

Premarital Counseling Strategy Paper

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MFT 509: Premarital Counseling

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Outline for Premarital Counseling

There will be a total of 11 sessions if both individuals are getting married for the first time, each session will be 50 minutes to one hour, twice a week. Clients can accommodate the days according to their convenience. If there is a case of remarriage, then it would be a 12th session. That extra session would take place after session #4 which is relationship dynamics. Below is stated the development of each session and the content.

Session #1 - Assessment of the couple and introduction to Prepare Enrich

- Purpose of premarital counseling and goals for each session.
- What are your expectations of marriage? Be aware and reasonable of what you expect.
- Are you ready to be vulnerable?
- Explanation of the “no secrets” policy.
 - ❖ Exercise during session: have each of them write down 10 expectations they have from their partner.
 - ❖ Homework: think about the commitment you have embarked on and write down some thoughts.

Session #2 & 3 - Individual counseling sessions.

- Do you know who you are as an individual and do you like yourself? I will explain the concept of differentiation.
- Is there anything that you would like to know from your partner that you do not feel comfortable asking him/her?

- Are there any secrets that you might want to share with your partner, but do not know how to do it? As their counselor I will guide them to do it.
- Are you willing to die to the “self”?
 - ❖ Homework: share with your partner one thing that you would like him/her to know.

Session #4 - Couple counseling resumes to discuss topics that concern them individually and Genograms of each individual’s family or origin (FOO).

- Overview of Prepare Enrich growth and strength areas. SCOPE and Personality profile.
- Exploration of patterns from FOO that they would not like to continue in their marriage.

Session #5 - Relationship Dynamics within the couple and with their family, friends, and leisure activities.

- Unspoken rules and unconscious roles. (Parrott & Parrott, 2015, p. 23)
- Have you discussed holidays and where will they be spent?
- What if your partner is more social than you are? Will you be okay with your partner going out with family and friends by him/herself?

Session #6 - Quality of their communication and conflict resolution.

- Why is it important to learn to communicate effectively?
- Use of reflective listening and the importance of making “I” statements.
- What is your part in a conflict? Introduction of ten steps for conflict resolution.

- Are you okay with your partner having a different opinion from you?
 - ❖ Exercise during session: guess the percentage of the components of communication. Content 7%, tone 38%, and nonverbal 55%
 - ❖ Homework: practice “I” statements with your partner.

Session #7 - Financial Management

- Are you going to have joint or separate bank accounts?
- Who will be in charge of managing the finances if they have joint accounts?
- Do you have debt that your partner does not know about?
 - ❖ Homework: Do a budget.

Session #8 - Sexuality and Spiritual beliefs.

- Get each partner’s clear sexual history; it is important to have full disclosure.
- Myths about sex.
 - ❖ Exercise during session: in a post-it have each partner write down how many times a week they would like to have sex and discuss their answer.
- What is intimacy to you? Physical and spiritual.
- Do they share the same faith or do they have a faith at all? If you do not share the same faith, who is going to follow who?

Session #9 - Future plans: individual and as a couple.

- Do they want children? If they do, how many? If not, why and are you both okay with not having children?
- In case of infertility, are you comfortable with using alternative methods?

- Would they be okay if you have to relocate to another state/country in the future?
- Are you okay with your partner advancing his or her careers after getting married?

Session #10 - Introduction to “love languages” and wedding plans.

- Do you know how your partner receives/gives love? Do you feel comfortable? If not, are you willing to work towards it?
- Will both partners be involved in deciding about the protocol, venue, and ceremony of the wedding?

Session #11 - Evaluation of premarital counseling.

- Were the sessions useful, and what was the greatest impact in their life?
- Do they want to follow up within six months, one or two years after getting married?
- What was their overall experience?

Session #12 - Remarriage

- Learning from the past.
- Partner styles and habits.
- Introduction to the statement, “When I’m protecting me from you, there can never be us.”

Contraindications or termination policy for premarital counseling.

- Termination policy will state that, once the couple has reached the goals they came to counseling for, they will be terminated.
- Also , if the couple seems to be making no improvement during counseling they can also terminate it and if a referral is needed it will be granted.

When is premarital counseling not recommended?

- As a therapist I would always recommend premarital counseling if the conditions allow it. I would not impose it on any couple, but I would explain the importance of it to people who are looking to have a lasting marriage; either first marriage or not. However, in the case of any sort of violence while the couple is dating, incest, getting married for any other interest than growing together as a family (ex. marrying for papers or a premarital pregnancy), if either one of the couple want to use the marriage as an escape form the family, or if there is a narcissistic behavior in either one of the individuals, I would not recommend premarital counseling. I will use that opportunity to explain to the couple that it would be easier to break an engagement than to go through a legal battle of a divorce in the future.

Are there any couple configurations or couple issues that would negate your ability to provide this service?

- Personally I would not give premarital counseling to same sex couples due to my values. I am respectful of the decisions people make about themselves, therefore I believe I deserve the same respect.
- Other couple issues that would negate my ability to provide premarital counseling is violence, disrespect between the couple or to myself.

Are there any conditions that would lead to termination of premarital counseling once it begins?

- When one or both partners are not committed to counseling.
- If the couple is not willing to follow through with the assigned homework and shows no interest during sessions.
- If the couple is consistently late, I would speak with them about accommodating the sessions at a time of their convenience, but if they continue to constantly cancel and be late then we would have to terminate counseling.
- Premarital counseling will be terminated if the couple does not pay the stated fees and there has not been any prior arrangements made.
- Counseling can also be terminated if clients and counselors are not a good fit for one another and a referral will be made.

Briefly state any policy regarding sexual purity during premarital counseling.

- In regards to the policy of sexual purity during premarital counseling I would explain to the couple the importance of not having sex before marriage and I will show them the statistics of divorce for couples who were cohabiting before marriage.
- If the couple coming to counseling are leaders from church and they reveal to me that they are having an active sexual lifestyle, I would recommend them to do a purity covenant and to have sex until the day of the wedding. If they make a covenant before the Lord, it demonstrates the love and commitment they have for one another. Nonetheless, Christian or non Christian couples should know that intimacy is not only having sex. It means the joining of their sexuality and spirituality. They become one, however, if they

are not living together, they are only sharing their body because after having intercourse they both part ways and the union is broken. They should learn to protect and respect each other's body, mind, and soul.

Briefly state how you will address the issue of hierarchy or egalitarian structure.

- In regard to the issue of hierarchy, the parents are at the top and children follow under. The Bible states that the husband is the head of the woman as Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:25). It also says that a woman should be submissive of her husband. This does not mean that the husband will be disrespectful with her and that she should put herself at risk in order to obey her husband, but their relationship should be of respect and love towards one another.
- There should not be an egalitarian structure in the family because it would mean that children have the same power as their parents, which could cause chaos at the moment of making an important decision, because everyone would have a different opinion. And the Bible is clear when it says that a divided household cannot stand (Matthew 12:25).
- It is important to teach a couple to establish boundaries from the beginning because they will determine how the family stands. For example, if a man feels respected, he would want to protect his family which will cause his wife and children to feel loved. Establishing healthy boundaries from the beginning builds healthy marriages, and healthy marriages are the foundation to have a healthy society.

Reference

Parrott, Les; Leslie Parrott. (2015). *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*. Zondervan.

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