

My name is Cindy Britton. I have a master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Nyack College. I am also a pre-marital certified Prepare/Enrich facilitator. Prepare/Enrich is an inventory and couple's assessment tool. It customizes a couple's assessment completed on line that identifies a couple's strength and growth areas. My mission will be to give premarital education and facilitate relationship assessments in order to assist couples in developing the skills they need to have a successful marriage.

I will offer 8 premarital counseling sessions. Each 90-minute session will be held. This provides couples with a variety of subjects to discuss that are the cornerstone of a happy marriage. It also allows the pair to discuss any difficulties that may develop during the sessions. 90 minutes is plenty of time to cover all topics, complete all worksheets, and go through any assignments for the next session. The sessions should not last so long that the partners lose interest. Couples may also be unable to commit to a weekly session of more than 90 minutes due to work or other obligations.

The first session will consist of obtaining background information. The couple will fill out a background questionnaire. The questionnaire will provide demographic information and their past experience with therapy. We will discuss what premarital counseling is, is not and the purpose of counseling. Pre-marital therapy is used to gain a better understanding of a couple's relationship. Premarital counseling might help to reduce the number of unexpected events in a partnership. It aids couples in comprehending the realities of marriage and how to deal with them effectively. It can assist to start a conversation regarding subjects that have never been discussed before. Premarital counseling can also assist couples in determining whether they have deeper personal or relationship issues that need to be addressed in a more intensive therapeutic setting, such as individual counseling. If I don't have enough experience with these issues, I will refer

them to another therapist that will be able to further explore their concerns. Premarital therapy isn't about solving all of your issues or making things great before you tie the knot; instead, it's about increasing awareness and gaining tools to assist with particular needs. This is the point at which I would inquire about their relationship. How did they meet, how long have they been dating, reasons for their desire to get married and when did they get engaged? Are they living together? Are there any issues that would cause them to not get married? We will discuss the expectations of counseling the couple may have, help to evaluate how each person feels about one another and what they expect from their relationship. I'd answer any questions the couple might have about the premarital counseling procedure. I would also discuss certain topics such as cohabitation. Discuss their views, possible scriptures, depending on their religious views. We would discuss the pros and cons of cohabitation and how this honors God and their relationship with God and each other. The homework assignment will be to fill out the Prepare-Enrich assessment online.

I will continue with housekeeping topics during session two such as contraindications, termination policy, and my expectations during the premarital counseling process. Being honest and transparent are some of the expectations that I would share with couples. Individuals must be open about their views, feelings, desires, and dislikes. We will also discuss the no secret policy. If a person discloses a "secret" to me one to one, I will encourage the individual to tell their partner the information. If they need support with disclosing the information, I will work with the individual on how they can obtain the courage, confidence and skills to share. If the person decides that they will not disclose the information depending on the topic, this may be grounds for me to terminate the counseling process. Be willing to learn and grow as individuals and as a couple. I would expect them to be open to try new things and to challenge themselves as a person

and as a couple. Be willing to work on any growth area that may be discovered. Part of the counseling process is to work through the issues that may be harmful to the person and relationship. The person may be challenged to take an honest inventory of their behavior and how it is affecting their partner and the relationship. This may include facing their past. We will discuss the termination policy. I will expect the couples to attend all of the sessions and be on time. They must call within 24 hours to cancel the session. They must call if they will be late. After the second lateness or cancelation, this will be grounds for termination. I will go over the Prepare-Enrich assessment results. This assessment can assist me as the counselor in identifying their strengths, areas of growth, areas of compatibility, and future issues. The homework will be for each person to list their reasons and readiness for marriage. Also, write 20 expectations you have of your partner, 10 expectations you think your partner has of you and list 3 of the most disappointing experiences of your life and how you handled those disappointments.

During the third session, we will discuss healthy and unhealthy reasons for marriage and what are some of the reasons that indicate a person is ready for marriage. We will go over each person's expectations for their partner, what they think their partner expects of them and what and how they handled disappointments in their lives. People frequently have expectations that are out of sync with reality. Unspoken rules and unconscious roles are dictated by particular mindsets. We will talk about being aware, being reasonable and being clear about their expectation. Also, being willing to listen and being guided by God. During our session I will have them complete the SYMBIS worksheets, Your Personal Ten Commandments and Making Your Roles Conscious. We will also discuss marriage myths. We will discuss some of the myths that couples have going into a marriage. We will discuss who taught us these myths and mindsets. We will complete the worksheets the Ten (plus two) Commandments and Family

Legacies. The homework assignment will be to complete a Genogram to include them, their parents and grandparents.

The beginning of the fourth session, we will go over the Genogram. We will look for any family positive or negative patterns. How their family legacy has shaped them into how they think and behave? What patterns are they bringing into their marriage and how that has and will impact their relationship. We will then discuss the topic of communication. We will discuss their definition of communication. They will give examples of what they think is effective communication. The three aspects of communication will then be discussed: content- what is being said, tone of voice- how it's being said and nonverbal communication such as facial expressions, body postures, and actions. I'll present the figures for the three aspects of communication. We'll talk about what constitutes healthy and unhealthy communication. We'll talk about how good communication starts with who you are and then moves on to what you do. We'll talk about how important it is to have qualities like warmth, genuineness, and empathy. I will have each person complete the Prepare-Enrich creating a wish list worksheet. They will take turns in sharing their wish list and we will discuss the assertiveness and active listening. I'll also talk about I statements. I-Statements consist of describing how you feel, giving an indication of the conditions under which you feel that way and why those conditions cause your emotions. I will have the couple practice I-Statements with each other. Reflective listening has two steps. One to seek to understand what the speaker is saying, repeating what the speaker said and confirming that the hearer understood what the speaker said. We will also discuss the value of disconnecting from social media and devices, and how to communicate through touch. We will discuss how these actions will improve their communication with one another. Tonight's

homework will be to practice the skill we went over in the session. Also to practice the daily dialogue and daily compliments worksheets in the Prepare-Enrich workbook.

Session five will be about stress management. We will define stress and the different types of stress. I will have them identify three stressors in each of their lives. They will complete the couples exercise in the Prepare-Enrich workbook as well as the balancing your priorities worksheet. We will discuss this in the session. The homework will be to look at the Wedding Stress worksheet and think of areas of the wedding planning that have become overwhelming. Practice prioritizing what is important to each of you and then using I statements, communicate your wants. Also, practice active listening and reflective listening.

Session six will deal with conflict resolution. Every couple will have disagreements and conflicts in their marriage. Discussing the reason why people have conflict will be important to discuss. Having the couple to understand that how they react to beliefs, ideas, attitudes, feelings and behaviors that are different than theirs is what causes conflict. Also discussing that all conflict will not be resolved but agreeing to disagree may be needed in some situations. We will discuss dirty fighting tactics such as bullying, name-calling, contempt, stonewalling, defensiveness, sarcasm, exaggeration, humiliating, taunting, ordering, denying, withholding, making excuses and playing the martyr will have a negative impact on their marriage. We will discuss what some of these tactic mean and how we use them to fight dirty. I will have each person identify 5 hot topics that need to be addressed. We will discuss each topic and use the communication skills that were learned to express their feelings. We will complete the Ten Step For Resolving Conflict worksheet. We will discuss how to fight the good fight. We will go over not to run from strife, how to choose your battles carefully, define the issues clearly, state your feelings directly, rate the intensity of the feelings, give up put-downs and don't dwell on

downers. The homework will be to complete the How To Take A Time-Out worksheet in the Prepare-Enrich workbook.

Session seven will deal with forgiveness. We will define forgiveness and discuss what forgiveness is not. I will have them complete the worksheet dealing with seeking and granting forgiveness, six steps for seeking forgiveness and six steps for granting forgiveness. Homework will be to read three scriptures on forgiveness and how God has extended his forgiveness towards us. Also, in preparation for the next session, I will have the couple create a budget of their finances.

Session eight will be about finances. We will talk about their concept of money. I will have them complete The Meaning of Money worksheet in the Prepare-Enrich workbook. We will then discuss what ways are their value of money similar and different. We will discuss their expectations of savings, investments, joint accounts, who will be in charge of overseeing the finance, their spending habits. We will also discuss their financial goals. I will have them to complete all of the financial worksheets in the Prepare-Enrich workbook.

Session ten will explore intimacy. We will discuss what is intimacy. What is their definition of intimacy? How does they express intimacy and their expectations of expression from their partner. I will have them complete The Expression of Intimacy worksheet and we will discuss it in the session. We will also discuss their views on sexual intimacy as well.

Session eleven will discuss any other topic that the couple will feel that they want to explore. I will express that they are able to contact me if they need to discuss any issues that may arise in their relationship once the premarital counseling is over. At this time, I will end the sessions and premarital counseling process.