

# ARE YOU READY FOR MARRIAGE?

## How Pre-Marital Counseling Can Help

### Ensuring a Happy Marriage

Happily married couples are skillful at sharing dreams, handling conflict, nurturing love, and repairing damage to the relationship.

#### When You Should Seek Pre-Marital Counseling

- 1 Mutual expectations, cultural and religious differences and feelings about children should be discussed before you marry, not after.
- 2 When you have been too long in a courtship. If you have been engaged for more than nine years, plan on marrying, but haven't, it's time to understand what's going on.
- 3 When one partner is "commitment-phobic." Find out what lies at the root of the fear so you can move forward in your relationship or move on.
- 4 When you can't resolve significant issues. The number one predictor of divorce is the habitual avoidance of conflict. If you aren't yet married, but already disagree about issues related to money, children, chores, work, sex or a host of other things, now is the time to learn how to address differences.
- 5 When you have failed at a marriage and want to try again. Every happy, successful couple has as many as 10 areas of "irreconcilable differences," but they accept and respect them as part of their relationship.

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### What You Can Do Right Now

- ❑ **Don't believe "marriage myths."** Popular myths include: "Good luck and romantic love are the keys to a good marriage;" "Having children brings a couple closer together and makes for a happier marriage;" "It's unrealistic to expect people to stay in a marriage throughout a lifetime because we live so much longer today;" "Married people have less sex—and less satisfying sex—than single people do;" and "Living together is just the same as marriage." Studies show these are all untrue.
- ❑ **Educate yourself about how healthy relationships work.** Churches, synagogues, and continuing education programs at local colleges can all recommend books, classes or DVD learning on key topics.
- ❑ **Examine differences in "family of origin."** They will provide clues to potential areas of conflict to discuss. Since our own approaches to relationships derive from what we learned from our parents, talk with your partner about how his or her parents handled conflicts, showed affection and respect, and shared child-raising responsibilities. Ask about their belief systems with respect to money, sexuality, and religion.
- ❑ **Remember love is a verb.** Do you make an ongoing effort to nurture your love for your partner by paying attention to his or her needs?

### Offering Extra Support

#### About Marriage and Family Therapists

Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are relationship experts. They work with individuals, couples, families, children, adolescents, and the elderly, providing support and perspective as patients struggle with life's challenges.

Licensed by the State of North Carolina, MFTs are psychotherapists who are uniquely trained and credentialed to assess, diagnose, and treat a wide range of issues so individuals achieve more adequate, satisfying, and productive relationships and social adjustment.



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It's easy, convenient, and private.

Seeking a Marriage and Family Therapist or other mental health professional to assist with life's difficulties is a sign of courage and a step in the right direction. Ask about E.J.'s special areas of expertise (i.e. anger management, divorce, relationship counseling, trauma).

E.J. is a certified Prepare/Enrich Facilitator which is the leading relationship inventory and skill-building program used nationally and internationally. It is built on a solid research foundation and significantly improves a couple's relationship. PREPARE/ENRICH is custom tailored to a couple's relationship and provides couple exercises to build their relationship skills.

If you are looking for extra support and guidance through a challenging situation or are just ready to move in a different direction in your relationships, I look forward to working with you to achieve your goals. Please call or email me for an individual, couples, or family therapy consultation today.

