



BENEFITS OF PREMARITAL COUNSELING

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is premarital counseling important? Do we really need this?

YES! Premarital counseling *prepares* you for your new life together as a married couple. With most of your focus on the wedding, this gives you an opportunity to focus on the *marriage*. Your wedding is one day in your life but your marriage is all the rest of the days that follow.

How much does it cost? We have a lot to pay for with the wedding!

This is the first question I get from most couples, followed by the question below.

My premarital counseling fee is \$50/session (1/2 off my regular counseling fee) for the first 10 sessions plus \$30 for the cost of the PREPARE inventory. Plus, you can qualify for a \$70 discount on your marriage license!

How many sessions will we need?

The answer to this question really depends on the couple. Some couples only want to complete the PREPARE program (7 sessions) and other couples prefer to attend additional sessions to ensure they've worked out any outstanding issues prior to the wedding. A good average tends to be 10 sessions but again, it really depends on the couple.

What information is covered during the sessions? What will we learn that we don't already know?

I am a certified PREPARE/ENRICH counselor and I utilize this program in my premarital counseling sessions. This includes a *couples inventory* that you and your fiancé complete separately online after our initial meeting. I get feedback from that inventory that identifies your strengths and growth areas as a couple and we use that information in our follow-up sessions, along with communication exercises and real-life issues you may be experiencing in your relationship. You will learn how to communicate more effectively, resolve conflicts and solve problems, manage your finances together, talk about children and parenting, talk openly about each other's families, and develop goals for the future.

We live together ... do we really need premarital counseling?

YES, YES, YES! Statistics show that the divorce rate is actually higher among couples that live together prior to getting married.

What can possibly change? We already live together, share our money, friends and families.

In every way but the legal way, we're already married.

I'm not sure anyone can really explain to you "what" changes, it just does. Marriage is a transition from one type of a relationship to another and it takes work, knowledge and persistence to make it last. Maybe you've been given this "notion" from parents or married friends and you think to yourself "yeah right, we're different, and if you can't tell me why or how things change, then it's not really that big of a deal". Sound familiar?

A very truthful, informative and funny article ("15 things no one ever tells you about being married" by Julie Klam) in the December 2007 issue of Glamour describes this "change" as follows:

There was only one person who really gave me an honest depiction of being married - my dog, Otto. It occurred to me that I didn't resent Otto for getting sick in the middle of the night or eating the lion's share of my quesadilla or wanting me to stay home with him instead of going out with my friends. Being married was like having a dog who talked. No one ever told me that.

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Our Pastor/Officiant is requiring us to complete a structured premarital program.

Will completing the PREPARE program with you (Adrienne C. Laursen, MA, LAMFT) qualify?

Yes! This is a well-known, widely used premarital program and should meet the requirements of your Pastor or Officiant. Of course, it's always a good idea to check with him or her prior to getting started.

What are the benefits of seeing a Licensed Therapist vs. our Pastor for premarital counseling?

While a Pastor is trained to offer education and guidance, a Licensed Therapist such as myself holds advanced education and training in the area of Marriage and Family Therapy. I specialize in couples counseling and have experience working with couples of all races, life stages and sexual orientation. A Marriage and Family Therapist also has the experience and training to work on deeper issues that may be present in your relationship. I am also a PREPARE/ENRICH trainer and train other therapists and pastors to use this program with their engaged couples.

Another benefit of seeing a therapist is ultimate confidentiality and clearly defined boundaries. You won't have to worry about seeing your therapist at church or be put into a marriage prep group with other couples from your parish who will hear the intimate details of your relationship. I offer a completion certificate that you can present to your Pastor or Officiant stating you completed the necessary premarital education program.

What if one of us is concerned about getting married based on the issues we bring up in our counseling sessions?

Anytime a couple engages in counseling there is room for surprises, and this can sometimes generate fear around attending counseling either before or after marriage. But think of it this way ... during counseling you will have the time and opportunity to understand the issues that could be "deal-breakers" and to discuss them openly before you enter into marriage. Common "surprises" that couples often neglect to talk about on their own are: 1) *children* (when to have them, how many you each want, and how to raise them) and 2) *role expectations* (the roles you each expect your spouse to take on based on your experiences, perceptions, wants, etc.). Just remember that whatever issues may arise, it is easier to work through them prior to getting married!

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ADRIENNE C. LAURSEN, MA, LAMFT, is a Licensed Associate Marriage & Family Therapist and a certified PREPARE/ENRICH Counselor. I am passionate about helping couples grow their relationship, both prior to and after marriage, by enhancing communication and intimacy. Please feel free to contact me with any questions. I offer a free 20 minute in-person or telephone consultation for new couples and my office is conveniently located in Hopkins, near the intersection of Hwy 169 & Excelsior Boulevard.



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