



Pressure Points | Leader Guide

Introduction

No matter where we were born or where we live now, how much money we have or how little money we have, whether we live in the country or in the heart of the city; marriage is difficult. The good news is that you are not alone and your marital issues are not uncommon.

Marriage Pressure Points exists to offer relatable resources through dramatic short films and accompanying study guides. Our short films center on conflicts commonly faced in marriage and aim to reveal the brokenness in each of us that keeps us from having the healthy marriage God intends for us. The accompanying study guides are designed to help couples, on their own or in small groups, be proactive in addressing their issues through honest and grace-filled discussions.

We thank you for taking this step towards making your marriage the one that God intends for you and your spouse. Whether you are doing this study with just your spouse or with a small group of other couples, we know that these films and study guides will inspire dialogue. It is by working on our own brokenness though that change will truly come.

How To Use This Study

The Marriage Pressure Points Guide can be used as one study or split into multiple studies. Each film has 2 - 3 short lessons (2 - 3 questions each). Below is a list of the short films, along with the number of lessons as well as a brief description. There are also a few different ways for you to go about this study with your small group.

Here are some suggested ways to use the study.

1. **In its Entirety**

Of course, one way to use this study is exactly as you see it. One week per short film, doing all of the lessons associated with that short film to give you a 10-week study.

2. **By Category**

The ten short films are organized on our Resources page into three different categories.

a) **Addiction/Sex** - *Addict, Storms, Push and Cheater*

These four short films contain a total of 12 lessons for a more in-depth study on marital issues involving addictions and sex.

b) **Communication** - *Invisible, Last, and Angry*

The seven lessons in these three short films will give you the opportunity for a more in-depth study about common marital issues revolving around communication.

c) **Family** - *Priorities, Flattered, and Portrait*

The seven lessons in these three short films will give you the opportunity for a more in-depth study about common marital issues revolving around family.

3. A la Carte

Feel free to organize the study according to what films best suit the needs of your small group. You can mix and match to do each week by film (using all of the lessons for that film) or choose a small selection of the films to stretch into a longer, more in-depth study.

Descriptions of Films

Addict (3 lessons)

A newlywed wife discovers her husband's addiction to pornography. The two of them discuss its damaging effects on their relationship and how to move forward.

Angry (2 lessons)

A quiet-mannered husband confronts his wife about her anger issues toward their friends, their children and him.

Cheater (3 lessons)

A couple needs to have a raw and honest conversation about the husband's infidelity.

Flattered (2 lessons)

A young, briefly insecure wife reconnects with an old flame, which agitates her husband and puts her marriage at risk.

Invisible (2 lessons)

A construction worker's high-powered executive wife flirts heavily in the office, seeking attention outside of the marriage.

Last (3 lessons)

A newlywed wife is fed up with her husband's best friends taking priority in his life.

Portrait (3 lessons)

A captivating story about the emotions and tensions that divorced then remarried families face daily trying to understand their new roles in a step-family, and at the same time, trying to maintain a healthy new marriage.

Priorities (2 lessons)

One couple's story of how the endless details of life eroded their relationship without them even noticing. How a romantic 'happily ever after' can become an empty list of to-do's as life's priorities pile on.

Push (3 lessons)

A young married couple is spiraling out of control as a result of spousal abuse.

Storms (3 lessons)

A married couple struggles after several years of marriage to get on the same page regarding their sex life. We join them for one of their relationally tense counseling sessions, where the husband thinks too much of it, and the wife thinks too little of it. It is a familiar story about unmet and unknown expectations.



Group Guidelines

- **Confidentiality** It is difficult for people to open up when they don't trust the group. By having a "What happens in small group, stays in small group" attitude, it frees everyone up to be open and the entire group benefits.
- **Respect Your Spouse** Small group should never be the first time someone hears about an issue. Remind the couples not to bring an issue up or tell a story about their spouse without having discussed it and been given permission ahead of time.
- **Respect the Group** Each person is unique within the group. As such, they have different perspectives and solutions about situations. Group members should avoid giving unsolicited advice.
- **Do the Work** Members of the group should take the time each week to watch the film and do the accompanying lessons. Then, set aside a designated time (perhaps a date night) to discuss the lessons as a couple.
- **Honesty** It is important that the participants are honest, with themselves and with their spouse.
- **Openness** The group thrives on honesty and openness. Being open encourages others to do the same as well.

- **Share** Each time someone in the group shares, it not only helps their own marriage but speaks to the other couples in the group as well (whether or not they express it out loud)
- **Listen** Sometimes we wait for someone to finish speaking just so we can put in our “two cents”. This is different from listening. Each couple should make a point to listen to each other as well as others. Sometimes it is best to just respond, “Thank you for sharing.”
- **Work on Your Own ‘Stuff’** Oftentimes, people join marriage small groups in hopes of the spouse doing all the changing. The biggest gains in the marriage will happen when each person works on his/her own stuff. Have couples look at it as if there is a boundary line where each husband (and his stuff) is on one side and the wife is on the other. Each spouse should stay on his/her own side of the line and each spouse work on her/his own stuff.



Tips for Leading Small Group

- **Following the Leader** As the small group leader, other group members will follow your lead. By sticking to the above guidelines as well, you will set the example that your small group will follow. For instance, sharing your own struggles will encourage openness in the other couples and show them that they are not alone.
- **Lead, Don’t Teach** Your job in the small group is as a facilitator. The group looks to you for wisdom and guidance but remember that all members of the group will add value.
- **Awkward Silence is Okay** Whenever you ask questions (especially in the beginning of your time together), you will notice that awkward silence. Avoid jumping in. The longer the silence, the more likely that another group member will eventually answer.
- **Rabbit Holes Aren’t All Bad** Sometimes the group can get off track, either because the whole group gets off on a tangent or one person monopolizes group time. When it seems to reach the point where it is beyond beneficial (that’s up to you to decide), you can get back the helm by thanking them for their input and tying the topics discussed back to the subject for that evening.

It's okay if you are obvious about this. It is a good way to establish leadership and set boundaries.

- **Look Out for the Quiet Ones** There seems to be one in every group. The person who appears to have something to say but just sits in the group instead. Provide them the opportunity to speak by asking them directly what they think or to provide their answer for one of the questions. If they aren't comfortable, don't push. Just let them know that you'll check with them again another time.
- **Communicate Outside Group** Keep in contact regularly with your small group. By emailing a devotion you just read that spoke to you or texting someone when they had an important meeting, you are showing your group members that you genuinely are interested in them as a person. You will reap the rewards during your small group time.