

**Research Study by John Gottman, Ph.D.,
The Effectiveness of *The Art & Science of Love, A Workshop for Couples*
1999 - 2003**

Our research has shown that couples strongly benefit from participating in the workshop, *The Art & Science of Love, A Workshop for Couples*, especially if it is followed by multiple sessions of marital therapy using Gottman marital therapy methods. To assess the effectiveness of our two-day workshop we conducted a randomized clinical trial in Seattle with a racially and ethnically diverse representative sample of 100 distressed couples (Ryan & Gottman, unpublished). We now have one-year follow-up data from these couples.

In this research we studied five different groups, with 20 couples in each group. Each of the groups was given a different intervention to help their marriage. Here's what each group received:

- Group 1 – The first day only of the two-day workshop, *The Art and Science of Love* (ASL), which dealt with building friendship and intimacy
- Group 2 – The second day only of the two-day workshop, ASL, which focused on managing conflict
- Group 3 – Both days of the ASL workshop, integrating work on friendship, intimacy and conflict management
- Group 4 – The assignment for each couple to read the book by Gottman and Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*
- Group 5 – Both days of the ASL workshop plus 9 sessions of marital therapy using Gottman couples therapy methods.

All couples were evaluated on five different measures:

- Marital quality
- Friendship quality
- The quality of sex, romance and passion
- Constructive versus destructive conflict patterns
- The amount of 'meaning', goals, and values the couples shared (the "shared meaning" system)

Couples were assessed prior to their interventions, immediately following the interventions, and again after one year had passed. The one-year follow up was designed to assess relapse after treatment. We will be following these couples for 5 years in total.

The results of the study were the following:

- All interventions were effective at achieving the goals of improving the quality of sex, romance, and passion in couples and helping couples have less destructive and more constructive conflicts; however, the full two-day workshop (*The Art & Science of Love*) was the most effective intervention for accomplishing both of these goals.
- The couples' quality of friendship was also improved after the two-day ASL workshop, but without the additional 9 sessions of marital therapy, the friendship

quality relapsed after one year. However, with only 9 sessions of marital therapy added to the workshop, there was no relapse after one year.

- The shared meaning system also improved with the two-day ASL workshop, but for the women in these couples, the 9 sessions of therapy were again needed to avoid relapse after one year.
- When different marital therapies have been statistically evaluated for their ability to improve marital quality, the therapy average effect size ranges from .51 to .95 (summarized in a review paper by Bray and Jouriles, 1995, p. 463). We found that the effect size of the ASL 2-day workshop plus 9 sessions of Gottman method marital therapy equaled 7.39 for men and 5.06 for women, which demonstrated the considerable power of the workshop and marital therapy to help distressed couples.
- The couples who seemed to fare the worst, despite any of the interventions listed above, were those couples troubled by intense physiological flooding, minimal ability to repair destructive interactions, and high negative sentiment override (negativity overshadowing most of their interactions). The analyses of these couples revealed the need for improved interventions to both reduce flooding and enhance self-soothing.

Two figures from the Ryan & Gottman paper are reproduced below.

Reference

Bray, J. H. & Jouriles, E.N. (1995). Treatment of marital conflict and prevention of divorce. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 21(4), 461-473.

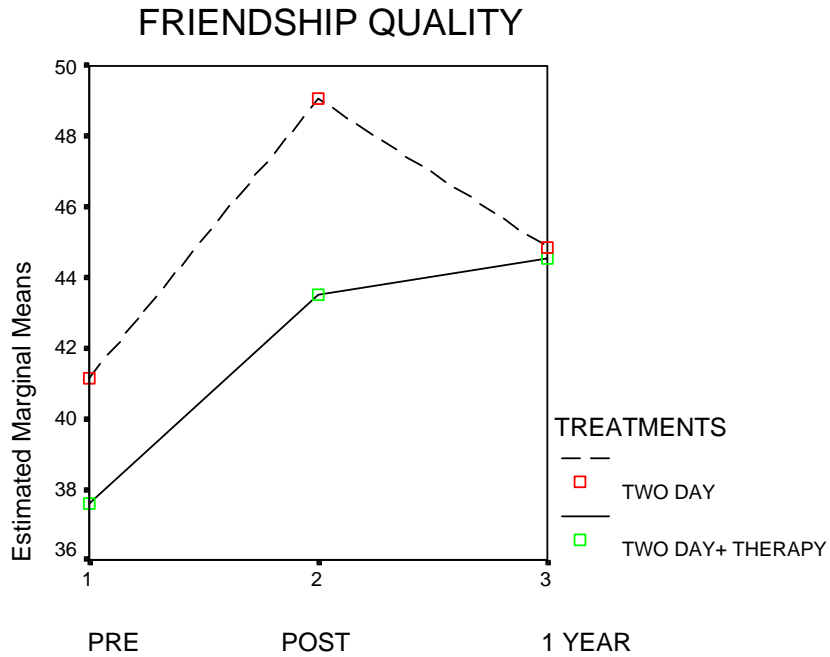


Figure 1. Two-day workshop compared to the two-day workshop plus nine sessions of marital therapy for the couple’s friendship

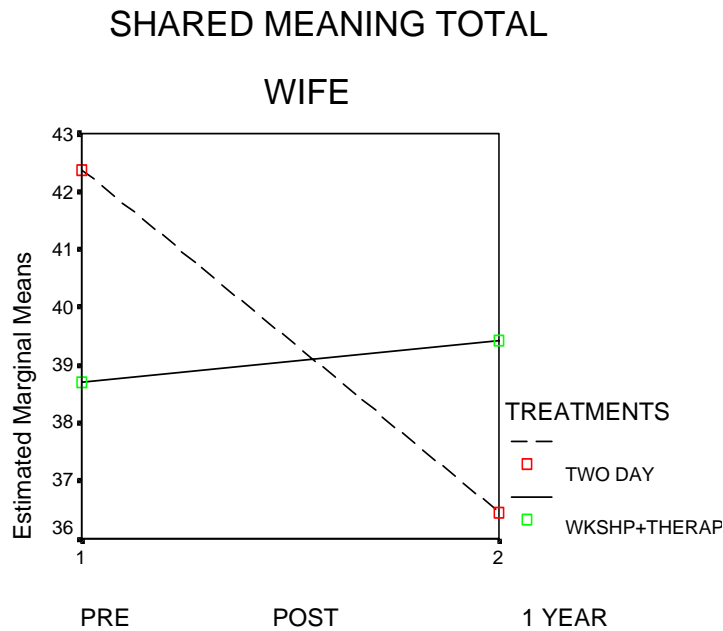


Figure 2. Shared meaning system for wives (analysis of covariance on pre-scores), showing relapse with just the two day workshop, but no relapse with the two-day workshop plus nine sessions of marital therapy.