecting and honoring our partners?
- ? What advice can we give our partner as to what pleases us?

[After the discussion, bring the women and men back to gather to report back to the whole group. Have the group compare similarities or differences.]



Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Sex is intended to be satisfying to both husband and wife. It is good to express to your husband or wife, as our faith values tell us to do. Sex is never meant to be selfish or harmful to your spouse. Sex should be a gift that is given and received with joy. If sex is a burden, it is very important to talk about it together. Talk openly about what you can do to bring joy again. Never make sex a demand. If you have problems with sex, get some help from someone you both trust to counsel you wisely. Sex may bring the blessing of children. Couples need to plan for the healthy timing and spacing of children before having sex. We will talk more about this.

For now, in your heart, consider this question:

- ? Are you building trust in your relationship? Are you making learning about each other's desire and pleasure a priority? Why or why not?
- ? Are you listening to each other and thinking about what gives the other person pleasure? Is sex something that is coerced or invited? How do you feel when the other person turns you down or says no?

[Allow for five minutes of quiet reflection.]



Homework (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Ask:

- ?** What are some of the challenges we face today in building trust? Ask each other whether you feel heard and respected in your relationship.

- ?** How can we prioritize each other's pleasure and desire?

This week in the quietness of the night and in your own home, talk with your spouse about this session. Tell each other how you build trust and find delight in each other. Decide together how you can increase that delight.

SESSION 6: THE PROTECTED FAMILY (PART 1)

Notes to Facilitators

Time: 2 hours

Every life is precious and good. Because of this, couples need to plan well to protect every precious life with honor, health, and opportunity for a good education. This is particularly true for girls and those with special health needs or disabilities. This session will introduce the importance of valuing and protecting life and learning about a woman's monthly cycle to understand fertility.

Facilitators should invite a community health worker to Session 6 and Session 7. Please plan ahead of time so that the community health worker is able to come to the meeting and review the materials and speaking points ahead of time with him/her. You may need to adjust the time/place to accommodate their schedule.

Session Objectives

During this session participants will:

- Understand the importance of protecting the family by deciding together how many children to have, and when to have children.
- Understand when a woman can become pregnant in her monthly cycle
- Discuss how we can learn from the different views of others
- Interact with a local community health worker to learn about family planning

Materials

- 31 dried beans or small stones
- A community health worker is invited to Session 6 and 7. Please make arrangements ahead of time to invite your local community health worker and provide details on what is expected of them at the meeting according to the instructions in the manual
- Picture 11: Umbrella or illustration of umbrella
- Picture 12: Picture with 3 Rows of Circles (7 open circles on the top row, 12 on the second row that are shaded in, and 12 open circles on the third row)
- Any pamphlets or brochures on sexually transmitted diseases from the Ministry of Health

Contextualization

Please note that materials should be adapted to local context (For example, names and references to trees, etc.).



Review (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Welcome back, everyone!

Last week we discussed the beautiful gift of sex. There were two important ways for relationships to have healthy sex. One was to build trust, and the other was to seek each other's pleasure.

Today we are going to continue discussing our bodies, specifically how we can protect and strengthen our families and protect our bodies by planning how many children to have.



Introduction (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Today we will talk about how to protect our families from poverty or poor health that may come with having many children. When we have many children, we can also struggle to care for and educate each one. It is good when we think ahead and decide as a couple how many children we can successfully care for children and protect from poverty.

Male Facilitator – Say:

[Show umbrella or Picture 11 an illustration of an umbrella]

- ?** What do you see in this umbrella? **[Open umbrella if one is available]**
- ?** What is this used for?
 - *Possible responses: to protect us from the rain, to protect our children from the sun*
- ?** What are some things that are important to you in your family to protect? **[Take a moment with another couple and discuss together, then return to the group and give an opportunity for couples to share.]**
 - *Possible responses: our health, our children, the right to get an education, our farms, respect in the community, etc.*



Agree/Disagree Game⁵ (30 minutes)

[Try not to voice your own opinions or ideas about the statements but allow participants to engage with each other. Don't force people to share why they chose "agree" or "disagree," but invite them to share only if they wish. If you find any participants seem uncomfortable making a public "agree/disagree" decision for any statement, reassure them that they can "pass" or skip a statement by remaining in the middle. There doesn't need to be a resolution from the activity or agreement – the point is the discussion itself.]

⁵ This is adapted from: Pathfinder International (2013) 'GREAT Scalable Toolkit'.

Male Facilitator – Say:

Now we will play a game.

Let's all stand up and stand in the middle of the room, ensuring physical distancing and safe space between each other due to COVID-19.

I am going to read a few statements out. If you “agree” with the statement, you must go to the right side of the room. If you “disagree” with the statement, you must run to the left side of the room.

If you would like to, please tell us why you agree or disagree.

Statements:

- A woman is not a real woman until she has given birth to a child.
- A man will not be respected by his community until he is a father.
- A real man has a male child.
- Only the man should decide when to use contraception and when to try to get pregnant.
- It is healthy to wait at least two years after having a first child before trying to become pregnant with a second child.
- It is only the woman's responsibility to prevent pregnancy.

? Was anything surprising during this game?

? Did anyone want to change their mind after hearing the opinions of others?

It is good to discuss and debate our ideas. This helps us learn from others and respectfully share our opinions.



Story (15 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Mateyo and Chisomo were relaxing by sitting together outdoors in the late afternoon as the sun was setting beyond the hills. The children were kicking the ball in the yard not far away.

“We are so blessed,” Mateyo said as he watched the children play.

“Yes,” Chisomo agreed.

“I think it is time we stopped,” Mateyo said.

“Stopped what?” Chisomo asked.

“Stopped having more children,” Mateyo said as he went on. “I have been thinking of our past few conversations. You're right. Our lives are full. We have plenty of responsibilities to care for and to educate our children well. I want to do a good job with them. I want them to have the very best we can give them. Let's stop having more children and go to the clinic together to learn what to do. We know about fertility methods, but I would like to learn more. I also want to protect your health. Your last pregnancy with Rute was really hard. We need your body to have the strength

to care for us and to do some things you would like to do — like grow your business, as you told me a few weeks ago.”

Chisomo had a very big smile on her face, remembering her dream to expand her business someday

“Thank you, Mateyo. I know this was a big decision for you, and I’m grateful that you have been thinking on this especially all the things we spoke about a few weeks ago,” Chisomo said.

The next day they went to the health center and met the nurse.

“Welcome.” Nurse Jane said. “My name is Nurse Jane. I am here to help you talk about your family and how to care for each member very well. First, I want you to know that your health is very important as a couple. You already know we have a special clinic for pregnant women and family planning, but we also have a special clinic to help care for men. Sometimes we wrongly leave out the men. They also need care and support.”

“Thank you, Nurse Jane,” said Mateyo. “We have come today because we talked together as a couple and with our respected religious leader. We have decided we want to learn about methods of family planning. We already have three children, and we have decided we would like to stop having children for now at least so we can care for each one very well with the resources given to us. In our faith, we believe that all life is precious, and we want to be sure we can take good care of each life given to us. We want to have enough food and enough resources to educate our children well. Can you help us?”

“I would be delighted to help you. It is very good that you have come and have come together to make this decision as a couple. Here, let me get some pictures and family planning items so you can see all the options and choose the best one for you.”

Nurse Jane shows Chisomo and Mateyo a poster of contraception options. “You have a number of choices; all of them are good, but some are more effective than others. Have you heard of some of these?”

“Yes,” Chisomo answered. “I have heard of pills and injections.”

“Good,” Jane said. “These are both good options, and each has differences I can share with you. The pills you take every day – without missing any days. The injection I can give you and it lasts for about three months. Many women like to use the injection because it does not require daily reminders like the pill. There is also a very small implant that the health center can put in your arm. This is a small, flexible plastic rod. That can last for a lot longer. The implant is also more effective than the pill, injections or condoms.”

“Have you heard of any other ways?”

“Yes,” Chisomo continued. “My sister talked about counting the days of the monthly cycle. That way, we can know which days are days to get pregnant and which are not.”

“Yes,” Jane said. “That is also good if you really take care to count every month and avoid sex in the usual way during the fertile days. Do you remember how many days are the fertile days?”

“About 12,” Chisomo said.

“That is correct. For 12 days, you cannot have sex in the usual way, otherwise you could get pregnant. During those 12 days, you should abstain from having sex or use a condom if you are not trying to become pregnant. You can have sex during your bleeding days. That is not within the fertility period.”

“OK, what other ways have you heard of?” Jane said.

“We know about the condom. But we do not know if we would like to use that.”

“You can try it,” Jane said. “Many couples think they will not like it, but they have never tried it. Often, they are surprised in a good way. There are male condoms but also female condoms – which are inserted into the vagina just before sex. Condoms are also a way to prevent pregnancy. You can get condoms from the clinic, or you can buy them, but you have to use them correctly. Many couples like to use them because they are more accessible and don’t have any side effects. However, you have to use them consistently and correctly each time.”

“Another way,” Jane went on, “is the coil, or an intrauterine device. It is inserted at the health clinic. The doctor inserts it into the woman’s vagina, and it just stays there. It is very small, and you don’t feel it. It prevents pregnancy very well for 5-10 years. Many people like this method because it doesn’t affect women’s hormones. When you want to have a child, you go back to the clinic, and they simply remove it.”

Finally, if you have a baby six months old or younger and you are only breastfeeding without giving any other food or water at all, and you also have not started the monthly cycle again, you are not likely to get pregnant. As soon as you start giving food at six months, you should continue breastfeeding but also use a different way to prevent pregnancy. That is very important since it is not healthy for you or your baby to get pregnant so soon.”

“So let’s review. What ways do you remember?”

“The condom,” Mateyo said.

“Pills, injections, and an implant,” Chisomo said.

“Counting the days of the monthly cycle,” Mateyo said.

“We also learned about the coil that stays in the vagina until the health center removes it.”

“Good,” Jane said.

“Do you have some questions?”

“Yes,” Chisomo said. “My friends have told me many stories about some of these methods. They say there are so many side effects.”

“I have heard those same stories.” Jane continued. “Side effects can occur, but they are often rare. Also, once you choose the method, we will go over potential side effects to look out for. It is always good to ask the experts at the clinic if you have any concerns rather than rely on rumors and stories from friends. Remember, the health workers are happy to help you.”

“Thank you,” Jane. Can we get the help we need today once we decide?” asked Mateyo.

“For sure!” Jane said. “I am ready to help you any day. Please let me know what you decide together.”



Discussion Questions (15 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Ask:

- ? What did Chisomo and Mateyo decide to do about having more children?

- ? How did Mateyo come to the conclusion that he was ready to stop having more children? Did it happen after one conversation or was it over a long period of discussion and thought/reflection?
- ? What did Chisomo and Mateyo learn from Nurse Jane?
- ? What method of family planning do you think Chisomo and Mateyo will decide to use?
- ? What questions do you have about planning for your future?
- ? What are the main barriers you face about using a form of contraception to plan your family? How do you think these barriers could be overcome?



Community Health Worker Visit: Presentation of Fertile Cycle and Family Planning Methods (30 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

We want to introduce a special guest now who can share more ways that we can plan for children.

Community Health Worker – Say:

Thank you for inviting me to speak today. I am here to give a very brief presentation and talk about our bodies. Our bodies are designed beautifully. We need to protect them, build strong families, and ensure each one can reach their dreams—each child, man and woman. Proper timing and spacing of pregnancies can protect the lives of mothers and protect the lives of children. Women are much more likely to have complications and not survive pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period when births are too great in number, too early, or not adequately spaced apart. Planning for spaced pregnancies also protects children against small size at birth and low birth weight, stunting and underweight, and early death. Families are best protected when they follow three guidelines:

- Delaying the first pregnancy until the mother is at least age 18
- Waiting at least 24 months after a live birth before attempting the next pregnancy
- Waiting at least six months after a miscarriage before attempting the next pregnancy

Planning for protected families means understanding how our bodies work and when a woman or adolescent girl can become pregnant.

A woman and adolescent girl's body has a cycle of changes each month that enables her to get pregnant during certain days if she has sex during those days. We call these fertile days, meaning it is like the fertile fields when we plant our gardens. If everything is ready—the soil is ready, the fertilizer is ready, the rains are ready, and we have the seed. When we plant the seed, the garden will grow.

All those things come together on certain days of the month. This is a very sacred time and one we must understand and plan for. It is important that as couples in a long-term relationship, you both talk to each other about whether you want to have children, and how many children you would like to have and jointly care for. If we plan well, we are more likely to have a good outcome

for our families. If we do not plan well, the woman and the child may have poor health outcomes, and our families may face many other problems that result from not being able to take care of our children.

To do this well, we need to understand the days a woman is fertile. We need to understand that these are the days when having sex will very, very likely bring a child. We also need to understand that we can plan to delay pregnancy until the timing is good for the other children in the family, for the mother, and for the father. This does not mean we are outside of our faith values. It means just the opposite. It means that we are planning together to follow our faith values and the command to care well for the children we are blessed with—those we already have or will have in the future when the time is right.

Additionally, protecting yourself from sexually transmitted disease is an important aspect of caring for yourselves and your families. I have some brochures and pamphlets here with some information for you to look at. Please let me know if you have any question on this as our time together is very short today.

Female Facilitator – Show:

[Show Picture 12 with three rows of circles or draw matching circles in the ground]:

Community Health Worker – Say:

We will use these circles and dried beans/stones to demonstrate how couples can learn about and count the fertile days of a woman's monthly cycle. This is important so we can protect the dreams for our children and not have children too close together in age.

This method works best if the woman's monthly cycles are between 26 and 32 days long. If you count the number of days from your first day of bleeding one month to the first day of bleeding the next month and discover your monthly cycle is shorter than 26 days or longer than 32 days, this way of counting may not work for you. For most women, this method of tracking fertility is a good fit.

The first circle on the top row with seven circles **[Point to the upper left circle]** represents the first day of the monthly period—when the woman starts to bleed. We will put a stone there. Add a stone to the next circle on the top row the next day. Continue to add a stone along the top row each day. These seven filled circles represent the first seven days of the monthly cycle when bleeding begins and you are not considered fertile. You may bleed all of these days or just a few of them. That is normal. Having sex during these seven days is unlikely to result in pregnancy.

On the eighth day, add a stone to the first circle on the middle row, which has 12 circles. **[Place the eighth stone in the first circle of the second row]** Each day, add a stone to a new circle along this row. During these 12 days, women are considered fertile, and a woman can get pregnant if she has sex. Abstain from sex or use a condom during sex these days to avoid pregnancy.

After these 12 days through the end of your cycle, there is another window in which you are no longer fertile and can have unprotected sex. Add a stone daily to keep track until you start bleeding again. When this happens, remove all the stones and start counting over at day one on the top row. You may not fill the last row with stones if your cycle is less than 31 days. Remember to start counting from the top when your next bleeding cycle begins.

This method can help us count the days and know when pregnancy can happen. Then we can plan to avoid sex that enters the woman those days and enjoy sex with your spouse in other ways.

You can make your own version of these counting circles at home to keep track of your cycle. We can also use beads or other similar items to keep track of our cycle.

This is a very short presentation, and I'm happy to take your questions before going to the next part of the presentation.

[Allow time for questions.]



Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Thank you to our community health worker for that very good presentation. And thank you for the questions that you raised. We will now take a few moments for each couple to discuss and think about the Lesson together. Turn to your spouse and ask one another what you think about the idea of protecting your family by planning the number and timing of your children. Also, discuss with your spouse what materials at home you could use to make your own Counting Circles.

[Allow couples to privately talk for five minutes]



Homework (2 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

At home, talk together about the dreams you have for your children. Make a plan together on how you will reach those dreams and how you will protect your family from problems that could keep them from reaching their dreams. Look over the materials provided by the community health worker. It can be useful to decide together whether you would like to have children and how many children you will have so that each one will be able to reach their dreams.

SESSION 7: THE PROTECTED FAMILY (PART 2)

Notes to Facilitators

Time: 2 hours

This is the second segment of the protected family session and will discuss family planning methods. Couples build upon their friendship and consider the values they hold to jointly decide what family planning method best suits their family needs. Their plan should reflect a plan to protect every precious life with honor, health, and opportunity for a good education. As a facilitator, your role is to share the benefits of protecting a family by planning the timing and number of children to have and to promote conversations among couples to make these decisions together. You can also point couples to the options they have for family planning by sharing a Family Planning Methods Wall Chart (see Annex below). However, the counseling on specific family planning methods should be done by a health provider. This is one of the main reasons to invite community health worker to participate in this session and to answer questions that come up from the couples. As couples raise questions about various family planning options, refer them to the nearest health facility for further guidance. Ultimately, a health provider will be able to provide the necessary information for couples to make a choice that fits their needs and desires.

Facilitators should invite a community health worker to Session 6 and Session 7. Please plan ahead of time so that the community health worker is able to come to the meeting and review the materials and speaking points ahead of time with him/her. You may need to adjust the time/place to accommodate their schedule.

Lesson Objectives

During this session participants will:

- Understand the importance of protecting the family by deciding how many children to have
- Learn about different family planning methods
- Discuss how decisions are made in the household

Materials

- Review Annex 1 (Family Planning Guidance) and have a printed copy of the one-page illustrations on different methods of family planning for this session
- Sticks to make two large squares
- Seven rocks or pieces of cloth
- Two loaves of bread/ugali mounds/packets of biscuits

Contextualization

Please note that materials should be adapted to local context (For example, names and references to trees, etc.).



Review and Introduction (3 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Last time we learned about a method to understand fertility.

- ? Can someone review it for us?
- ? Did anyone have a chance to discuss the dreams for your family with your husband or wife?
- ? Has anyone decided to start using this method for tracking fertility? If so, please describe what you are learning. **[Give time for a couple to describe their experience of using the fertility method]**



Game (30 minutes)

[You will also need to prepare the space before this session. Use sticks to construct two squares on the floor each representing a house big enough to accommodate four people standing upright. Bring seven rocks/pieces of cloth that can be used in the role play. You will also need two loaves of bread/packets of biscuits/balls of ugali. The role-playing part of this activity should take less than ten minutes so that the remaining 20 minutes are for discussion.]

Male Facilitator – Say:

Today we are going to tell a story about two couples, Chisomo and Mateyo, and John and Rosa.

- ? Could we ask for two couples to help us act this story out?

Let's have Chisomo and Mateyo come and stand in this house. The second couple will stand in the house next door.

John and Mateyo are cousins, and they married on the same day. Mateyo married Chisomo and John married Rosa.

In the first year of marriage, the two couples each had their first child. **[Give each couple a rock or a cloth to act as a baby.]**

Chisomo and Mateyo decide to plan their family together, learning ways to create time and space between Chisomo's pregnancies. John and Rosa did not initiate family planning, and John refused to discuss this issue. In the second year of marriage, John and Rosa had their second child. **[Give John and Rosa a rock or a cloth to act as a baby.]**

In the third year of marriage, John and Rosa had their third child. **[Give John and Rosa a rock or a cloth to act as a baby.]**

In the fourth year of marriage, both couples had a child each. **[Give each couple a rock or a cloth to act as a baby.]**

In the fifth year of marriage, John and Rosa had their fifth child. **[Give John and Rosa a rock or a cloth to act as a baby.]**

In the sixth year of marriage, both couples had a child each. **[Give each couple a rock or a cloth to act as a baby.]**

In the seventh year of marriage, John and Rosa had their seventh child. **[Give John and Rosa a rock or a cloth to act as a baby.]**

Now we can see that John and Rosa have seven children, and Chisomo and Mateyo have three children.

Now here is a loaf of bread for each family. This bread represents the resources the family has. **[Hand a loaf of bread to each couple.]**

Distribute this bread among your family members, and then show us how much bread you have for each parent and child.

Female Facilitator – Say:

First, I'm going to ask our actors for today some questions.

- ?** How did it feel to do this activity?
- ?** Was there anything that you noticed about how you acted during this activity?

Now let's discuss as a group what we just saw.

- ?** What impacted you as you were watching this role play?
- ?** What might happen if family planning is not used?
 - *Possible responses: unplanned pregnancies, financial pressure, insufficient resources, poor health for women, poor health for children.*
- ?** Who thinks about birth control or contraception more? Is it the man or the woman? Why do you think this is?
- ?** When do men talk about birth control or contraception, if at all? Do they talk about it if they are in a committed relationship? Do men talk about contraception if they are just sleeping with women?
- ?** How do women feel about using family planning methods/contraception?
- ?** Why is it important for women and men to discuss family planning together?
- ?** What is one thing that you can do with your partner to plan a family and avoid unexpected pregnancies?



Community Health Worker Visit/Lesson: Presentation on Family Planning Methods (30 minutes)

[Using Annex 1 the one-page visual chart, the community health worker will provide a brief lesson on different methods of family planning that are often available from community health workers or in local pharmacies and can answer questions.]

Community Health Worker – Say:

Thank you for that robust discussion. This story shows the economic consequences to families who do not plan. There are sometimes health problems as well. Specifically, these health problems can affect women and children.

Without proper spacing of two years between pregnancies, women's bodies are put under a lot of pressure. They need time to let their bodies recover before a new pregnancy. Additionally, spacing and timing pregnancies help children. For example, if a woman gets pregnant soon after giving birth, her body may not be able to nurture her next child. This can cause complications for the baby in her womb. Pregnancy can also deplete a mother's milk, making it harder to breastfeed the child she already has. This can cause poor nutrition for the older baby. Allowing at least two years between pregnancies helps mother and baby.

One support for families can be long-acting contraceptives. (community health workers will talk about the types of long-acting contraceptives available for women within the communities. These may include implants or IUDs.) In the story of Mateyo and Chisomo from last week, an option like this was a good choice when they decided not to continue having children.

Having a conversation about how many children you want to have and what form of family planning method you use is important for any couple having sex. Deciding together about the plan helps to prevent unplanned pregnancies.

Religious leaders, Community Health Workers, Health Clinic staff, and sometimes our friends can be resources to help us understand how to have healthy families. As couples, we can decide how many children we can have so that each child has the best opportunities and that every family member's well-being is protected. It is important to know all the facts about each method from a trusted source and understand our situation. There are many ways to prevent pregnancy until the time is good for your family. Each couple should decide what way is good for them and be sure to use it responsibly.

Some are very simple and do not require reminders or thinking, like the injection or the coil (intrauterine device/IUD).

Others require daily attention, like taking a pill, counting days, or putting on a condom.

Others are permanent solutions if a couple does not want to have more children at all. This is a good option for couples who are satisfied with the number of children they have.

For some couples, religious traditions or cultural taboos may influence the decision to choose a certain method over another.

But to be sure, there is a method that can meet every couple's needs.

Be sure to discover that method and adhere to it consistently to be a happy family for the sake of your family for generations to come.

? Do any of you have questions about family planning methods?

To wrap up this activity, think quietly to yourself about your family planning values.

? Is there a family planning method that you would feel comfortable using?



Game: Who Makes Decisions?⁶ (30 minutes)

[Choose 3-5 of the statements below that you feel are most relevant to your context (don't use all of them). After reading each statement, invite a few participants to explain why they chose that particular person. If people are unsure, encourage them to think about who makes the decision most of the time. Spend about ten minutes playing the game and then allow 20 minutes for discussion.]

Female Facilitator – Say:

Today we will finish by talking about who makes decisions in the family.

Let's all stand up and go to the middle of the room.

On the left of the room, we will allocate as the man's side. On the right, we will allocate as the woman's side. In the middle, we will allocate the space for women and men together.

I will read a series of statements, and you need to run to whichever side represents the person who typically makes decisions about this topic.

Ready? Let's start! **[Read just the 3-5 questions you previously selected]**

- ? Who decides who does the housework?
- ? Who decides if or when a pregnant woman can go to the health facility?
- ? Who decides what the children will eat?
- ? Who decides which food to buy?
- ? Who decides what to do with the money that is earned?
- ? Who decides if children need medical care or vaccinations?
- ? Who decides if children should be punished?
- ? Who decides when to have sex?
- ? Who decides how many children they should have?

⁶ This is adapted from: Plan & Promundo (2020) "Father's Club Manual. Engaging Men in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, and in Sexual and Reproductive Health for the Multi-country SHOW Program"

? Who decides when a girl should be married?

Let's come back to our seats.

? What types of decisions do women usually make? Why is this?

? What types of decisions do men usually make? Why is this?

? What did you notice about who makes the important decisions?

? Is it fair that some people have more power in decision-making than others?

? What happens when someone does not have the power to make or participate in decisions that directly affect their lives? What problems occur when one person makes all the important decisions for the family?

- *For example, if men are the sole decision-makers on the number of children to have, this takes away his wife's right to make decisions over her own body and puts her health at risk. It also further burdens her with the task of taking care of more children than she may be able to. Men can feel large amounts of stress with having to make all the decisions in the family. They also feel the burden of being the sole provider for the needs of their family.*

- Are there any disadvantages to sharing decisions? Why or why not?
- What are the benefits to a husband and wife sharing power and making decisions together?



Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Think about the values you have relating to family planning. I will ask four questions and provide a few minutes to reflect silently on your answers briefly.

? What would you say to Nurse Jane if she asked you what method would you feel comfortable using? **[Wait two minutes for reflection]**

? What method would you take home? **[Wait two minutes for reflection]**

? Now think about how you can discuss the various options with your partner. **[Wait two minutes for reflection]**

? Do you think you could come to a decision together as a couple on what method would be best for your family? **[Wait two minutes for reflection]**



Homework (2 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Decide in the next week what contraception method you will talk over with your spouse. Decide together about which method you will use every day as a couple so your children will reach their dreams. Make a plan with your spouse to invite your Community Health Worker to visit you or to attend the clinic together.

SESSION 8: COMMUNICATING WITH YOUTH/YOUNG PEOPLE

Notes to Facilitators

Time: 2 hours

We learned last session about the dreams we have for our children and family planning. When a marriage relationship is enjoyed with honor, mutual respect, and life commitment it is a beautiful celebration and dreams are realized.

Today's session focuses on some challenging topics: early child marriage and the importance of talking to our young children about sexuality and their changing bodies.

Lesson Objectives

During this session participants will:

- Understand the importance of earning a young person's trust so that they can openly discuss concerns with you
- Discuss the importance of talking to our young children about puberty, their changing bodies and sexuality.

Materials

- Contact information for the local community health worker or faith leader who has undergone Family Life Education training.

Contextualization

Please note that materials should be adapted to local context (For example, names and references to trees, etc.).



Review and Introduction (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Welcome back! It's great to see you all again.

Last week we discussed the importance of planning ahead for our families by identifying which contraception we will use. We talked about how women and men can share decision-making.

Today we are going to start by returning to our story. Today we will be hearing about the oldest daughter of Chisomo and Mateyo – Chikondi.



Story (15 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

One day Chisomo and Mateyo’s oldest daughter, Chikondi, who is 11 years old, visited her Aunt Judith. Chikondi had something specific she wanted to talk about with Aunt Judith - relationships with boys. She wanted to get her advice.

“Welcome Chikondi. I’m very happy to see you,” said Aunt Judith.

“Thank you, Auntie. I’m glad to see you as well”, Chikondi replied.

After they caught up on the local news from the family and community and had a cup of tea together, Chikondi started to discuss the purpose of their visit.

“I wanted to get your advice, Aunt Judith. Lately, I have noticed that my friends are starting to talk about boys more. My friend, who is 14 years old, just got married a few months ago. Soon it could be my turn! I guess I am a bit worried about this.”

“Marriage is a big step”, Aunt Judith said. “You know, it is very important, Chikondi, that you have dreams that you work toward. It is very important that you stay in school to achieve those dreams. Getting married early is common in our culture, but it can also have negative consequences. If your body is not ready for bearing children, it can cause serious health problems for you and your future baby. Marriage is a big step and needs to be considered carefully – when you are ready.”

“Yes, Auntie,” said Chikondi. “That is what I want. I still want to finish school and go to university before getting married. My dream is to be a teacher, and I’m worried if I marry too soon, it won’t happen. However, some girls in my class were saying that I don’t have to get married to enjoy myself with boys. I don’t understand what it means to enjoy with boys. There is a boy in my class who is very nice to me, he helps me carry my books, and lately, he has been sitting next to me every day. Yesterday he asked me if I wanted to go with him after school. I like to spend time with him, but I’m also worried about what he wants to do. What does it mean to enjoy time with boys, Auntie?”

“I am so glad you asked,” Aunt Judith said. “Chikondi, you will grow into a fine young woman in the next few years. You will grow breasts just like mine. Your hips will widen, and your body will experience many changes. While that happens, you will also experience some changes in your mind, as you notice boys more. Boys will come to like you, and you will also come to like some boys. Those girls in your class talking about enjoying time with boys are talking about sexual enjoyment. Do you understand what it means to have sex?”

“I want to tell you something, Auntie. Will you promise not to tell my mother?” Chikondi blushed and looked down.

Aunt Judith replied, “I cannot promise not to tell your mother, especially if it has to do with your safety. However, I promise to be very careful with whom I share your trusted information. Do you trust me to do that?”

Chikondi replied, “Yes, Auntie. I trust you. You have always listened to me. Even when I was very young, you took good care of me. I can tell you.”

“Yesterday, when that boy told me to go with him after school, I went with him. We went to the fields close to the river, behind the school. No one saw us. When we got to the river, he hugged me and said he loved me. Then he touched my breasts. I felt very confused, I liked what he was

doing, but I also felt very ashamed. He asked me to take off my shirt, but I felt very confused, so I ran away and went straight home.”

“Today, I saw him in school, and I stayed away from him, but I was very confused as I really like him. I don’t want him to go to another girl. I’m not sure what to do.” Chikondi started crying softly.

Aunt Judith put her arm around her. “Oh, my dear Chikondi. Thank you for sharing with me. I’m so proud of you for telling me. You’re a sweet, honest girl. Let me tell you, the confusion you’re experiencing is very normal. Your body and mind are undergoing some changes, and what you feel is very normal.”

“However, I will need to tell you – what that boy is doing is not right. You felt ashamed and ran away when he asked you to take off your shirt because you knew in your heart that it was not the right thing to do. I’m very proud of you for doing that.”

“You know, this sexual enjoyment is very good and normal. However, it must be practiced in a safe, loving, committed relationship. When you give your body to another person, you must trust that he will take care of your body and mind, as you do. Touching your private parts like your breast or vagina is only reserved for those with the right to do so. And that right is only reserved for a special person you will commit to in a long-term relationship when you’re much older. Furthermore, my dear Chikondi, as you told me earlier – you want to go to university and become a teacher. The unfortunate reality is that if you allow yourself this sexual enjoyment at this young age, you could easily contract a sexually transmitted disease or even get pregnant. Do you understand, my sweet girl?”

“Yes, Auntie,” Chikondi replied softly. “We also had a recent session with teachers at school who told us about these things. I also learned the importance of saying no if I felt uncomfortable or someone forced me to do something I didn’t want to do.”

“Yes, it is very important to get help if you are experiencing violence. In every relationship, there should be mutual respect and love. Our faith values teach us the dignity of each person should be protected and valued. This means everyone deserves value. When a young boy asks you to do something that you are not comfortable with, this is an example of violence and power. Do you understand what I’m saying, my dear girl?”

Chikondi listened intently to her Aunt Judith, who explained many things to her. She also explained to Chikondi how she can access further information from her local nurse at the health center as well as the community health worker.

As they closed the conversation, Aunt Judith asked, “May I have your permission to tell your mother what we discussed? I think she should also have a chance to hear from you and your heart and how you’re doing at school?”

“Do you think she will get angry, Aunt Judith?” Chikondi asked.

“I promise you, if I know my sister Chisomo well, she will not get angry. She will be very happy that you discussed these matters very openly.”

“Thank you, Auntie. I really appreciate this conversation and feel much better.”



Discussion Questions (25 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Ask:

- ? In the story, what advice does Aunt Judith give Chikondi about her changing body? What does she say about marrying before being ready?
- ? Why does Chikondi choose to confide with Aunt Judith?
 - o *Possible answers: she chose to confide with someone she trusted. Discuss the importance of establishing trust with young people, and having an open relationship with them*
- ? From what sources of information is 11-year-old Chikondi learning about her changing body?
 - o *Possible answers: Teacher, friends, Aunt Judith. [Talk about the fact that peer influence is very strong at this age and that adults should learn to communicate with young people in such a way that allows them to be heard and listened to.]*
- ? How did Aunt Judith close the conversation to ensure that she could share the details of her conversation with Chikondi's mother? **[Discuss the importance of trust with young children.]**
- ? How did the young boy in Chikondi's class establish power over Chikondi to get her to a secluded spot?
- ? Do you think Chikondi should get married at 11 years or in the next few years? Why or why not?
- ? Where can you (as parents of young people) get more information on this topic of puberty and communicating on sexual health? **[Possible answers: CHWs, WR/SCOPE-trained Faith Leader who has gone through Family Life Education training, Care Group Volunteer]**



Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Today we have covered some challenging topics. We might feel personally challenged to change how we think about issues like early marriage for girls. We might have been challenged in our own understanding of how to communicate with our young children about sensitive topics such as sexuality and teenage pregnancies. Let's take a few minutes to reflect on how we can apply what we have learned.

[Allow 5 minutes for quiet reflection]



Homework (2 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Think about the topics of child marriage and teenage pregnancies, as well young people in sexual relationships and talk over your reflections with your partner. If you have a young son or daughter between the ages of 10 and 19, plan how you will discuss some of these topics with them. Call your community health worker and local faith leaders who have been trained to discuss these sensitive topics with young people, and ask for advice on how to speak with them.

SESSION 9: THE BROKEN RELATIONSHIP

Notes to Facilitators

Time: 2 hours

Some relationships get broken over time. This may be in the physical relationship including sex or different forms of physical harm, or it can be mental or emotional abuse. All forms of abuse are wrong and should never be justified, excused, or overlooked. The consequences of broken relationships and abuse are deep, harmful and lasting. Where there is abuse, the responsibility to love our partner with our heart, soul, mind, and body is violated. Many problems result. Some of these problems such as lack of trust or the risk of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV will be a far-reaching consequence.

It is important here to mention to everyone that if they experience violence and need help, there is support available. Ahead of this session, the facilitator should have a list of trusted service providers: counselors, social workers, community health workers, faith leaders, etc. Share this list with participants so that they or others they know can seek help in situations of violence or abuse.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, it is very important to pay attention to verbal and non-verbal communication to identify people who are uncomfortable and may not want to participate. In this session in particular, people should not feel they have to participate (i.e., they should feel safe to communicate, and silence is okay).

Lesson Objectives

During this session participants will:

- Discuss and identify different kinds of domestic abuse and the consequences
- Reflect on problems in their families and extended families needing support
- Identify the kinds of support needed and available in the local community and from health, legal, and social service providers
- Discuss the impacts of violence in the community and the potential for change

Materials

- Pamphlets or information about health care, social welfare, and legal services that are available for people who have experienced violence in their homes, and others
- Picture 2: Illustration of a baobab tree
- Picture 5: Illustration of the fallen baobab tree (with a rotten inside)
- Picture 13: Illustration of Chisomo comforting Pauline.
- Picture 14: Illustration of Yosefe beating Pauline



Review (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Last week we discussed the importance of being ready to commit to a long-term relationship like marriage and how our young girls and boys should be educated and informed on the consequences of engaging in sexual behavior outside of long-term committed relationships, especially when they're young. This is something for us to think about as our children get older.

? Does anyone remember what we discussed?



Guided Imagery Activity (30 minutes)⁷

[It is important not to rush this activity. The pauses specified in the story below are important, so make sure you stop and allow participants to absorb the words you have spoken. Speak in a slow and gentle voice.]

Male Facilitator – Say:

Now we will do an activity that requires listening and using your imagination. I will read a story to you. I will ask you to imagine you are some of the characters in the story. Men, you may have to really use your imagination and put yourself in a woman's shoes for this activity.

Before we start, get comfortable, and close your eyes. Get ready to focus on the words I say. Breathe in slowly and out slowly to release tension from your body. Do this three times to ensure you are relaxed. **[Allow time for everyone to breathe and relax]**

- Think about the community where you live and imagine that you are a woman living there. Imagine that it is early in the morning and, as usual, you are taking care of your family and things around the house. Observe who is around. Is anyone helping you take care of the home? Do you have enough money to buy the food for the family today? What are you thinking about? How do you feel in this house? **[Pause]**
- You walk out of your house and are now in the street, seeing other people. You see another woman washing clothes. What do you think life is like for her? Do you think her husband treats her well? **[Pause]**
- You see a young woman on her way to work. She has a bruise on her face. How did she get that bruise? Does she have support from people around her? Who does she talk to about what is happening in her relationship? **[Pause]**
- You see a pregnant woman with three young children beside her. She looks sad and tired. Why do you think she is sad? How much say does she have in what happens to her? **[Pause]**
- You continue to walk down the street. What do you see? Do you see women carrying buckets of water? Do you see women taking care of children? What are the women doing? How many different things do you see women doing that are unpaid? Look around for men. What are they doing? Who are they with? **[Pause]**

⁷ Adapted from: Raising Voices, "SASA: Rethinking Violence Guide"

- You see an old woman with wrinkled skin and grey hair. She is sitting on the ground begging. How did she get there? What is the story of her life? What do you think she has been through? **[Pause]**
- You see a young girl playing next to the old woman. She is wearing a torn dress and is sitting in the dirt. What will her life be like? What can she hope for in the future? **[Pause]**
- Now imagine that you travel forward in time. Imagine that your community has been working to prevent violence against women for some years, and the work has been well received. Women’s rights are now being respected, and their needs are being taken seriously. There have been positive changes for women in the community **[Pause]**
- Remember the young girl in the torn dress playing next to the old woman. Imagine that you see her again, now grown-up. What is her life like as an adult? Is it similar to the women you saw earlier, or is her life different? Have things improved? **[Pause]**
- Look around in the community; what do you see? How are women treated differently as a result of the success of your work? How have women’s lives changed? Take a few moments to imagine this. Think of the woman washing clothes, remember the young woman with the bruised face, and the old woman begging. How will their lives have changed? Are they treated with respect? Do they have a say in their families? Are they able to make decisions for themselves? **[Pause to allow participants to imagine this in detail]**

When you are ready, breathe in slowly and breathe out slowly, releasing tension in your body. Take two more deep breaths. When ready, slowly open your eyes and return to the group.

Thank you for participating in this activity. Let’s talk about what we felt and imagined during this exercise.

- ? What does it mean to be a woman in your community? What are women’s lives like?
- ? Why do you think women may be poor?
- ? Why do you think women may suffer so much violence?
- ? Do you see opportunities for women in your community?
- ? What did you imagine when I asked you to imagine the future?
- ? How did you see women’s experiences and feelings change in this new future?
- ? How do we get from our present reality to realizing our future hopes? What needs to happen?

In our sessions, we have talked about power, status and violence. We have discussed some of the challenges women face in society. As communities, it is important, that we are aware of the different power held by different groups. We want our marriages and families to reflect how power is shared, where each person has a voice and where everyone is treated with dignity and respect – as our faith values teach us.

Now we will return to our story.



Story (15 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

A Saturday afternoon, Chisomo’s friend Pauline came to visit her. Her eyes were red and swollen from crying, “What’s wrong, my friend? Why do you look so sad?” Chisomo said as she hugged her friend. **[Show Picture 13 the illustration of Chisomo comforting Pauline]**

Tears began to roll down Pauline’s cheeks. Chisomo continued to comfort her with a hug. Slowly Pauline calmed down.

“Now sit down here,” Chisomo said, leading her friend to a chair, “what happened to make you so sad?”

“I don’t even know where to start,” Pauline said as she sat down. “I never believed such a thing could happen to me,” she continued as she wiped her tears, “I thought that Yosefe loved me...”

“But of course, he does,” Chisomo said. “What could he have done to make you think otherwise?”

“I can’t even find the words to explain,” Pauline sat silently for a long time, then said, “Yosefe has been treating me very harshly lately. He’s cut me off from any money, and I am struggling to feed the children.”

Chisomo was too shocked to respond.

[Show Picture 14 illustration of Yosefe speaking harshly with Pauline]

“He told me that it started after the birth of our last child. He complained that I had no time for him because I was always busy with the children. He even said that I was not as attractive as I used to be...,” Pauline said as she burst into tears.

“I’m so sorry!” Chisomo said as she moved closer to hold her friend’s shoulder.

“I don’t know what to do. I feel so hurt by his words and his actions. On our wedding day, we promised to be faithful to one another. Everything seemed fine at first, but then he started being unkind, especially whenever he got money and got drunk. He shouts at me, blames me for everything, and says I have no time for him, even though he does nothing to help with the farm, the children, or his mother, whom I care for. Now, as if caring for our children is not enough, I am worried that he might be sleeping with someone else, and I worry about sexually transmitted diseases he might have gotten, or if I might get one too!”

“Have you talked about this with him?” Chisomo asked.

“How can I when he thinks it’s all my fault!” Pauline replied, “I’m worried that he will beat me. I feel so angry and helpless. I came to you because I don’t know what to do.”

“I’m so sorry,” Chisomo said, embracing Pauline as she started crying.

“I am here for you, Pauline. I want to let you know you are not alone, and you will not have to share this burden alone.

Chisomo’s mind wandered back to what their faith leader Banda told the congregation last week. The teaching was about a man helping his friend in times of trouble and leaning on faith amid hardship.

Chisomo continued, "We will have troubles in this life. They are very painful. But we are here to help you see that and help you with the support you will need."

Pauline then said, "Thank you. It helps to talk to you about this."

Chisomo said, "You know, many people in our community can support us through issues like this. When Mateyo and I used to struggle with conflict in our marriage a few years ago, we went to see our faith leader. He asked us to see him weekly so we could discuss our marital conflicts with him. Through that process, I have learned how to use my voice. Let me encourage you to speak with our faith leader Banda and his wife. They're very experienced in counseling and can support you."

A few days later, Chisomo came back to check on Pauline. She was surprised to hear Pauline singing loudly while she busily poured honey into pots for their business.

"Good morning Chisomo!" Pauline said happily. "It's a beautiful day, isn't it!"

"Hi, Pauline! It is a beautiful day. How are you? You seem much better."

Pauline smiled. "Yes, things are much better. I have always been afraid of letting others know about my problems. But it really helped to talk to you. And actually, my husband talked to his friend also. His friend suggested we meet with our trusted faith leaders to talk about some of our problems together."

Chisomo responded, "Counselling can be a very helpful way to work through conflicts in marriage. I told you yesterday that when Mateyo and I first got married, we had some very angry arguments, and an older couple from our community really helped us."

Pauline said, "We have only had one meeting this morning, but it was so helpful. The faith leader and his wife listened to both of us. For the first time, I could tell my husband about how frustrated I feel. He understood this for the first time. And he said that he wants me to follow my dreams with our honey business and to keep working on expanding into the next town. He was so supportive. We still have a long way to go, but that first meeting was a great start!"

"That's great to hear, Pauline. I'm sorry you've experienced conflict in your marriage, but you should know that it is very normal. Seeking help is also very good and healthy. I hope the counseling continues to be helpful."



Discussion Questions (20 minutes)

[Separate men and women into two groups, and ask each of the following questions, one at a time. Allow participants to give their responses to each question for about 15 mins. Some possible responses are in italics. After 15 minutes, bring the two groups together to have a joint discussion where a summary/highlights can be shared with the larger group.]

- ?** What are some traditional views of marriage that are harmful?
- *Possible answers: husband always controls the family and the wife must submit, the husband leaves the family, the husband has other wives or women and comes and goes, the wife is always told to endure problems, the husband may beat his wife, the woman must have sex with another male relative if her husband dies*

- ?** Why does violence occur in families?

- Possible answers: because of inequality between women and men, men occupying a higher status/power than women

? What issues is Pauline facing in her marriage?

- Possible answers: too much responsibility/work, unfaithfulness from husband, economic abuse, physical abuse

? In what ways does Yosefe abuse Pauline?

- Possible answers: harsh, hurtful words, or sharing responsibility, unfaithfulness, cutting her off from money

? What risks did he bring to his marriage by being unfaithful?

- Possible answers: broken trust, destroyed self-value, sexually transmitted disease, possible separation of family and eventual struggle to care for children

? What would you advise Pauline to do about the problems she is facing?

- Possible answers: seek advice and counseling from a trusted source like a religious leader or family member, talk to husband openly about his unfaithfulness, go together for sexually transmitted disease test, seek help immediately when abused



Lesson Presentation (15 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Ask:

? What are some of the problems that Pauline mentioned in the story?

[Wait on responses and then continue]

Female Facilitator – Say:

In many communities, including here, violence often occurs from a man toward a woman. We may be used to seeing violence in our communities. But, just because we think it is normal does not mean it is right.

It is never justified to use violence in your marriage—even if it is a common social norm in our community—and it can have long-lasting damage to your entire family. If you or anyone you know is experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual violence or abuse, encourage them to get help. This might mean talking to a health provider, a counselor, a religious leader, a friend or a family member.

Male Facilitator – Say:

Remember our tree image from the last few sessions? Building trust and having open communication drives away fears in our relationship.

[Show Picture 2 the illustration of the healthy baobab tree] A baobab tree is strong from the inside. When the inside is strong, the wide trunk will not crumble, and the outside is protected from wind, fire, and storms.

[Show Picture 5 the illustration of the fallen and hollow baobab tree] There is fear in a household when love is not protected, and power and strength are used to abuse. The trunk of marriage is weak when women are abused through physical beatings, demeaning emotional statements and disrespect, unfaithfulness or being told they are not valuable. These women need protection. It is very important to have a safe place where the women know they can go for help, safety, and medical treatment if they need it. They also need a safe person to listen to and counsel them. Any form of violence is never acceptable, even if others do not see it and everything looks fine on the outside.

Healthy family relationships are strong inside and outside the trunk, like the big baobab. The strength is found in working at a marriage together; by talking and listening to each other; honoring and respecting each other. If one party refuses to work together, then assistance must be found. Violence must never be accepted.



Small Discussion Groups (20 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Let us break into two groups—the men talking to men and women talking to women. The question to discuss is,

? “What makes someone a good support when I am facing a challenge?”

[Allow for 10 minutes of discussion. Afterward, have a representative from each group report to the whole group. Have the group compare any similarities or differences.]

Male Facilitator – Say:

Sometimes in our households we face challenges that we need not face alone. We need to reach out to people we trust who can provide wise counsel for us as we face our issues as individuals and as a couple.

Here are some examples of times in which outside support can be important:

- When a couple has a disagreement that they cannot resolve, a faith leader, lay counselor, or trusted elder may be able to help them understand each other and come to a resolution together.
- When women or children are abused or abandoned, they need protection and support. Women must not simply endure abuse or abandonment. They need support that gives them the courage to get help. **[Please provide specific information about children's social and legal services available.]**
- When a person with disabilities needs support so that s/he can live her/his best life, then the community services and neighbors are available to encourage and provide accommodations.
- When someone in the household cannot control his/her temper, there may be lay counselors or others who can help the person learn other ways to cope or to manage the things that set off the anger in the first place. This kind of help can take time, and it is important that someone having issues with anger does not harm the people that he/she is closest to.

Some places that families can find support:

- Faith Community: consider going to your religious leader, your *Families Together* leaders, or a wise couple in your community of friends for counsel.
- Local government: if an issue of health or abuse is going on, reach out to a Community Health Worker, the health center or a representative from the Ministry of Gender if possible to access specific services that you or your spouse might need. The Ministry of Health or Ministry of Gender can also provide referrals and case management for more serious concerns.
- Traditional leaders: advocate to traditional leaders to change practices harmful to families.
- Police: in cases of violence or abuse, the police (or the community police) may be solicited to get involved if they are a trusted source of protection.



Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Take a few moments to reflect on how physical and emotional abuse causes fear and breaks trust in a marriage and family. If you have ever experienced or know others who have experienced this kind of abuse, consider its damage and what it would take to heal such broken relationships.

[Allow 5 minutes for silent reflection]



Homework (2 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

[Show Pictures 2 and 5 the illustrations of the two baobab trees – one broken and one healthy.]

Think about your own family, your friends, and your own relationships at home this week.

- ? Is the inside of your relationship as strong as the outside looks to others, like a healthy baobab? What will you do to strengthen your relationship and ensure everyone inside is loved and protected?
- ? Think also about your community. How can you support people who might be experiencing violence? What would you do differently when you experience sadness, anger, or other strong feelings to ensure that you care for yourself and others well?
- ? As a couple, talk about some of the challenges you face in your marriage. Then talk about what you might need to address these things to remove these crocodiles. Do you need to reach out to someone trustworthy for support? Commit to one thing you will work on this week to find a safe, healthy way forward.

SESSION 10: THE SUPPORTIVE FAMILY

Notes to Facilitators

Time: 2 hours

This is the final lesson. Hopefully couples have found and adopted new ways to make their relationships stronger and healthier than before. Hopefully, the participants see that love, trust and protection is the foundation for a strong and lifelong marriage relationship. Allow time and a safe space for participants to share openly; encourage them to share what they have learned, affirm them for behaviors they have decided to changing for the better, note how their attitudes toward and understanding of one another has improved, and acknowledge what actions they have committed to take in the future.

Session Objectives

During this session participants will:

- Consider the meaning of love and mutual trust in a long-term relationship
- Discuss what couples wants are with regard to the size of their families
- Discuss choosing a family planning method meeting their couple's values
- Reflect on how their marriage will be different in the future

Materials

- A small snack/refreshment to celebrate the final lesson together
- Picture 2: Illustration of a baobab tree
- Picture 5: Illustration of the fallen baobab tree (with a rotten inside)
- Picture 7: Illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo looking lovingly at each other

Contextualization

Please note that materials should be adapted to local context (For example, names and references to trees, etc.).



Review (5 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

In the last lesson, we discussed how to seek help when we need it.

- ?** Who would like to review what they learned from this session?



Introduction (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

This is the final lesson in our series. We have learned so much about attitudes and actions that can promote being a happy family and couple. Let's summarize some of the things we have learned throughout our time together.

- ?** What topics or lessons stand out most from our time together over the last ten lessons?
[Listen to their answers: add only what they do not mention]
- *Possible answers: to develop trust, be friends, to talk together and make decisions together, to enjoy sex together, to be committed and faithful to each other, to protect one another, to seek help from others in the community, to never tolerate violence, to support each other in times of difficulty, to plan healthy families through child spacing and family planning.*

Let's remind ourselves of the baobab tree **[Show Pictures 2 and 5 the illustrations of the tree].**

- ?** What will give our marriages a strong trunk to support the tree?
- *Possible answers: mutual trust, faithfulness, pleasure in sex, friendship.*
- ?** What will destroy the tree so that the trunk crumbles?
- *Possible answers: unfaithfulness, violence, disrespect, lack of communication, lack of support, lack of love and care*

In this final lesson, we will look at how we can express love in our words and actions. We will work to commit to loving one another.



Story (10 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

[Show Picture 7 the illustration of Mateyo and Chisomo looking lovingly at each other]

Female Facilitator – Say:

Mateyo returned from work. He found Chisomo in the kitchen preparing tea for him. He noticed she looked clean and smelled fresh, wearing a nice dress. Her hair was neatly tucked back. She gave him the cup and sat down in the chair next to him.

“Oh, thank you, my love,” Mateyo said as he sipped his tea.

Chisomo smiled. She noticed that lately, Mateyo was calling her by a pet name, and she liked it. It made her feel very special and honored by him. She also noticed he was thanking her for things that she normally did. It was nice to have things noticed and appreciated. She felt warm inside and content.

Mateyo took another sip of tea and then pulled something from his pocket.

“I have a surprise for you today,” Mateyo said.

“A surprise? It’s not our anniversary or my birthday. What do you mean, a surprise?” Chisomo looked down with a broad grin.

“I know,” Mateyo said. “But I have been thinking. I don’t tell you often enough how much you mean to me, how good you make me feel as your husband, how much I love you. I decided this time to back up my words with a little gift. I love you, Chisomo. I appreciate all you do for our family. You mean everything to me.”

“Really?” Chisomo said. “I’ve never heard you say these things before.”

“I know,” Mateyo continued. “There are things I want to change. I want our love and marriage to be a happy one all our lives. I want you to know that I appreciate you. I don’t want to just expect things from you, like this cup of tea or the children you have given us. I want you to know I appreciate and love you not for the things you do but for who you are. You are clever and beautiful, and I am blessed to be your husband. It is time I told you that.”

“Oh my,” Chisomo said. She could hardly believe what she was hearing. She took Mateyo’s hand and reached over to hug him.

“Thank you, Mateyo,” Chisomo said. “That means so much to me.”

“Here, Chisomo. It is a small gift, but one I have been saving up for to surprise you with.”

Chisomo took the bag and opened it. It was a new pair of shoes with a nice bag to match—a beautiful bright yellow.

Chisomo beamed with delight. She quickly tore off her worn sandal and tried on the shoes. She proudly walked in front of her husband, wearing her new shoes and holding her bag at her waist as if she were a fashion model.

“You look so beautiful, Chisomo.”

Chisomo blushed and gave her husband another hug.

“But more than the shoes and bag, I want to love you with my heart, mind, soul, and strength for the rest of our lives. I have been thinking about our conversation about children and family. It took me some time to think about it, but I truly understand that you told me what you thought and felt about expanding our family and having more children.”

“I want you to know that I would like to follow up with what Nurse Jane said about getting a vasectomy. I think it’s time that I also showed you my love by action. You also deserve to grow your business and dreams. I also agree that our family size is perfect for us, despite what others in our community say about having more children. Tomorrow we can go to Nurse Jane to get more information on this so I can help you.”

“Oh, thank you,” Chisomo said. “But are you sure about the vasectomy? It’s a permanent and a surgical procedure.”

“Yes, Chisomo. I am sure. We have been discussing this for many weeks, and it was not a decision I made lightly. By discussing with you over the last month or so, we decided together that we should stop having children. And getting a vasectomy is a one-time and permanent solution so that we do not have continually ask you to keep going back to the health center every month for pills or get an injection every few months. It’s a good solution. Do you think so, too?”

“Mateyo, I am so grateful to hear you say all these things. I agree with you. And I love you too, with my heart, mind, soul, and strength,” Chisomo replied.

Mateyo then helped Chisomo with the washing up after the meal. He turned out the lights in the kitchen, gently took Chisomo's hand, and led her to their bedroom. A soft light flickered in the corner.

"I want to see you now *without* those pretty yellow shoes and bag, my love," said Mateyo as he gently kissed her, led her to the bed, and knelt down to take off her shoes.



Discussion Questions (15 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Ask:

[Ask each of the following questions, one at a time. Allow participants to respond to each question and then summarize what they have said before asking the next question.]

- ?** How did Chisomo show her love to her husband?
 - *Possible answers: prepared tea and a nice meal just the way he liked it, she talked openly with him about issues important to both of them and spent time with him, she is running a business to support their family*

- ?** How did Mateyo show his love to his wife?
 - *Possible answers: brought her a surprise, told her how much he loved her, spent time with her, helped her do the washing up, praised her, gave her a pet name, was gentle and loving to her before getting into bed with her*

- ?** What sacrifice did Mateyo make to show his love?
 - *Possible answers: he saved up his money to buy her a special surprise, he also decided to undergo a surgical procedure (vasectomy) so that they could stop having more children*

- ?** What sacrifice did Chisomo make for her husband?
 - *Possible answers: she prepared for his return, bought his favorite fish and prepared a lovely meal, she works hard to run a business to earn extra money for their family.*

- ?** How did Chisomo and Mateyo come to the conclusion that a vasectomy was the best solution for their family planning needs?
 - *Discuss the importance of talking and discussing jointly as a couple. Discuss how it took Mateyo some time and that it took Chisomo some courage to bring up the topic, even though this was outside of their cultural and social norm in their community*



Lesson Presentation (5 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

Our faith teaches us that love is more than words. It also has actions. So often, when couples first get together, they remember this. Still, over time, life gets busy, and couples may not pay attention

to giving love, building trust, or keeping enjoyable sex a priority. In our story today, Mateyo showed love to his wife even though they had been married for many years. He showed his love without expecting anything in return, and Chisomo also showed him love.

Loving each other and building trust as a couple may take time. We will need to be brave and talk about things like how many children we want to have together, what kind of sex feels good to us, what kind of contraception we want to use, and what our true feelings are (even when those feelings aren't the most acceptable). When we love each other and show each other that we are trustworthy through lots of those conversations, we find ourselves feeling safe and opening up more in other ways, too. This kind of love shines out to others, and reflects our faith values.



Small Discussion Groups (20 minutes)

Female Facilitator – Say:

Let us break into two groups—the men talking to men and women talking to women. The question to discuss is,

- ? What is one conversation you and your partner need to have to build trust and love between the two of you?

[Allow for 10 minutes of discussion. Afterward, have a representative from each group report to the whole group. Have the group compare any similarities or differences.]



Wrap-up (20 minutes)

Male Facilitator – Say:

- ? What difference has *Families Together* made in your own lives, and what commitment will you make to changing your future? You do not have to share, but it would be wonderful to hear from as many of you as you feel comfortable sharing.

[Allow for responses, leaving adequate silent spaces for the opportunity to speak from everyone who wishes to]



Homework (2 minutes)

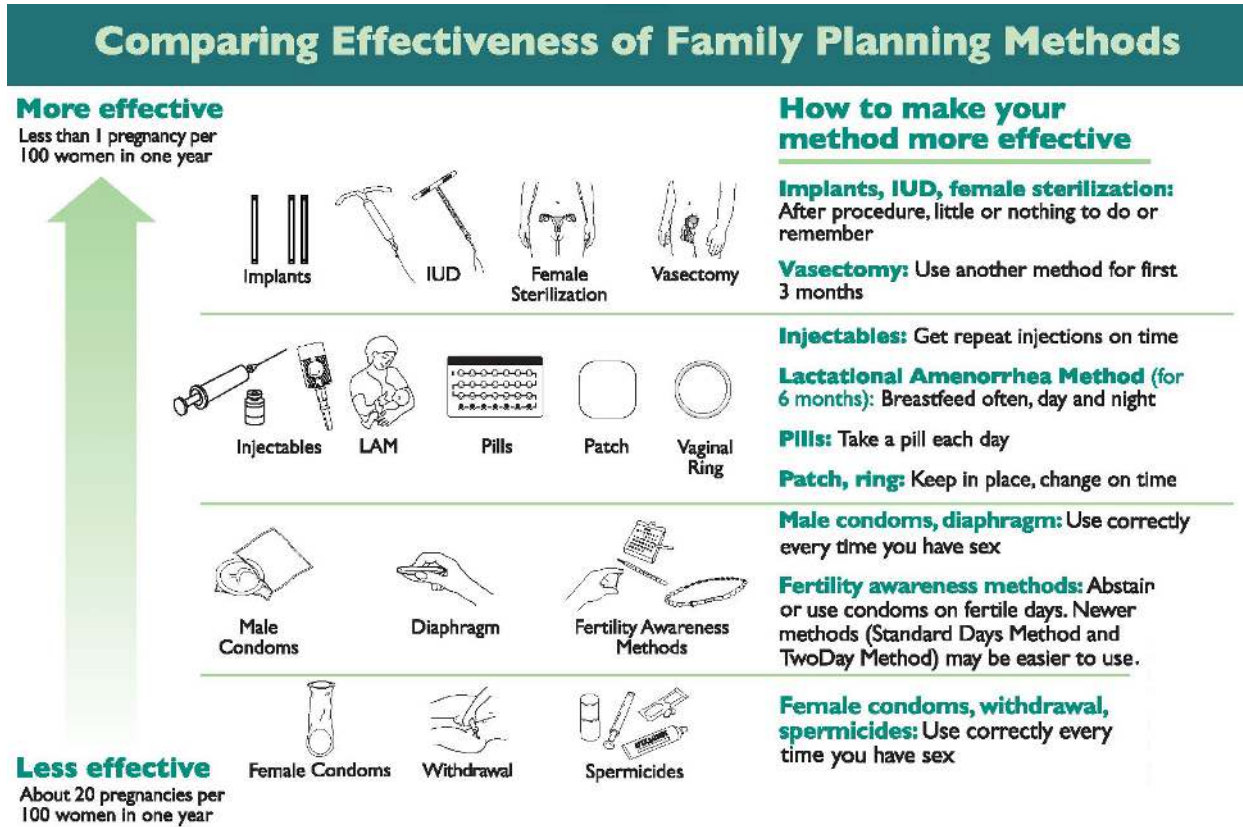
Female Facilitator – Say:

As we conclude our time together, I want to thank each of you for taking the time to commit to these sessions and for having the courage to engage in real, sometimes challenging, conversations to strengthen your families. By taking these steps towards strong, protected, healthy families, you are agents of change in your communities. I encourage you to share the information you and your spouses have learned with others—perhaps at a community gathering or at a family event. Consider also the opportunity to become a trainer for others in your community or congregation.

ANNEX 1: FAMILY PLANNING GUIDANCE

While facilitators have a captive audience in Session 7, it is an excellent opportunity to provide a broad overview of the various available family planning methods, including the “tagline” fact of how each method is used and its major pros and cons.

To prepare for Session 7, please print this [one-page visual chart](#) on family planning methods:



This [reference chart](#) has more detail on the pros and cons of each method and can be used as a reference for facilitators to learn about the methods.

For each option, providing this basic level of family planning guidance is also an opportunity for facilitators to offer support in making the first step (e.g., “Would you like me to call the health post nurse for you to see if they have Depo shots available right now?” or “Would you like me to follow-up in a few weeks’ time to see how your fertility tracking is going in case you have any further questions?”)

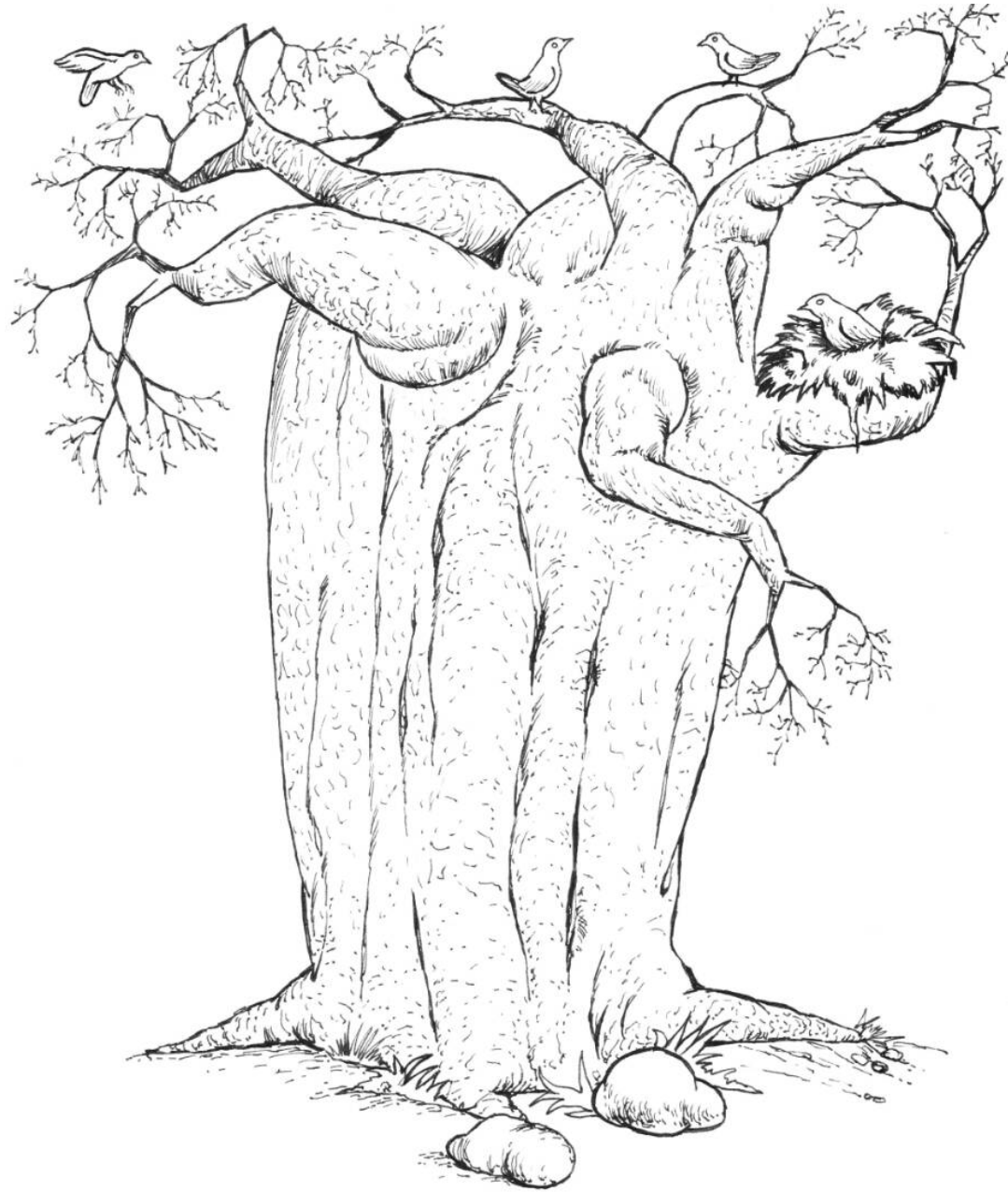
However, *Families for Life* facilitators are not expected to counsel or provide detailed information on family planning methods. This is the role of the health worker. For any contraception choice follow-up questions beyond what is spelled out in the wall-chart or for counseling on what is the best method for a particular couple, *Families for Life* facilitators should refer the couple to the nearest health facility and/or the community health worker within their community.

ANNEX 2: PRINTED ILLUSTRATIONS

Picture 1



Picture 2



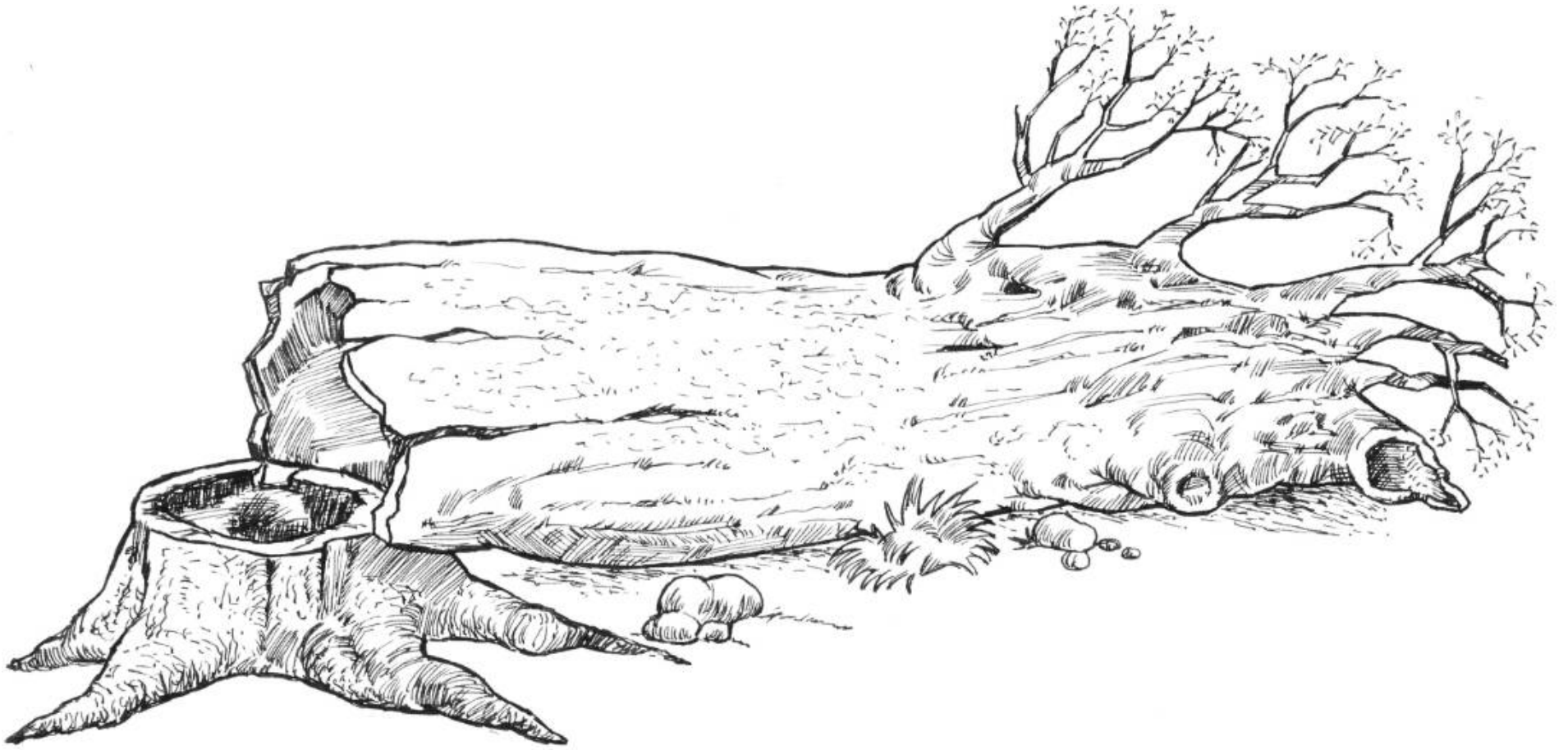
Picture 3



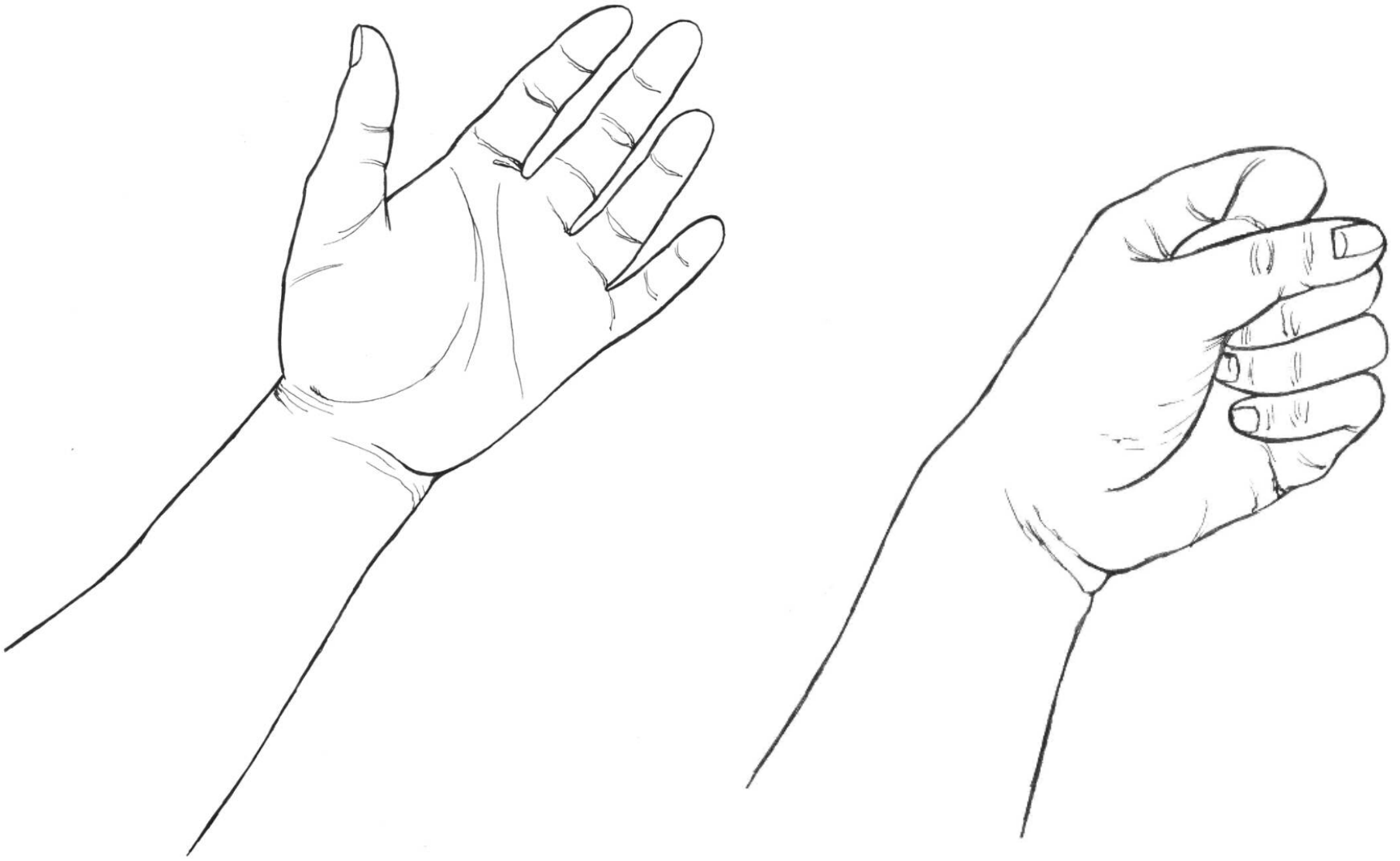
Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6



Picture 7



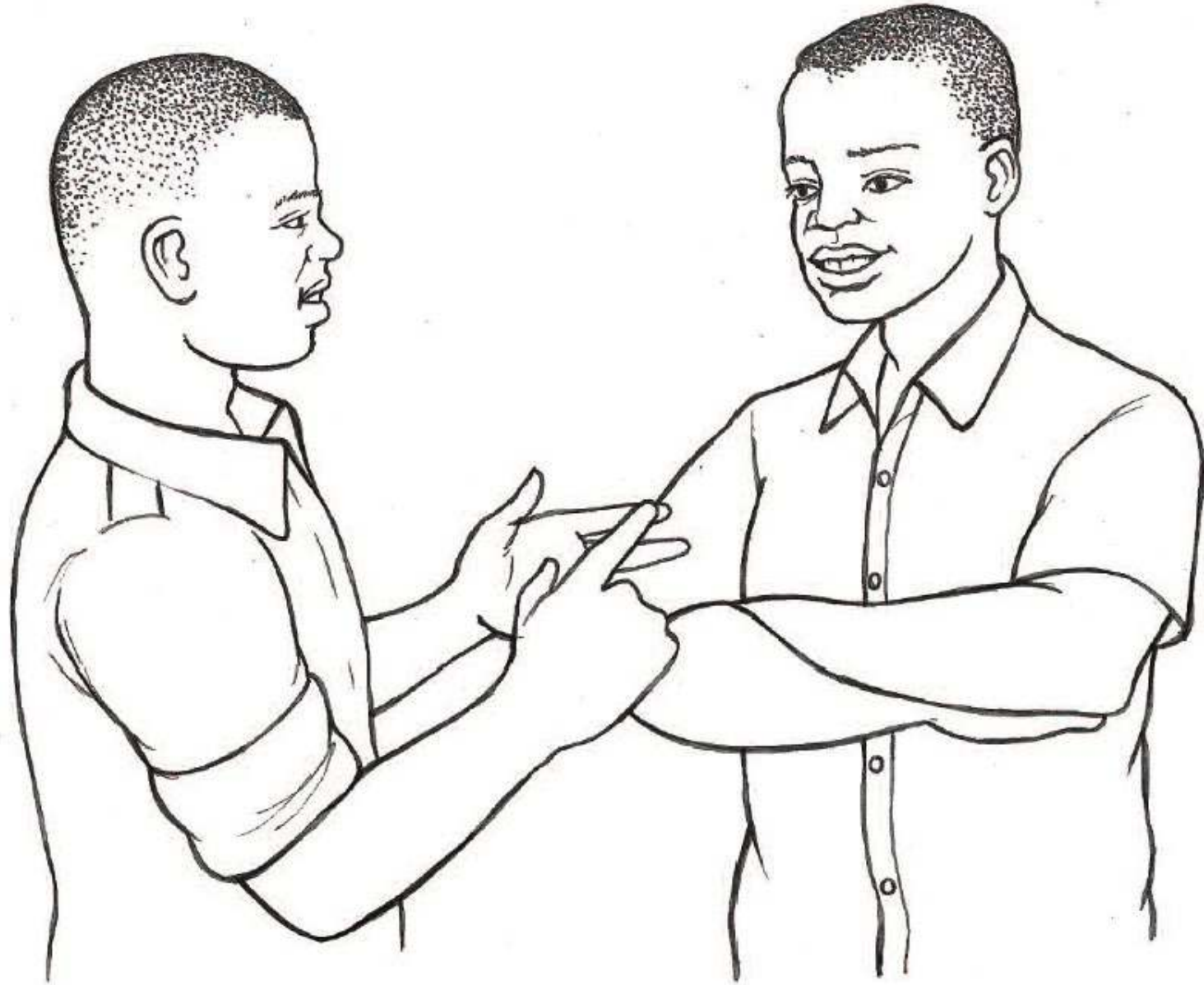
Picture 8



Picture 9



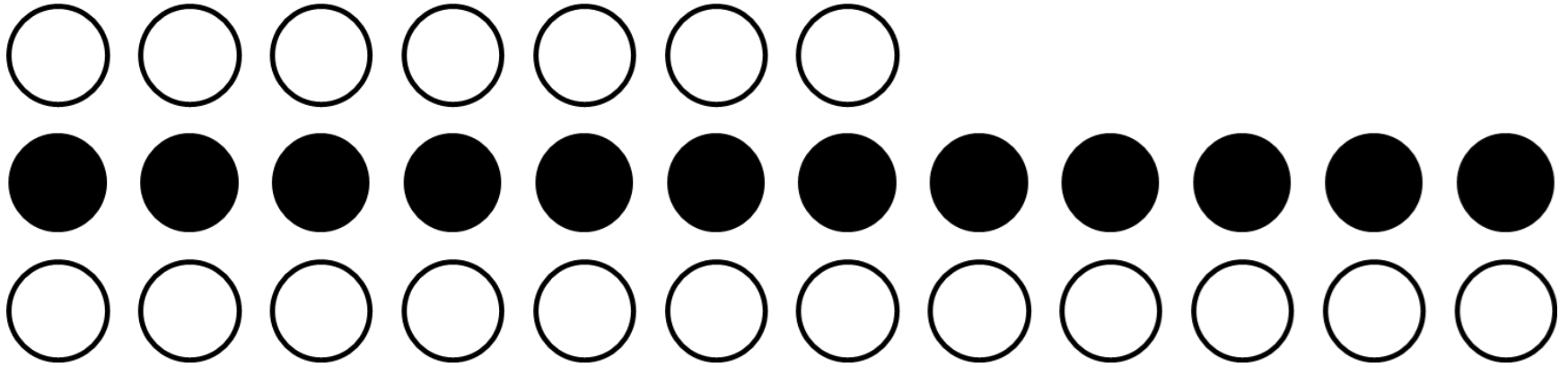
Picture 10



Picture 11



Picture 12



Picture 13



Picture 14

