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Pre-Marital Strategy Paper

As someone who has studied and received pre-marital counseling, I strongly believe that it is important for couples to participate in counseling to help them identify and overcome potential problems, improve communication and conflict resolution skills, and strengthen their relationship before taking the big step. I recommend that couples participate in premarital counseling which includes 8 to 10 sessions. In this paper, I will outline 9 sessions that I'm sure are important.

Session 1 Introduction, Expectations & Assessment Report

Length: 2 hours

During the first session, I would introduce myself as the counselor and aim to build a rapport with the couple. I will explain the importance of premarital counseling. I would also ask the couple to identify their expectations for the relationship and the counseling process. In addition, we'll get to know each other and discuss what they hope to get out of pre-marital counseling. I'll ask about their relationship history and background. I'll also evaluate the facilitator report of the Prepare-Enrich assessment with the couple to identify potential areas of strength and weakness in their relationship, and also share with them the couple's report.

Session 2 Communication

Length: 60 minutes

This session is all about communication. We'll discuss the importance of effective communication in a relationship, and how it can impact our emotional intimacy and overall satisfaction. We'll also explore how their communication styles may differ and how we can navigate those differences. We'll start by identifying their communication styles and preferences. We'll discuss how we express ourselves, how we listen to others, and any patterns or habits we may have developed over time. We'll also talk about any communication challenges we've faced in the past, such as difficulty expressing emotions or a tendency to avoid conflict.

Next, we'll learn about the four key elements of effective communication: listening, validating, expressing, and problem-solving. We'll practice each of these skills and explore how they can be applied in our relationship. We'll also talk about any potential communication pitfalls, such as assumptions, blaming, defensiveness, and stonewalling, and how we can avoid them. We'll discuss the importance of setting boundaries and expressing our needs and desires clearly and respectfully. We'll talk about how we can use "I" statements to express our feelings and avoid blaming or criticizing each other. Which I learned and found very helpful in class.

Finally, we'll explore the role of nonverbal communication, such as body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions. We'll learn how to read each other's nonverbal cues and how to use our nonverbal communication to enhance our understanding and emotional connection. The goal of this session is to help the couple develop a shared language for communication and to build the skills they need to express themselves effectively and listen to each other with empathy and understanding.

Session 3 Intimacy and Sexuality

Length: 90 minutes

I would focus on intimacy and sexuality. This can be a difficult topic to discuss, but it is an essential component of a healthy relationship. I would explore each partner's sexual history and expectations, discuss physical, emotional, and spiritual intimacy, identify potential barriers to intimacy, and build communication and negotiation skills around sexual topics. We'll also explore ways to increase physical, emotional, and spiritual intimacy in their relationship outside of sexual activity, and how to communicate about sexual preferences and boundaries in a way that is respectful and supportive. If the topic of past abuse or trauma comes up, we'll explore ways to address and heal from this in a safe and supportive way.

Furthermore, Premarital counseling from a Christian perspective should acknowledge the importance of sexual purity before marriage, and while also providing a safe and non-judgmental space for couples to discuss their beliefs and values. For practice, I would ask the couple to practice having open and honest conversations about their sexual needs and desires. One of them may feel embarrassed but it will be necessary to open up and be able to communicate their feelings or needs. Also, I will promote sexual purity before marriage.

Session 4 Spirituality

Length: 60 minutes

We will be exploring the Christian spirituality and beliefs of the couple. As a Christian counselor, my goal is to help the couple identify their individual beliefs and values and how they align or differ with each other's beliefs. One important aspect of Christian spirituality is seeking God. This may include attending church services together, praying together, reading the Bible

together, or finding other ways to support each other in their Christian journey. We will discuss the benefits of seeking God together, such as deepening their spiritual connection and strengthening their relationship. I will provide a non-judgmental space for the couple to discuss their Christian beliefs and values. I aim to help them find common ground and ways to respect each other's differences, while also encouraging them to seek God together.

Session 5 Affection

Length: 60 minutes

In the fifth session, I would focus on affection. Affection is an important aspect of a healthy relationship. I would explore each partner's preferred ways of giving and receiving affection, discuss the importance of physical touch, and identify potential barriers to affection. We would practice techniques for expressing affection, such as hugging, holding hands, and kissing. For homework, the couple will be asked to practice affectionate behaviors outside of the session, like holding hands, hugging, saying "I love you", or doing small acts of kindness for each other. They can keep track of how it makes them feel and discuss their observations during the next session.

Session 6 Family

Length: 60 minutes

We'll discuss how our family of origin has influenced us and explore any potential challenges or conflicts that may arise if our families are against our relationship. We'll discuss any family dynamics, roles, rules, traditions, rituals, and communication styles that shaped their worldview. We'll talk about any similarities or differences in their family backgrounds and how they may impact their relationship. We'll explore how their families have dealt with conflict, expressed love, showed affection, and managed boundaries, and how these experiences may have

affected their expectations for their relationship. If their families are against their relationship, we'll talk about the reasons behind their objections and explore how we can address them. We'll discuss how we can communicate with their families in a way that honors their concerns while also respecting their feelings and desires.

We'll also talk about how they can support each other if their families are not supportive of their relationship. We'll explore ways to create a sense of unity and collaboration in their relationship, even if their families are not fully on board. The goal of this session is to help us understand each other's family dynamics and how they may impact their relationship, particularly if their families are not supportive. We'll learn how to communicate about these influences in a way that helps them navigate any potential challenges or conflicts that may arise. We'll also identify ways to integrate the positive aspects of their family backgrounds into their relationship while being aware of potential areas of differences. I'll ask us to reflect on their family of origin and any potential objections they may have to their relationship. The couple will write down any significant values, beliefs, or traditions that they wish to carry forward into their relationship.

Session 7 Roles and Responsibilities

Length: 90 minutes

In this session, we will explore expectations and beliefs about gender roles and responsibilities in the relationship. It's important to have this discussion because differing expectations around gender roles can lead to misunderstandings, conflict, and unmet needs in the relationship. We will begin by discussing how they currently divide household and relationship responsibilities and explore our feelings about this. This will include a discussion about how we each envision the roles and responsibilities in the relationship, both inside and outside the home.

We must have an open and honest discussion about this so that they can communicate their needs and expectations to one another.

We will then work on developing a shared understanding of each other's role in the relationship. This will involve examining traditional gender roles and discussing how they can be adapted to meet their needs as a couple. We will also explore how we can support one another in our roles and responsibilities and identify areas where additional support may be necessary. They will receive exercises to practice sharing responsibilities and building a partnership that works for them. This will involve communicating regularly about their roles and responsibilities and being open to adapting our plan as their relationship grows and changes.

Session 8 Addressing Trauma and Emotionally Healthy Relationships

Length: 2 hours

The goal of the tenth session is to address any past traumas that may be impacting the couple's emotional health and relationship. Trauma can have a significant impact on emotional health and can manifest in anxiety, depression, anger, and intimacy issues. In this session, we will explore any past traumas that either or both partners may have experienced and how these traumas may be affecting their emotional health and relationship. We will also focus on developing emotionally healthy relationship habits to support healing from any past traumas. This includes discussing ways to build trust, open communication, and empathy. The couple will be given exercises to process past traumas, explore how these traumas are affecting their emotional health and relationship, and develop strategies to manage any challenges. By addressing past traumas and developing emotionally healthy relationship habits, the couple can

strengthen their relationship, improve their emotional health, and prepare for a successful and fulfilling marriage.

Session 9: Wrapping Up

Length: 60 minutes

As we approach the end of the pre-marital counseling, our final session will be an opportunity to reflect on our progress and celebrate the skills and knowledge the couple has gained. We will review the goals we set at the beginning of counseling and assess how far we've come. During this session, we'll first review the couple's progress toward each of their original goals. We'll discuss what strategies they found helpful and any challenges they faced. This will also be a time for the couple and myself to acknowledge and celebrate their achievements and express gratitude for the time together in the nine sessions.

To conclude, there are some situations where premarital counseling may not be effective or appropriate. Personally, one situation where premarital counseling may not be recommended is when the couple is not committed to getting married. If one or both partners are unsure about their relationship or are not fully committed to the idea of marriage, premarital counseling may not be helpful. In this situation, it may be more appropriate for the couple to work on their issues and their relationship before considering marriage.

Certainly, the pre-marital counseling sessions provide couples with a foundation of knowledge and skills that can help them navigate the challenges of marriage. By investing in their relationship before they get married, couples can build a strong and healthy foundation for a lifetime of love and happiness.