SmartLoving Marriage

Presenter Role Description

# SmartLoving Marriage Seminar Background Information

The SmartLoving Seminar is a collaborative effort of a Team of couples including:

* **Host** — usually, though not always, a couple, the Host is the driver and overall coordinator of the seminar. They generally book the venue, plan the promotion campaign, and coordinate the logics.
* **Hospitality team —** who provide for the physical environment, food and physical needs of participants.
* **Prayer sponsors** **—** who support the seminar in prayer
* **Presenting Couples** **—** who present some of the talks as well as supporting the initiative more generally
* **Facilitating Couple** **—** who has sufficient experience to be responsible for the entire process of the seminar. They oversee the preparation of the Presenting couples, liaise with the Host Couple, brief the chaplain and handle any problems that may arise for participants on the seminar.

Couples may have more than one role – for example, usually everyone who is involved in any way, will also be a Prayer sponsor.

# Qualities of Presenting Couples

Presenting Couples are ideally those who:

* have an obvious ‘sexual urgency and tenderness’ towards each other which allows each spouse to be confidently expressive of his masculinity or her femininity. To be seen by participants as ‘having something that they would like to have themselves’.
* have had a strong positive experience of SL and so can wholeheartedly and enthusiastically embrace its concepts, lifestyle and spirituality.
* are open to ongoing growth in their relationship and personal formation.
* willingness to work with the SL seminar process in both content and format.
* are a couple who can motivate and inspire others to grow in their relationship, who are relatable to others and respected in their communities.
* are committed to the Church, are both practicing Catholics, and are open to a deeper understanding of the Church’s teachings and a genuine openness to growth towards full embrace of the teachings.
* are available to participate in the training program (this is flexible) and are willing give generously of their time and talents in supporting SL.

These characteristics often take time to fully develop so some couples may be not be approached to present for some months or even years after their first SL experience.

# Qualities of Facilitating Couples

In addition to the above qualities of a Presenting couple, Facilitators are a couple who:

* have presented on at least two SL seminars and have prepared and presented at least half (preferably all) of the seminar talks.
* have a thorough understanding of the seminar process.
* have the ‘personal presence’ to inspire confidence in the participants (can command the room).
* are resilient and calm in the face of unexpected problems (of a logistical or counselling nature) and have a strong understanding of the duty-of-care aspects to their role.
* are accountable to the SL leadership.
* can respond to queries about the seminar and beyond with confidence and accuracy.
* have the insight and capacity to workshop presenting couples’ talks.

# Training Process

The training process flexible and is a bit like an apprenticeship. We do have ‘presenter training courses’ but these are generally run intermittently, and they are not pre-requisites; couples attend these hen available as an ‘extra’.

The first step in becoming a presenting couple involves entering into a discernment process that involves:

1. **Responding to the invitation.** Becoming a presenting couple is by invitation from the SL Leadership Team.
2. **First Seminar.** Preparing and presenting two to three talks on a seminar (as part of a presenting team of 2-3 couples) is the first major step. The talk outlines are fully scripted with spaces for inserting personal sharings. The instructions for the sharings are detailed and these sharings are ‘workshopped’ (or reviewed) by a Facilitating couple. All talks are workshopped well before they are presented to ensure that sharings are appropriate and concise (nothing is said on a seminar that has not been reviewed by a workshopper).
3. **Evaluate.** After the first seminar, reflect with the Facilitators on the experience and whether you and they both believe it’s the right role for you. This allows you to opt out of the process if you so choose, or for the Facilitators to help you find an alternative role should they judge that this is not an appropriate role for your particular talents.
4. **Subsequent Seminars.** If you proceed, then you continue to add talks to your ‘repertoire’ until you have all of them covered. This usually takes 3-4 seminars, spread out over a couple of years. You will also be expected to contribute to all aspects of SL including hospitality, prayer, gatherings, organization and general leadership.
5. **Ongoing Commitment.** We do not ask for a specific commitment to any specific number of seminars from our Presenting couples. Rather, we schedule seminars about six months out, and then staff them with a Facilitating Couple, Presenting Couples (and host couples, chaplain etc) based on who is available. As a rule, Presenting couples need to participate in 2 seminars a year to stay current. If this is not possible, other activities such as renewal days, gatherings and SL Engaged are a good way to maintain currency with the material.
6. **Facilitator Training.** After several seminars, couples who have the time and ability to contribute as a Facilitator will be gradually initiated into this role. There are many couples who are wonderful Presenting Couples, but who are not suited to this more authoritative and demanding role. Being a Facilitator is not seen as a ‘promotion’ nor is it assumed that every presenter will become one.

The advantage of this approach is two-fold:

* Firstly, couples can step forward into this role knowing they will not be put in a position that is not right for them. We take very seriously our responsibility to the couples who attend SLM Seminars and would not push (or allow) couples to undertake this role if they were not capable of fulfilling it.
* Secondly, couples moving into the presenting role do not need to have all the teaching content and weekend process under their belts before they begin… they simply have to pick up a few talks and then grow from there.  In truth you can’t learn the process on paper… our couples tell us it takes presenting on 2-3 seminars before they really understand the subtleties of the process and how it all fits together.

Our Presenting Couples are part of an international presenting team (although they usually only present in their regional areas), going where they are needed (and as they can).

We invest considerable time in the formation into our Presenting Couples, so they are expected to expend their talents more generally in the SL community than ‘just presenting seminars’. This means supporting other initiatives, like Gathering groups, Renewal events, contributing to the promotion and hospitality aspects of the seminar etc.

# Resources |[www.marriageRC.org/team](http://www.marriageRC.org/team)

**Talk outlines** can be accessed from the website as a word document. The outlines are considered propriety material and should only be used by SLM presenters.

Another helpful document is the **Training Handouts** available as PDF. This document outlines the mentality, the objectives of the seminar, a sweep of the seminar process, and rationale for the Gatherings.

The website also has a number of other resources including Host Guide and promotional resources.

# Preparing Talks

The talks are categorized as:

1. **Prayer/Meditation Talks** (Bethlehem Prayer, Anointing Prayer, Mass, Sexual Affirmation) – there’s not a lot of writing preparation, but they do require someone to lead and organize them. Prayer/Meditation Talks are usually covered by ‘rookie’ presenters.
2. **Support Talks** (Sexuality as Gift, Trust A (Communicating for Intimacy), Sex is Holy, Living in Love, Sacrament of Intimacy, Power of Love) – these talks tend to be of a scene-setting, motivational tone. Rookies normally do two or three Support Talks each.
3. **Challenge talks** (All in the Family, Name it & Tame it, Trust B (Irresponsibility), Trust C (Control), Act of Love) – these talks have a confessional tone – they take more preparation and usually deliver high growth in both the presenting couple preparing it, and those listening to it. Each rookie presenter should do at least one Challenge Talk (if you are doing the All in the Family, its best to also do Name it & Tame it because they are closely linked).
4. **Facilitator talks** (Introduction, Trust D (Reconciliation), Sacramental Affirmation, Wrap up) – these involve more complex processes that need detailed instructions. We reserve these talks for Factilitators.

The Facilitator for your seminar will work out which couple will deliver which talk in consultation with all the presenters.

Once you have your talk allocation, the best place to start is with one of the Support talks – they are a little easier, and it is encouraging for all to get a few talks done and finished quickly. In the meantime, you can be thinking about the sharings on your Challenge Talk. It’s preferable to get on the phone with your workshopping couple before you put pen to paper on the Challenge Talks, just so that they can talk through each sharing and outline what needs to be communicated. It can prevent a lot of wasted time spent going off on a tangent.

# Suggested Timetable (revise as needed)

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| Time to Seminar | Tasks |
| 2+ months | Identify and write the sharings for two **Support Talks**. Email your sharings through to workshop couple. |
| 6 weeks | Think about the sharings for your **Challenge talk** and make phone contact with your workshop couple. |
| 5 weeks | Write sharings for the Challenge talk & email to workshoppers |
| 4 weeks | Revise sharings if needed. Start on Prayer/Meditation Talks and email sharings through. |
| 3 weeks | Last round of workshopping. Adjust any of the language in the content to suit your style. |
| 1 - 2 weeks | Practice your talks to determine which spouse will say each part. |

Presenting couples are expected to be **self-motivated** and to either get your sharings to your workshop couple on time, or let them know if you need to revise the timetable. Workshop couples are fairly responsive and can usually turn the workshopping around within 3-5 days, but if it’s left until too late, everyone will be distracted by the impending seminar. The participants deserve the best you have to give, and so it is vitally important for Presenters to take the initiative in getting their talks workshopped in good time.

# Presenting Talks

As a rule, couples read the talks verbatim as this is the most time efficient way to cover the material and the seminar has no room for diversions. Many couples rephrase parts to suit their own style and this is perfectly fine.

Some presenters like to ‘ad lib’ but this is discouraged especially on their first seminar, as it takes time for presenters to develop an understanding of the entire process and not just their isolated talks. When couples ad lib, they often inadvertently ‘trespass’ on material that belongs in another talk. Ad-libbing also tends to flavour the more confident spouse, so care must be taken to avoid one spouse dominating the floor.

Reading a talk however does not mean that a monotonous delivery is okay! Every couple is asked to practice together out loud and to deliver their talks with animation, eye contact and an awareness of engaging with the participants. You are not just reading the talks, you are proclaiming them. Being well prepared does not make it less meaningful or less sincere – it makes it more effective and is definitely a gift to the couples.

Even experienced public speakers find presenting on a SLM seminar very different: it is much more difficult to present as a couple where your sacrament is the subject rather than you as an individual. In addition, the material in some talks is very personal and has a confessional nature; these talks often stir deep emotions in the presenters.

# Further Training

There is always more to learn and couples need constant renewal to keep their marriage fresh and vital. Presenters are expected to be role models by taking up opportunities to continue their growth and formation. A number of initiatives are available through the MRC including, Gatherings, Renewal Events, the Passionate Love Weekend, Training Days, and the annual Leadership Development Conference.

* **SmartLoving Engaged** is a sister programme to SLM specifically for engaged couples. Mentor couples host one engaged couple in their home for 6 sessions. It is great way for Presenters to maintain their currency in the material if they are unable to present on a seminar for an extended period.
* **Passionate Love Weekend** is a residential retreat for SL couples. It includes a catechesis of the Theology of the Body in the context of the lived experience of marriage. Specific couple exercises and community prayer make this a powerful spiritual encounter.
* **MRC Leadership Formation Conference.** This conference is held every two years in Sydney and is an opportunity for couples to undertake further training and in-servicing, network with other couples, and be refreshed in their relationship. We encourage all couples to attend the conference as often as possible. Other local events are scheduled when there is sufficient demand.