

Assignment 2

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MA Marriage and Family Therapy

Course: MFT509 – Pre-Marital Counseling

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Text Chosen: Book - Saving your Marriage Before it Starts.

Saving your marriage Before it Starts (3) is an excellent source of instruction on Premarital Counseling. Among many important topics covered, Myths of Marriage held my attention. It's essential in Premarital Counseling to define the couple's real expectations regarding married life, to avoid disappointments, regrets, and frustrations.

Myths of Marriage.

Marriage is a social and spiritual institution that has been present in many cultures throughout history. Many myths and misconceptions have developed in marriage. Relationships based on myths will crash into disappointment. These myths are from childhood stories and media that perpetuate the idea of eternal romantic love. Some of these myths are very well worked and exemplified in the book *Saving your Marriage Before it Starts*.

1 – *We expect exactly the same things from the marriage.* It is a common belief that both partners in a marriage should have the same expectations for the relationship. However, research by

Smith (2020) has shown that individuals bring their unique perspectives, experiences, and expectations to a marriage.

Different expectations in marriage can lead to misunderstandings, disagreements, and dissatisfaction. Partners must address and understand these expectations to avoid conflict. Open communication, flexibility, and willingness to compromise can help Premarital therapy aid couples in understanding and finding common ground in their expectations for the marriage.

2 - My spouse will make me whole. It is commonly believed that a romantic partner can make an individual feel complete and fulfilled. However, according to a study published in the Journal of Marriage and Family (Johnson et al., 2018), individuals who have a strong sense of self and self-worth before entering a relationship have a greater chance of having a successful and fulfilling relationship.

In premarital counseling, exploring the myth that a spouse makes one whole is essential.

Emphasize the importance of self-worth and self-esteem for a successful relationship. A healthy relationship enhances one's life, not completes it. Each person must work on their well-being before and during the relationship.

3 – Unspoken Rules. Marriage involves two people building a life together, including unspoken rules such as household chores and time spent with friends and family. These unspoken rules can lead to tension, frustration, resentment, and dissatisfaction if not addressed. According to a study by Johnson and colleagues (2018), it is essential for couples to be aware of these unspoken rules and actively work to communicate and understand each other's perspectives. By doing so, they can reduce misunderstandings, increase trust, and build a stronger partnership.

4 - *Everything bad in our relationship will disappear, or/, and everything good in our relationship will get better.* Another myth related to relationships is that if there are problems in a relationship, they will naturally disappear over time. If things are good in the beginning, they will always be good. According to a study by Paquelet and colleagues (2022), this belief can lead to the assumption that problems will resolve themselves and that everything will naturally get better. Unfortunately, this can lead to problems becoming more deeply ingrained and difficult to solve. Whether related to communication, trust, intimacy, or finances, problems in a relationship require active effort to address and resolve. Waiting for them to disappear alone will only worsen the problem. Avoiding dealing with problems can build resentment and dissatisfaction, which can be hard to overcome later.

Premarital therapy should emphasize that problems in a relationship will not disappear on their own and that addressing and resolving conflicts is necessary for a healthy relationship. Couples should be taught to manage issues through open communication and understanding.

5 - *Unconscious roles:* This myth refers to the unspoken and often unrecognized expectations and behavior patterns that couples may fall into within a relationship. Societal norms, past experiences, and individual personalities can shape these roles. Studies found that these unconscious roles can significantly impact a relationship, leading to dissatisfaction, resentment, and disconnection if they are not recognized and addressed. Premarital therapy should address unconscious roles in a marriage that can lead to power imbalances and a lack of equality. Couples must communicate and understand each other's perspectives and balance and

redistribute responsibilities to promote equality. Open communication and active listening ensure that each person's needs and contributions are respected and valued.

In conclusion, marriage is a complex and nuanced institution that is influenced by a wide range of factors. To have a healthy and fulfilling marriage is vital to be aware of and critically evaluate common myths and misconceptions. Working with these myths with couples in Premarital Counseling is essential to lead them to the reality of living as married, which can be far from their dreams, but still very happy and lovely because a loving and healthy relationship can bring a lot of joy, support, and fulfillment.

References:

- 1 - Johnson, Matthew & Horne, Rebecca & Neyer, Franz. (2018). The Development of Willingness to Sacrifice and Unmitigated Communion in Intimate Partnerships: Willingness to Sacrifice and Unmitigated Communion. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 81. 10.1111/jomf.12544.
- 2 – McNeil Smith, S., Williamson, L. D., Branch, H., & Fincham, F. D. (2020). Racial discrimination, racism-specific support, and self-reported health among African American couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 37(3), 779-799.

3 - Paquelet, D. R., & Brown, K. S. (2022, November 28). *Parental alienating behaviors in Noah Baumbach's high-conflict divorce films, The Squid and the whale and Marriage story: A cinematherapy tool for (training) mental health providers - contemporary family therapy*. SpringerLink. Retrieved January 12, 2023, from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10591-022-09656-3>

4 - Parrott, L., & Parrott, L. L. (2006). *Saving your marriage Before it Starts*. Zondervan.