

A Pre-marriage Proposal: Getting Ready for Marriage, an Adlerian Design

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Faculty of the Adler Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Arts in

Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy

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August 2011

Acknowledgements

My journey into a mid-life second career was met with surprise and encouragement by my family and friends. My reintroduction into the academic community was met with grace and encouragement by faculty and fellow students. My ensuing busy schedule was met with encouragement and patience by my job and my husband. I am grateful for the voices along the way that have cheered me on when it seemed impossible to do one more thing. Andy Leet, a stranger in a strange new workplace when I began my return to school, became a voice of encouragement, support, understanding, and celebration. Jonna Fantz, my best friend, walked alongside me in this marathon and became a voice of affirmation that I could go yet another mile. Myron, my husband, became a voice of reason and support especially when patience and energy seemed to fade. The silent voices from the many books and articles I have read have stimulated a passion in me that has been trying to emerge for a long time. To these and many others I am grateful for their companionship along my journey to this new land I am about to enter.

Abstract

This paper begins with a search for an Adlerian premarital preparation program, following Alfred Adler's prophetic voice from 1926 that proper premarital preparation would benefit generations to come. The paper reviewed literature and uncovered programs for both marriage enrichment and education, and premarital preparation; six programs were reviewed and evaluated. The search and resulting program evaluation found few options considered accessible for the 70% of couples married every year who do not receive any premarital preparation before the wedding. The paper then develops a premarital program for use in the community education setting.

KEY WORDS: pre-marriage; premarital preparation; premarital program; community education

Contents

Introduction	3
Part 1: Program Review	
A Word About Assessments	7
Philosophical Foundations	7
Program Format	9
Critical Components	12
Adlerian Concepts	17
Program Review Summary	18
Part 2: The Program	
Structure	21
Format	22
Course Overview	24
Lesson Plans	
Week One: Your Marriage	26
Week Two: You and Your Marriage	30
Week Three: Families of Origin	32
Week Four: Communication	38
Week Five: Conflict Management	40
Week Six: Cooperation	43
Table 1. A Comparison of Six Premarital Programs	19
References	46

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As early as 1926, Alfred Adler recognized that “It would be a real blessing for marriage, humanity, and the future generation if before every marriage there were some marriage therapy . . . to supplement inadequate preparation and improve erroneous attitudes.” (Adler, 1926/1978, p. 335) His perception indicates that preparation for marriage was inadequate, that mistaken attitudes were factors that needed to be addressed in good preparation and that adequate preparation before marriage would positively impact not only the marriage, but humanity and future generations as well. Now, nearly a century later, the divorce rate remains around 50%; Adler's words sound strangely contemporary. The National Healthy Marriage Research Center cites recent research indicating that premarital preparation can be an effective strategy in supporting healthy marriage and reducing divorce" (<http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/docs/stmarriagelicfs.pdf>). Knutson and Olson (2003) cite a major review of outcome studies with premarital couples that found premarital programs had a "significant impact on couples." Fawcett, Hawkins, Blanchard, & Carroll, (2010) in their meta-analytic study of the efficacy of premarital education programs found that the typical studies lack a sufficient time period to be conclusive, but that correlational survey studies offer a positive outlook and warrant longer-term research.

Premarital education, offering a prevention model, surfaced just before World War II, with clergy, community counseling and some college classes. For the most part, premarital counseling was done by clergy, mental health workers, and physicians. More systematic pastoral counseling and therapy developed during the two decades after the war (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997).

Early writings in marriage enrichment included the 1946 publication of the classic Adlerian book, *The Challenge of Marriage*, offering readers advice and strategies for good, intimate relationships (Dreikurs, 1946/1999). Father Gabriel Calbo's work, in Barcelona Spain, is frequently cited as the beginning of the marriage and family field in the early '60s, hosting weekend retreats for couples (Dinkmeyer, 2007). Independent of Father Calbo's work, David and Vera Mace began marriage enrichment weekend events in Kirkridge, Pennsylvania at almost the same time. The Maces went on to establish the Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment in 1973 (Dinkmeyer, 2007). Skills-based programs accounted for the basis of many emerging programs, eventually broadened out to include developmental-systems based programs, and cognitive-behavioral approaches.

In recent years premarital education has received more attention from policy makers and receiving more public funding (Fawcett, Hawkins, Blanchard, & Carroll, 2010). As of July 2007, seven states have marriage fee reduction laws that give a discount on the purchase of the marriage license for couples who have completed a specified number of hours of documented premarital education--typically 4-12 hours (www.healthymarriageinfo.org).

Premarital education is frequently a prerequisite for couples married by clergy in a church; Catholic churches and larger protestant churches can offer group classes on a regular basis. Those not connected to a church are left on their own to discover resources. It is estimated that only about 30% of couples preparing to marry do some sort of relationship education before the wedding (Busby, Ivey, & Harris, 2007).

Into this void has come the internet, with its instant access to wedding planner websites--complete one-stop shopping for everything a couple might need, including premarital counseling. A variety of formats and times are offered for prices ranging from \$195-\$495.

Thefirstdance.com offers a one-stop shopping venue for wedding information and includes helpful links like the national marriage therapy directory (<http://www.marriagefriendlytherapists.com/>) an "at home marriage prep," (<http://thefirstdance.com/premaritalcounseling.php>), "therapy in a box" at home workbooks, (<http://lisakifttherapy.com/c/toolbox-online-store/therapy-at-home-workbooks/premarital-counseling-workbook/>) the *Couple Checkup* premarital test (<http://thefirstdance.com/couple-checkup.php>), and electronic training (http://conscious-transitions.com/conscious-weddings-e-course/?ap_id=thefirstdance).

Self-help books manuals of all kinds have been around for more than 30 years, and now the internet is helping to bring these programs to the people. The book giant, Amazon.com, lists 14 self-help books on the first page after executing a simple search for "marriage books," offering anecdotal eye-catching titles like "Before You Tie the Knot," "101 Questions to Ask Before You Get Engaged," and "Things I Wish I Knew Before I Got Married." A best-seller, *Relationship Rescue*, is by popular TV talkshow host, Dr. Phil McGraw, and includes a book and separate workbook (2000a, 2000b).

The emergence of reality television shows in the last decade has added another dimension to relationship counseling. Shows like "Unfaithful: Stories of Betrayal" (Oprah Winfrey Network) allows people to look in on the relationship challenges of others, and decide for themselves what may or may not work for their own marriage. Dr. Phil's daily show (CBS) regularly features marriage relationship issues and his website includes a special section for relationship advice (<http://drphil.com/articles/category/5/>) and a blogging community (<http://community.drphil.com/blogs/>).

Mort Fertel (<http://mortfertel.com/>) offers marriage tips available by email subscription while promoting *Marriage Fitness*, a "marriage counseling alternative . . . a revolutionary system for marriage help," and Youtube.com offers short-attention-span couple counseling sessions and quick tips featuring renowned experts in premarital counseling doing live sessions.

From an Adlerian perspective, Dreikurs' *The Challenge of Marriage* (1946/1999) remains a classic and while dated, still offers important insight into marriage. Books about Adlerian theory and practice and couples and marriage therapy have given way to other books and journal articles providing yet another look at the foundational concepts as well as insight, techniques, and strategies for use in private practice. Only one program has been written--*Training in Marriage Enrichment* (Carlson & Dinkmeyer, 2003)--incorporating the Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler into a systematic, structured approach to marriage education. The original program, written in 1984, included a leader manual, participant book and audiotapes; the participant book was reissued in 2003 (Dinkmeyer, 2007). Its basic assumptions are that there is a purpose behind every behavior and that people's perception about that behavior is subjective. In the marriage system, those purposes and perceptions are critical to understanding which ones "help, or hinder, the enrichment of the marriage" (Dinkmeyer, 2007). A meta-analytic study by Silliman and Schumm (2000) concluded that it is time to "examine the content of current premarital programs," and look beyond the traditional target of couples' interaction patterns to the motives and meanings behind the behaviors.

Now, nearly a century after Adler's prophetic voice, with over two million couples married each year in the United States (Centers for Disease Control, 2009), and the divorce rate remaining close to 50% (U.S. Bureau of Census Statistical Abstract 2011), there still remains no decidedly Adlerian premarital preparation program to answer the call to look deeper than communication and skills education. This paper examines and critiques several programs currently available and offers a decidedly Adlerian program designed to reach some of the 70% of the couples left on their own to prepare for one of life's biggest challenges.

Program Review

Six marriage education programs were chosen randomly for review--some chosen for the variety of formats and some for their nationally-known presence in the field of marriage education. Three of these programs are considered to be marriage enrichment *intervention* programs recommended to be helpful for those about to be married as well or offer an abbreviated or customized options. Three programs are specifically designed as premarital education *prevention* programs. The programs reviewed are *Training in Marriage Education*, (TIME), (Carlson & Dinkmeyer, 2003); *Marriage Success Training*, (MST), (stayhitched.com); *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*, expanded and updated, (SYMBIS), (Parrott & Parrott, 2006); *Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills*, (PAIRS), copyrighted in 1989; (<http://www.pairs.com>); *Getting Ready for Marriage* (Hardin & Sloan, 1992); and *The Art & Science of Love*, (gottman.com). Table 1 compares details of the six programs.

A Word About Assessments

Three of the most popular and widely-used relationship assessment-inventories are PREPARE/ENRICH (<http://www.prepare-enrich.com>), RELATE (<https://www.relate-institute.org/>), and FOCCUS (<http://www.foccusinc.com>). They have each been developed through years of research and have been used in premarital counseling and preparation for 30 years. While premarital education programs can be developed around these assessment tools--and each one provides facilitators with strategies, resources, and exercises to create feedback sessions for couples--they are not programs in and of themselves and are, as such, not considered as a primary source for this paper. It should be noted that each program reviewed uses assessments in one form or another--from self-scoring checklists and simple likert scales to formal pre-assessments and free online assessments--and are noted in the evaluation.

Philosophical Foundations

Most programs utilize a psycho educational component as a part of the overall experience, and subscribe to a variety of philosophical conceptual frameworks. Silliman and Schumm (2000), in their review of research around premarital programs noted the frequent use of systems, family development, cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, and Adlerian models in their approaches, and that "the most widely tested models incorporate a family systems model at the grand theory level and cognitive-behavioral or Rogerian models at the application level" (Silliman & Schumm, 2000, p. 136).

The three programs designed for premarital preparation offer very different approaches. *SYMBIS* utilizes a strong psycho educational approach built on mastering identified life skills that the authors believe will "steadily and dramatically improve your relationship" (Parrott & Parrott, 2006); these skills are offered in the context of a Christian perspective. *MST* uses a developmental approach, teaching skills and strategies to address the challenges that occur through the stages of marriage and family life. *Getting Ready for Marriage* incorporates a family systems approach as it explores self- and other-understanding as a strong foundation for marriage. It is Christian in its overall perspective.

The marriage enrichment-focused programs vary in the weight that is given to skills training, offering instead three unique perspectives. *TIME* "incorporates Adlerian assumptions about motivation, yet its approach to couple initiative, equity, and interactive skills is implicitly systemic and constructivist" (Silliman & Schumm, 2000, p. 136). *The Art and Science of Love* applies a psychoeducational approach to provide insights based on years of research by founder John Gottman alongside training in relationship skills and strategies. *PAIRS* is literally a "Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills." It "delivers a unique technology built on a skills-based approach to enhancing empathy, bonding, attachment, and emotional literacy,

integrating "wide range of theories and proprietary methods from psychology, education and psychotherapy . . . and presents them in an educational format . . ."

(<http://evaluation.pairs.com/reports/pairs03102011.pdf>).

Program Format

The programs reviewed included a self-guided book (*Getting Ready for Marriage*) and book-workbook combination (*SYMBIS*), facilitator-directed groups (*TIME* and *SYMBIS*) and a seminar or workshop (*MST*, *PAIRS*, & *The Art and Science of Love*). All formats include educational presentations that are either live, recorded, or written. Each also includes discussion--as couples or in small groups--plus couple exercises to practice skills and some assessments to measure personal profiles.

Small group programs. These programs frequently employ a book and/or DVD and a workbook with exercises and discussion questions. *SYMBIS* is a packaged curriculum with DVD-based teaching, workbooks and a leader's guide that can be used in a group setting. The basic book focuses on seven questions to ask before--and after you marry--and includes a free online marriage assessment. The program can be done in 8-10 sessions and a year-long follow-up mentorship program is recommended. *SYMBIS* could also be used as a self-guided program. More information can be found at <http://www.realrelationships.com>.

SYMBIS offers a lot of practical information and resources; it is stimulating to read and has a workbook for exercises that offer an opportunity for application. The amount of information would be best done in a group setting with a competent facilitator. The number of sessions needed to get through the material could be problematic for couples--either on their own or in a group setting. Attempting this alone as a couple could quickly become overwhelming and would be best done with the DVD, adding more cost. Its Christian perspective could be problematic for some couples.

TIME is also designed as a small group experience, best done with a facilitator, and originally developed as a 10-session marriage enrichment program. It can be adopted for an

intensive weekend workshop or adult education program. Topic presentations, depending on the format, would be sometimes live and sometimes using video--and is combined with discussion, couple exercises and take-home activities. Participants use a workbook for outside reading, exercises, and brief assessments. The workbook can also be used as a self-directed course.

TIME lays out many important Adlerian concepts and synthesizes them well for the marriage relationship. However, it is a lot of material--very detailed and somewhat academic. Once again, it does not appear to be well-suited for couples trying this one on their own. The 10, well-packed sessions would be a lot to cover even for a group setting.

Getting Ready for Marriage is a self-guided program that offers a brief teaching on ten relationship topics followed in each chapter by self-scored assessment worksheets that address both family of origin patterns and couple patterns. This is simply written and could be developed as a small group experience at the hands of a skilled teacher-facilitator; it could be done as a couple without the aid of a facilitator.

Getting Ready for Marriage is light on teaching and heavy on worksheet assessments. The purpose of the worksheets seems to be to provide an opportunity for couple discussion; some of them are long and try to cover a lot of facets in some of the topics. The guidance offered to "score" the worksheets assesses compatibility and consistently suggests getting professional help when responses are in the lower range, considered potentially "incompatible."

Seminar programs. The seminar-style programs offer a variety of experiences. *PAIRS* is one of the nation's oldest & leading relationship skills training organizations (Eisenberg, 2010) and provides a private group setting with brief lectures live in a few locations in Florida, California, and some East Coast states. Several different relationship programs are offered; the premarital version is a customized 4-hour workshop where couples work together as pairs, with

no group sharing. This short workshop covers some of the key concepts and skills from their longer programs, and includes their signature resources: the *Relationship RoadMap*, the *Daily Temperature Reading*, the *Dialogue Guide*, and the *Emotional Jug and Caring Behaviors*.

The *PAIRS* organization offers some of the most practical help for couples, but the premarital seminars are scheduled less frequently than the larger relationship seminars. Couples are not likely to attend a 4-hour workshop if they have to travel very far and pay for lodging. There are many resources available online and occasionally, some of their other seminars are offered as online webinars (<http://pairs.com/>).

MST offers couples a one-day seminar-style approach with customized training for couples using a combination of experiential and cognitive learning. Limited to 15 couples the program combines guided large group presentations, demonstrations and private, structured couples discussion, exercises and goal-setting. An assessment is completed by couples before the seminar and is used to help identify couple relationship styles and offer strategies to clarify expectations. The seminar is scheduled in some East Coast locations and the Chicago area.

The greatest limitation of the *MST* option is its cost--around \$500 plus travel for this one-day training. Also, locations and schedules are limited. A book, *Guide to Marriage Success*, based on the seminars, is in process, which is designed to "present . . . a range of options . . . to promote marriage success and give you ways to select those that suit you best according to your relationship profile" (<http://www.stayhitched.com/mstbook.htm>). This promises a lot, and it will be interesting to see how well this book can translate their customized approach to premarital preparation. Additional information can be found at stayhitched.com.

The Art & Science of Love seminar is a 2-day workshop developed by Dr. John Gottman, one of the country's foremost relationship experts with years of research inside his "Seattle Love

Lab" (Gottman, 1999). Couples who typically attend are there for enhancement or repair of their relationships, but it is also advertised on the website for premarital preparation as a way to "start early . . . and get your relationship off to a healthy beginning and keep it healthy" (<http://www.gottman.com/59379/Premarital-Preparation.html>). The workshop can be attended in Seattle, Washington, presented by Drs. John and Julie Gottman or it can be found in some locations outside Seattle, presented by certified Gottman therapists. There is no group work, but couples work as a pair after interactive lectures; a team of "Certified Gottman Therapists" are available to assist couples as needed.

The greatest limitation of the Gottman workshop is its cost--almost \$800 plus travel expenses, and in limited locations. The skills and strategies are practical and tested and available in several books and other resources through [gottman.com](http://www.gottman.com); though practical and easy to understand, these resources would be a lot to wade through for a couple on their own.

Critical Components

An applied literature review of predictors surfaced three major categories of factors that affect marriages: a) background and context, b) individual traits and behaviors, and c) couple interactional process (Larson & Holman, 1994). Proponents and developers of premarital education alike continue to list several skills and talk points believed to be important in the preparation stage before entering the actual "lab stage" of marriage.

The developers of PREPARE/ENRICH, "the leading relationship inventory" (prepare-enrich.com) have developed several research-based categories and couple typology that have been found most predictive of marital success (Knutson & Olson, 2003). The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy cites a "marriage triangle" of factors that predict

marital satisfaction--individual traits, couple traits and personal and relationship contexts

(<http://www.aamft.org>).

Carlson and Dinkmeyer (2003) considered misunderstanding, alienation and loneliness as enemies of marriage and designed their *TIME* program to address underlying factors that impact these issues. *MST* offers a "concise list of seven relationship skills and knowledge areas that research has shown to contribute to the success and endurance of marriage: compatibility, expectations, personalities and families-of-origin, communication, conflict resolution, intimacy and sexuality, and long-term goals" (<http://stayhitched.com/prep.htm>).

SYMBIS cites marriage specialist research over the last three decades in listing these ingredients for building a happy marriage: healthy expectations, realistic concept of love, positive attitude and outlook toward life, ability to communicate feelings, understanding and acceptance of gender differences, ability to make decisions and settle arguments, and common spiritual foundations and goals (Parrott & Parrott, 2006).

For this project, six critical components were selected from the literature review, various lists, and the reviewed programs. In an exhaustive list, several sub-components could also be considered; these six serve as basic categories that are universally deemed critical for couples to consider in their preparation for marriage. They are offered in random order.

Communication. All the reviewed programs devote one or more sessions to develop understanding and skills in *communication*--this all encompassing human arena. Virginia Satir, noted pioneer in family therapy, provides a powerful metaphor for one of the most consistent components covered in all premarital counseling--considered universal in its importance to successful marriages: "Communication is to a relationship what breathing is to maintaining life" (Satir, 1976).

"Couples report that the number one problem they face in marriage is a 'breakdown in communication'" (Parrott & Parrott, 2006, p. 78). *PAIRS* offers a daily communication strategy, the *Daily Temperature Reading* (<http://fatherhoodchannel.com/2009/12/19/daily-temperature-reading/>). *TIME* says "communication is one of the most powerful factors influencing the quality of a relationship" and designates three chapters to the subject. *Getting Ready for Marriage* asserts that "good communication is the key that opens the door to a healthy, happy and more stable marriage" (Hardin & Sloan, 1992, p. xvi). *The Art and Science of Love* considers communication as a foundation to other marital issues.

Conflict management. Again, all the programs reviewed devote one or more sessions to understanding *conflict* and developing skills to manage it well. *TIME* devotes two chapters to conflict, outlining an effective process, and then applying it to common couple conflict areas. *The Art and Science of Love* has developed several resources around conflict, demonstrating key underlying factors and training for creating environments that foster helpful conflict. *PAIRS* views "constructive conflict" as one of its essentials for "enhanced communication, empathy, problem solving, and emotional connection."

Expectations. *Expectations* heads the list of foundational pieces that are helpful in understanding self and each other in a marriage. *SYMBIS* uses the myths of marriage as one of their "seven questions to ask before--and after--you marry" and offers education about stages of marriage and romance. *TIME* uses the concept of understanding the marriage relationship to address some of the underlying expectations. *MST* pushes it beyond a premarital perspective and addresses expectations that take couples into that unknown first year and beyond. *Getting Ready for Marriage* believes that many conflicts that arise in the first years of marriage can be traced back to expectations.

Family of origin. *Family-of-origin* awareness is another common theme identified by researchers and authors, but it is not given equal weight in the reviewed programs. *TIME* does not devote a single session to it but rather weaves it repeatedly throughout the program as an overarching influential piece. *MST* links it with in-laws as an important relationship-influencing dynamic. *SYMBIS* does not devote a chapter or section to this issue at all. *Getting Ready for Marriage* says that marriage counselors over the past thirty years have identified the influence of the family-of-origin as one of the most significant factors in a marriage and offers this version of the oft-cited truth: "when you marry, you marry families." The program devotes a chapter to knowing your family-of-origin and offers information and practice in developing genograms to capture family information and visualize family patterns.

Intimacy. The subject of *intimacy* takes on several layers in the reviewed programs, all with the underlying assumption that intimacy goes beyond sex. *MST* develops intimacy styles and strategies alongside the dynamic for couple bonding, personality styles and strengths. *TIME* uses the concept of encouragement and understanding each other and the relationship as a part of building intimacy. *SYMBIS* explores intimacy from a Christian "soul mate" perspective. *PAIRS* utilizes empathy and emotional literacy as foundations of couple bonding and attachment. *The Art and Science of Love* calls for building and sharing deeper connections with each other's inner world and "fostering respect, affection, and closeness" as critical components of intimacy. *TIME* devotes an entire chapter to being self-aware and considers that dynamic as part of the intimacy process.

Roles and responsibilities. *Roles and responsibilities* is included in many important checklists, but is inconsistent in the priorities of the reviewed programs. *MST* uses "challenges" to describe the many tasks of doing life together as a couple through the changes and stages they

must navigate together. These life responsibilities and challenges form the largest category of subjects for premarital education, and include finances, leisure, social relationships, children, household chores, and more. Expectations that can stem from families-of-origin often play a significant role in the couples' perspective about how to respond to these necessary and unavoidable challenges. *TIME* uses the language of "equal marriage" as a context for sharing tasks and addresses life tasks in the context of conflict resolution as a normal part of the challenge of marriage. *The Art and Science of Love* uses several chapters to address a few of these. *SYMBIS*, *Getting Ready for Marriage* and *The Art and Science of Love* do not address these issues, decidedly focused on enhancing competencies in broader, relationship dynamic issues.

Formal assessments would include these six basic concepts. PREPARE/ENRICH assesses all of the above plus partner style and habits, leisure activities, family and friends, spiritual beliefs, forgiveness, and children and parenting (https://www.prepare-enrich.com/webapp/pe/faq/template/DisplaySecureContent.vm;pc=1312126886825?id=pe*faq*overview.html&emb_sch_id=0&emb_lng_code=ENGLISH). RELATE uses a contextual approach--individual, familial, cultural, and couple--to assess marriage stability and satisfaction. Marriage relationship issues--including communication, conflict resolution, family background and more--are assessed in these four contexts, and combined to create a profile from which a customized approach to premarital education or marital enrichment can be developed (Busby, Holman, & Taniguchi, 2001). FOCCUS, a Catholic-based inventory, incorporates 189 questions that focus on communication, finances, sexuality, interfaith relationships and cohabitation consequences (<http://www.foccusinc.com/foccus-inventory.aspx>).

Adlerian Concepts

When Adler wrote about premarital counseling in 1926, he was theorizing about relationship skills that were necessary for solving the "life task" of love through the marriage relationship and the deficiencies that could arise in childhood training. He considered preparations for cooperation and social interest to be of the highest value for marriage partners (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Wes Wingett, in his relationship workbook, *Intimacy: A Task for Two*, uses five key premises of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology to identify the following assumptions he believes are critical underpinnings for marriage relationships:

[1] People are social beings who want to contribute and belong . . . [2] People are creative and self-determining . . . decision makers who are responsible for their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. [3] People are subjective in their opinions based on their personal perceptions of self, others, and the world. [4] People are holistic and must be viewed . . . through the body-mind connection, but also through the cognitions, emotions, and behaviors to understand them and their movement through life. [5] All people are goal directed . . . striving to move toward a sense of accomplishment, fulfillment, satisfaction, success, or some other self-defined goal ultimately [in order to] solve three intertwined social problems. . . occupation, friendship, and love (2010, p. 4).

The *TIME* program was designed from an Adlerian perspective. Originally developed in 1984, the book was revised in 2003 and went into its 4th printing in 2009. While it incorporates many of the basic components of the other programs reviewed, there are some uniquely Adlerian perspectives that deserve mention before moving forward. *TIME* advocates some unusual skills training. For example, the first chapter sets out encouragement as a force that builds happy

marital relationships and proceeds to teach skills that couples can learn to develop that create an atmosphere of mutual encouragement. The program also offers training in how to recognize personal goals, beliefs, and priorities and how to understand their effect on communication. An entire chapter is given to training couples to recognize their responsibility in and the role of *choice* in marriage.

Program Review Summary

Each of the programs reviewed offers adequate information and skills training, but does not provide insight or assistance in understanding the underlying issues that are foundational to a comprehensive premarital preparation. In addition, each program has limitations for the 70% who do not receive premarital preparation through more traditional venues like the church; those programs that could be used alone would be less effective without the help of a competent facilitator. Table 1 provides an overview comparison of the six evaluated programs. With those limitations in mind, the program that follows is designed to take premarital preparation "to the streets," and offer an accessible and affordable preparation to assist in reaching some of the 70% who are unaware of premarital education opportunities and incentives.

Table 1. A Comparison of Six Premarital Programs

	<i>TIME</i>	<i>PAIRS</i>	<i>Art & Science</i>	<i>MST</i>	<i>SYMBIS</i>	<i>Getting Ready</i>
Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adlerian • Family systems • Constructivist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills • Theories & methods from psych, educ & psychotherapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psycho educational • Relationship skill, strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental • Skills training • Life stages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family systems • Psycho educational • Life skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psycho education • Family systems
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group with facilitator • 10 wks • Workbook • Video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private group setting • 9-120 hrs • 4-hr wkshp for premarital • Singles/couples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-day workshop • no group work • interactive • therapists available • DVD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-day seminar • Lecture, discuss • Relationship style inventory • Workbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group • 8-10 wks • Year-long mentorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workbook • Worksheets • 10 chapters
Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage relationship • Communication • Choice • Conflict • Responsibility • Encouragement • Priority/values • Equal marriage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Empathy • Problem solving • Emotional connection • Intimacy skills • Conflict • Competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimacy • Friendship • Conflict • Assessing relationship • Five basic questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success factors • Bonding • Communication • Conflict • Family of origin • Expectations • Stages & shifts • Compatibility • Friends & social • Sexuality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 Questions • Marriage myths • Love style • Happiness • Communication • Gender gap • Conflict • Soul mates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loving & knowing self • Family of origin • Communication • Attitudes • Conflict • Religious orientation • Money • Sexuality • Family planning
Cost	\$17 workbook	\$100 + any travel & lodging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$725/couple • Travel/lodging • DVD: \$175 	\$495 + any travel costs	About \$80	\$15 on Amazon
Mode	Marriage enrichment	Marriage enrichment • Brief premarital	Marriage enrichment • Good premarital	Marriage preparation • Customized	Marriage preparation • Christian	Marriage preparation • Christian

THE PROGRAM

This program is designed to be distinctively Adlerian, decidedly focused on premarital preparation and designed to be used in a community education setting. It is laid out for six two-hour units for six couples. Couples who complete all 12 hours of the course will receive a letter certifying that they have complete the course. In the state of Minnesota that certification qualifies them to receive a discount on the cost of their marriage license.

Distinctively Adlerian

It is both a constructionist and a systems model, with a belief that that new marriage constructs a new family system. It does not seek to deconstruct, but rather takes a respectful look at the family of origin systems from which the couple got their ideas about marriage and family, and assists them in deciding which building blocks they want to use to construct their own marriage and family.

It is rooted in the Adlerian philosophical foundations that 1) people are social beings who want to contribute and belong; 2) people are responsible for their own thoughts, feelings and behaviors; 3) people are subjective in their opinions based on personal perceptions of self, others, and the world; 4) people are holistic; and 5) people are goal directed to solve the three intertwined social problems of work, friendship, and love (Wingett, 2010).

Decidedly Premarital

The program is not meant to be a comprehensive look at all the popular subjects that could be considered. As a preparation program it seeks to provide some information and insight into foundational issues that all couples face. It seeks to prepare them for the initial changes and adjustments and to assist them in creating a foundation for working together well to meet the challenges of life together. It is not skill-based per se, although it does include some skills

training exercises. It is designed to go a step deeper to examine the foundations from which patterns of behavior and interaction come, providing the theoretical context for skills training and a mirror of insight that can help couples better process their own interactions.

The Structure

The choices for unit composition were based in part on some of the major elements in other programs, like communication, conflict management, and families of origin. Other choices were based on Adlerian concepts considered important for marriage. Unit one introduces Adler's belief that the task of marriage is to work together to solve the task of love, and looks at Adler's social-interest laden "fundamental guarantee of marriage" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher). Unit two looks at the role of self-awareness and individual strengths that each partner brings to the process of creating a new family system. Unit three takes an integrative look at families of origin and how they shape us as individuals and then deposit us into a new arena that must create a new family system. Units four and five begin to synthesize the first three units and apply the insights to some skills training around communication and conflict management with an emphasis on our personal perceptions as the number one cause of relational disconnects. Finally, Unit six looks at the role of cooperation in making the new family system the best it can be . . . together.

Some of the concepts and activities were taken directly from Adlerian-based resources. *TIME* provided Adlerian foundational information already integrated for the marriage relationship. Wes Wingett's reference and application of an old German folk test for couples is used in Unit six (Wingett, 2010). Rudolf Dreikurs' delineation of the components of cooperation \ (1999) is taught in Unit six. An Adlerian resource that serves as a unifying thread that runs throughout all six units is *Cinderella the Sequel* (Bettner and Bettner, 1995)--a fairy tale

approach to the realities of marriage after the honeymoon. It is revisited each week with discussion as a starting place to understand the unit's concept.

Other activities were created to make some of the core Adlerian principles more easily accessible. For example, a simple pie chart diagram was offered in Unit two to illustrate Adler's life tasks. Questions about the couple's family of origin that provide insight into core beliefs and uncover expectations were used to develop a card game in Unit three.

The program is designed to be used in a community education venue with the belief that doing so would make this kind of premarital preparation accessible to more couples. Its brief format is offered to increase the accessibility and build couple awareness and curiosity that can spur them on to be life long partners in the life long learning process of creating and sustaining a satisfying marriage.

The Format

The program details offered here are not designed to be a comprehensive manual that can be used for teacher training, but rather, have been formatted as a lesson plan for use by the author in the designated community education setting. The program details include a course overview with each week's purpose and focus highlighted. The lesson plans use the four stages of Adlerian counseling as the movements of each session--1) align with the couples, 2) understand the couples, 3) offer insight for the couples, and 4) reorient and re-educate the couples (Dinkmeyer & Dinkmeyer, 1982). Each lesson also concludes with an activity idea to continue the learning outside of the class. A *Unit Sheet* is included for each week with a statement of the learning outcomes and focus, and some information and activities. In addition, worksheets, questionnaires, and activity guides have been included where applicable. Each couple would

receive a 3-ring binder with all of the hand-outs, worksheets, and assessments needed for the class. Couple pages are formatted for that purpose.

Finally, the program offered is based on what the author considers to be the most important understanding about marriage: **recognize what it takes to cooperate with each other to make a good marriage and develop the awareness and skills to be a good partner.**

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Purpose: Provide 12-hour premarital preparation experience that will help couples focus on some of the important components for creating and maintaining a lasting relationship.

Week #1--Your Marriage

Purpose-- Develop personal awareness about marriage.

What to expect--Explore expectations about marriage and what is needed for success.

Week #2--You and Your Marriage

Purpose--Recognize that knowing who you are and what you bring to your marriage makes a difference.

What to expect--Identify personal style and hits impact on marriage.

Week #3--Families of Origin

Purpose--Recognize how you and your ideas about marriage are shaped by your family of origin.

What to expect--A brief look at your family of origin and what impact that family has on creating a new one.

Week #4-- Communication

Purpose--Identify the crucial yet complicated nature of communication.

What to expect--Learn about your personal social style and try a communication model.

Week #5--Conflict Management

Purpose--Recognize that conflict resolution can be done well and create intimacy.

What to expect--Identify your conflict style and learn principles and strategies for resolution.

Week #6--Cooperation

Purpose--Recognize that marriage is a task requires cooperation from both partners to be successful.

What to expect--Learn the components of cooperation and identify household tasks.

ALFRED ADLER ON MARRIAGE

The fundamental guarantee of marriage, the meaning of marital happiness, is the feeling that you are worthwhile, that you cannot be replaced, that your partner needs you, that you are acting well, and that you are a fellow [hu]man and a true friend." (Ansbacher, H.L. & Ansbacher, R.R., 1956, p. 432)

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

HOUSEKEEPING

- Introduce myself as facilitator
- Talk about the letter of completion they can receive that gets them \$75 discount in the state of Minnesota for completing 12 hours of premarital education.
- Logistics of class length
- Confirm class roster

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Introduction

- There are many premarital programs available and all of them have a list of components that are critical for a successful marriage based on a variety of research.
- This program is based on some of that research and will incorporate some of those components.
- This program is not designed to cover every issue that couples will face in marriage, nor will it be strictly a skills-based program.
- It will be a look at what is underneath behavior and choices that affect everything marriage.
- I believe this will help you understand the dynamics in your relationships and give you the opportunity to change your beliefs and behaviors that do not support your goals for marriage.
- I have been married for 25 years, counseled both premarital couples and couples needing help midstream
- If I could distill my personal and professional experience down to the shortest, truest thing that I thought would make a difference in your marriage it would be this
Recognize what it takes to have a good marriage and develop awareness and skills necessary to be good partners in the process

ABOUT MARRIAGE

1. Distribute course overview sheet & highlight with time for questions
2. Introduce and briefly teach about marriage using Adler quotation course overview sheet.

WEEK #1--YOUR MARRIAGE**LESSON PLAN**

FOCUS: Develop personal awareness about marriage

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Couples will be able to

- Name and practice four parts of a basic communication pattern
- Name three basic life tasks and identify where marriage fits in
- Identify their marriage expectations
- Choose three components they want to have in their marriage

ALIGN WITH COUPLES

1. Have couples introduce themselves
names
how long they have been together
wedding date
tell about your first date--where did you go, what do you remember about him/her?
2. Read *Cinderella, the Sequel* (Bettner & Bettner, 1995)
Discuss reactions, thoughts; What do you think they thought marriage would be?
Explain how this will be used throughout the session as an example of marital dynamics we are covering
Guide discussion using the basic communication pattern: what do you notice, think, feel, want

UNDERSTAND COUPLES

1. Introduce the basic communication pattern--what do you notice, think, feel, and want--using information from *Talking and Listening Together* (Miller, Miller, Nunnally, & Wackman, 1991).
2. Introduce the concept of Adler's life tasks using materials from *Adlerian Therapy*, pp. 13, & 85-86 (Carlson, Watts, & Maniaci, 2006)
3. Have couples share with each other where they are in each life task using a scale of 1-10
After one shares, have the other use at least three pieces of the basic communication pattern
4. Highlight that marriage is life task of love to be solved by partners cooperating

INSIGHT

Teaching--

1. Have couples complete a worksheet about truths and myths about marriage
Share responses and process

REORIENT/REEDUCATE

1. Teach about critical components in marriage using information on the unit overview sheet
2. Have couples work in pairs to choose three of the components they want in their marriage

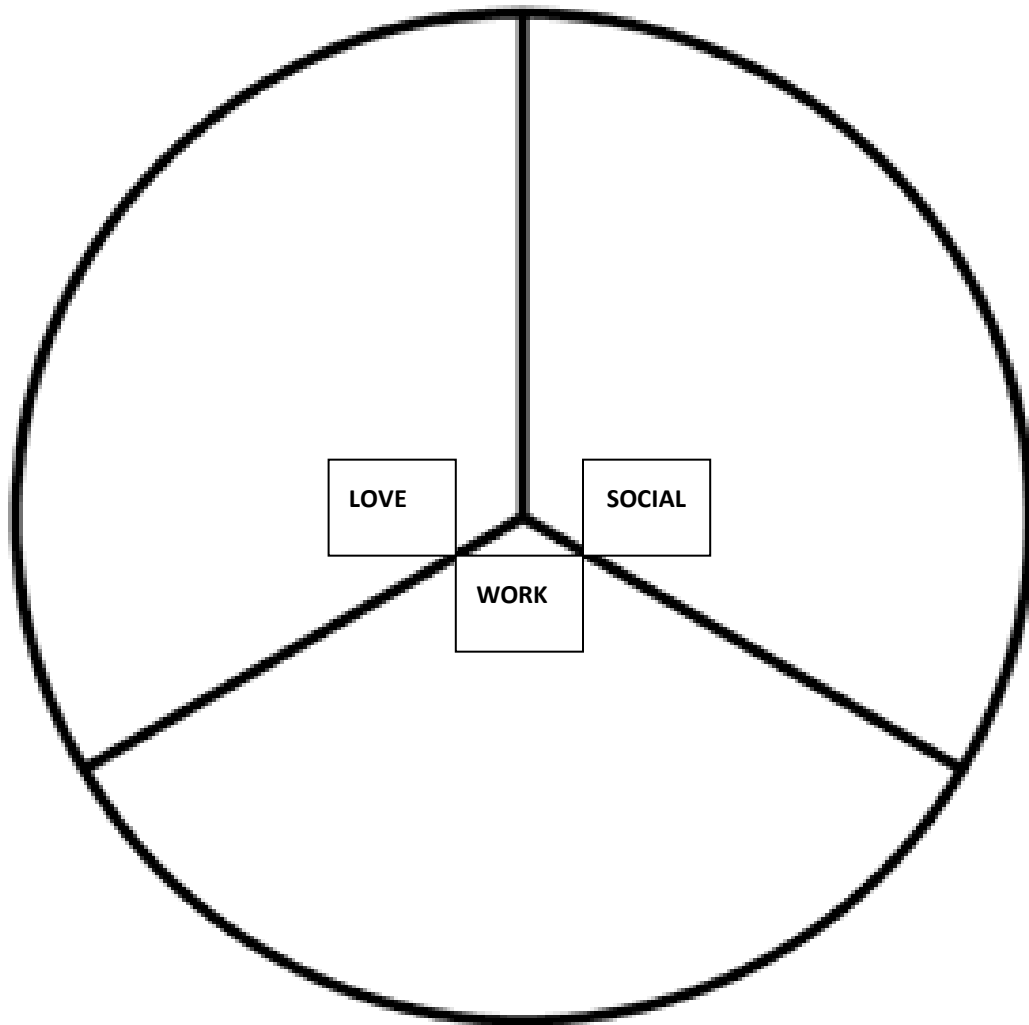
WRAP-UP

1. Using their unit overview sheet, have couples complete the "I learned" sections
2. During the week: Take time to discuss further your top three marriage components, practicing the basic communication pattern

HAND-OUTS

1. Course overview
2. Unit sheet
3. Life task diagram

Adler's Life Tasks



WORK: Useful to community; value to others; regular responsibility
SOCIAL: Interest in well-being of others; cooperation in community
INTIMACY: Close union of mind & body; utmost cooperation w/partner

UNIT SHEET: WEEK #1--YOUR MARRIAGE

FOCUS: Develop personal awareness about marriage

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this session, couples will be able to

- Name and practice four parts of a basic communication pattern
- Name three basic life tasks and identify where marriage fits in
- Identify their marriage expectations
- Choose three components they want to have in their marriage

COMMON EXPECTATIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE

- _____ 1. My partner and I expect exactly the same things from marriage
- _____ 2. Everything good in our relationship will get better after we are married
- _____ 3. To have a good marriage my partner and I should see things the same way
- _____ 4. The romance we have now will just get better with time
- _____ 5. A good relationship will always be able to find resolution to our conflicts
- _____ 6. Common interests are critical to a good marriage
- _____ 7. A great relationship is a peaceful one
- _____ 8. Love is all we need for a happy relationship
- _____ 9. I believe I have already learned everything there is to know about my partner
- _____ 10. Love means never having to say you are sorry

Adapted from *Saving Your Marriage Before it Begins* (Parrott & Parrott, 2006), *Relationship Rescue* (McGraw, 2000a), and *PREPARE/ENRICH Relationship Inventory* (prepare-enrich.com)

COMPONENTS OF A HEALTHY COUPLE RELATIONSHIP

(Carlson & Dinkmeyer, *Time for a Better Marriage*, 2003)

1. Individually accept responsibility and develop self-esteem
2. Choose to encourage each other
3. Identify and align their relationship goals
4. Communicate their feelings with honesty and openness
5. Listen empathetically when feelings are being expressed
6. Seek to understand the factors that influence their relationship
7. Demonstrate that they accept and value each other
8. Choose thoughts, words, and actions that support positive goals of the relationship
9. Solve relational conflicts
10. Commit themselves to the ongoing process of maintaining an equal relationship

What I learned about myself:

What I learned about marriage:

As a result, I want to:

WEEK #2--YOU AND YOUR MARRIAGE

LESSON PLAN

FOCUS: Develop awareness about personal style

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Couples will be able to

- Identify their individual personal love language
- Identify stages of marriage
- Use the basic communication pattern with partner in discussions

ALIGN WITH COUPLES

1. Revisit *Cinderella, the Sequel*

Using the basic communication pattern, discuss what they knew about each themselves and the other

UNDERSTAND COUPLES

1. Teach the concept of love languages, using information from *The Five Love Languages* (Chapman, 1992)
2. Have couples evaluate their own love language using information on their weekly sheet then share with their partner, each one first saying what they think their partner's love language is, then the partner revealing discuss using the basic communication pattern

INSIGHT

1. Teach about the stages of marriage using information from *Saving Your Marriage Before it Begins* (Parrott & Parrott, 2006)
2. Have couples discuss together in groups of two couples using the basic communication pattern

REORIENT/REEDUCATE

1. Review the critical components from last week and use as an overlay to the stages
2. Group discussion using basic communication pattern

WRAP-UP

1. Using their unit overview sheet, have couples complete the "I learned" sections
2. During the week: Practice speaking your partner's love language

HAND-OUTS

1. Unit sheet

UNIT SHEET: WEEK #2--YOU AND YOUR MARRIAGE

FOCUS: Develop awareness about personal style

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this session, couples will be able to

- Identify their individual personal love language
- Identify stages of marriage
- Use the basic communication pattern with partner in discussions

FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES

Adapted from **The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate** by Dr. Gary Chapman (Chicago: Northfield Publications, 1992)

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION—saying “I love you,” sincerely admiring, praising or complimenting your spouse; encouraging him or her and expressing your positive feelings in words—these are all ways to use words that affirm.

ACTS OF SERVICE—doing nice things for the other and helping out are acts of service. Serving the other says, “I care enough for you to go out of my way to spend my time to help you.”

GIFTS—buying a gift or making a gift for the other says, “I was thinking of you and I was willing to put my thoughts into action by getting something for you.” The gift might be small or large.

PHYSICAL TOUCH OR CLOSENESS—touching, patting rubbing, head rubs, back rubs, foot tickles and sexual caresses are all examples of physical touch or closeness. Being near the other, bumping up against the other and putting an arm around the other are other examples.

QUALITY TIME—hanging out together, spending exclusive time together and talking about things that are important to each of you show that you care for each other through conversation.

What I learned about myself:

What I learned about marriage:

As a result, I want to:

WEEK #3--FAMILIES OF ORIGIN--FIRST STOP FOR YOUR MARRIAGE**LESSON PLAN**

FOCUS: Ideas about self & marriage started in families of origin

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Couples will be able to

- Identify three things about self from birth order characteristics
- Identify similarities and differences between partners in how things were done in families
- Choose three family dynamics and decide how you want to do them in your marriage

ALIGN WITH COUPLES

1. Revisit *Cinderella, the Sequel*

Using the basic communication pattern, discuss what they know about their families of origin
Point out how their marriage expectations were impacted

UNDERSTAND COUPLES

1. Introduce the impact of birth order using information from *Counseling Children and Adolescents* (Vernon, 2004)
2. Using the "Birth Order" hand-out, have couples mark the characteristics that are most like them, then discuss together in groups of two couples using the basic communication pattern

INSIGHT

1. Reinforce differences in how we do life based on our families of origin
2. Have couples play the card game "We Did it Our Way" in pairs
Discuss using the basic communication pattern
Identify two similarities and two differences

REORIENT/REEDUCATE

1. Have couples choose three categories from those on their unit sheet and write how they would like to do those in their marriage
2. Have couples compare their lists and discuss using the basic communication pattern

WRAP-UP

1. Using their unit overview sheet, have couples complete the "I learned" sections
2. During the week: Continue discussing similarities and differences in your families using the basic communication pattern

HAND-OUTS

1. Unit sheet
2. Birth order overview

**UNIT SHEET: WEEK #3--FAMILIES OF ORIGIN
FIRST STOP FOR YOUR MARRIAGE**

FOCUS: Ideas about self & marriage started in families of origin

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this session, couples will be able to

- Identify three things about self from birth order characteristics
- Identify similarities and differences between partners in how things were done in families
- Choose three family dynamics and decide how you want to do them in your marriage

SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES IN OUR FAMILIES

THIS IS HOW I WOULD LIKE TO DO IT

Choose three categories from the list below and choose one dimension from each, and write about how you would like that dynamic to be in your new family.

- **Holidays (choose one)**
- **Finances (choose any part--budgeting, bills, spending, etc.)**
- **Vacations (where, who, what, when, how)**
- **Extended families (who, what, where, when, etc.)**
- **Dinnertime (who, where, when, how, what)**
- **Bedtime (when, how)**
- **Weekends**

What I learned about myself:

What I learned about marriage:

As a result, I want to:

BIRTH ORDER

FIRST BORN: "Working Monarchy"

- Only child for a period of time
- Family keeps more complete records: 1st step, word
- Dethroned for 2nd child: unprepared, death wishes
- Believe in power (parents' representative): power struggles w/bosses, spouses, kids
- Influenced by authority, public opinion
- Sensitive to expectations of others: sense of obligation to do things well leads to hesitation, stalling & dread of engaging in things; perfectionist, meet expectations
- Procrastination often disguised as preparation
- Task-oriented
- Constricted by righteousness
- Unable to see how they are of any value unless they are doing something wonderful/admirable
- Experience anxiety in presence of opportunities which are seen as obligations, then feel unable to refuse
- *No* is a difficult word
- Conservative in outlook, rigid
- May be less at ease w/members of own age
- Rate themselves
- Responsible
- Dislike change
- Want to be right
- Feel overworked, overwhelmed, martyr due to inability to say *no* versus the insensitivity of others
- Achievement and leadership
- Protect and help others, keeps upper hand, creates dependency
- More fearful, especially about failure
- Show greater need for affiliation
- Peacemaker for other children

YOUNGEST: "Baby, Crowned Prince/Princess,"
"Life's a Party"

- Why fight? We can use charm or charisma
- Never dethroned
- Watch 1st & 2nd compete; "Must be a better way."
- Begs forgiveness after doing what they want to do rather than ask permission and risk refusal
- Often pampered by older children; reduces competition
- Expects more from life emotionally and materially
- May be indecisive, asks for consultation
- Dependent
- Considered lucky versus competent by others
- Nobody listens to my opinion
- May look for remote areas of activity, achievement
- Ambitious
- Not taken seriously
- Expects others to do things for them and good at getting them to do it
- Often allied with first born against middle
- Party: fun hats, decorations, live music
- Concern about creature comforts, food, sauna
- Served as nobility--development of ability to say *no*
- Less conventional

SECOND BORN, MIDDLE: "Forever catching up"

- There is always another child
- Listen to first born's experience of outside world
- May be the oldest of their sex
- Challenge of life: "until now we have found only one way to do it"
- Shows perseverance and strength of purpose--stubborn
- Need to be told they succeed, always running
- Reluctant to meet expectations of others
- Middle: "rose between two thorns"
- May feel free of parental management
- May feel squeezed
- Sensitive to issues of justice, fairness
- Very empathetic, more so than first born
- Independence and autonomy generated by never getting just rewards
- Remembers birthdays, anniversaries, special dates--reminds others
- Negotiator in family, settles disputes
- Know what they oppose
- Fewer substance abuse or mental health issues
- Fewer baby pictures
- Enjoys planning activities requiring intimacy, more sociable
- Enjoys self-disclosure, *getting to know you* games
- Becomes what the older is not
- More aggressive
- More specific
- Needs reasons, "Why are we doing this?"









ONLY: "It is all up to me"





- Never dethroned
- Major complaint: loneliness, waiting impatiently to grow up, going to have lots of kids
- Never having to share parents can be a source of confidence
- Hopes and fears of all years place on them
- May find it difficult to share feelings, discuss worries in reference to parents
- I must be the only one who thinks and feels this way
- Understands adults better than peers
- Easily embarrassed among peers by their mistakes
- Resents common myths about only children
- Pseudo sibling rivalry with same sex parent
- Closer to more indulgent parent
- Sees self as independent and unique
- Self-reliant
- May be compulsive, task-oriented
- Expects privacy, acceptance & compliance with demands
- Enjoys working alone on solitary problems for long periods of time
- Since only competes against older people, they may entertain themselves by rebelling against authority
- Most divergent thinkers

Adapted from *Counseling Children & Adolescents*, Ann Vernon, 2004, Love Publishing, Denver, CO

WE DID IT OUR WAY CARD GAME

Original concept and design by Joyce Poley, author

<p>How did you and your family celebrate holidays? Choose one and talk about any traditions you may have had.</p> 	<p>How did your parents Express affection to each other?</p> 
<p>Who paid the bills at your house? How do you know that?</p> 	<p>What was dinner time like at your house? Who was there? Was there a routine? Who was responsible for having food ready?</p> 
<p>Who was the disciplinarian in the family? What was the method of discipline?</p> 	<p>What household chores and tasks did your mom do? What chores did your dad do? What were the children expected to do?</p> 
<p>What was the atmosphere like at home?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fun-loving Democratic Authoritarian Distant Sharing/cooperative Punitive Encouraging 	<p>What was it like at your house when someone got sick? Was it different for mom or dad than for the kids?</p> 

<p>What were your family's habits about giving gifts?</p>	 <p>If you had a Christmas tree, who decorated it? Put lights on? Decided where it went?</p>
<p>When everyone went together In the car, who drove? Was there a navigator?</p>	 <p>Was there a family value about exercise?</p>
<p>What were the expectations for the children about grades in school?</p>	 <p>What did your family do for entertainment?</p>
<p>Who worked outside the house?</p>	 <p>Who was responsible for doing the laundry at your house?</p>

 <p>We Did it Our Way</p>	 <p>We Did it Our Way</p>
 <p>We Did it Our Way</p>	 <p>We Did it Our Way</p>
 <p>We Did it Our Way</p>	 <p>We Did it Our Way</p>
 <p>We Did it Our Way</p>	 <p>We Did it Our Way</p>

WEEK #4--COMMUNICATION, DOORWAY TO RELATIONSHIPS**LESSON PLAN**

FOCUS: Communication is crucial to the relationship and easily complicated

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Couples will be able to

- Identify individual personal social style and how it is reflected in couple interaction
- Identify how family of origin communication pattern impacts individual communication
- Practice an active listening in communication

ALIGN WITH COUPLES

1. Revisit *Cinderella, the Sequel*

Use the basic communication pattern to discuss how their perceptions affected their communication

Introduce my communication tip: "Respond to what you know he or she meant, do not react to what you think he or she meant."

Use the basic communication pattern to discuss the statement

UNDERSTAND COUPLES

1. Introduce the concept of social styles using information in *People Styles at Work* (Bolton & Bolton, 1996)
2. Guide couples to plot themselves using the social styles grid

INSIGHT

1. Teach about communication perceptions and assumptions--revisit communication tip
2. Teach about the adaptive purpose of emotions in communication using information from *The Quest to Feel Good* (Rasmussen), and using anger, fear, and depression as examples
3. Teach active listening skills using information from the *Empowering Couples* from PREPARE ENRICH (https://www.prepare-enrich.com/webapp/pe/bookstore/template/PEMainSiteBookStore.vm/action/PEMainSiteBookStoreAction;pc=1316375250678?emb_org_id=0&emb_sch_id=0&emb_lng_code=ENGLISH&#menu_item).

REORIENT/REEDUCATE

1. Have couples role play active listening skills using issue suggestions from group

WRAP-UP

1. Using their unit overview sheet, have couples complete the "I learned" sections
2. During the week: Practice using the active listening model

HAND-OUTS

1. Unit sheet
2. Birth order overview

**UNIT SHEET: WEEK #4--COMMUNICATION
DOORWAY TO RELATIONSHIPS**

FOCUS: Communication is crucial to the relationship and easily complicated

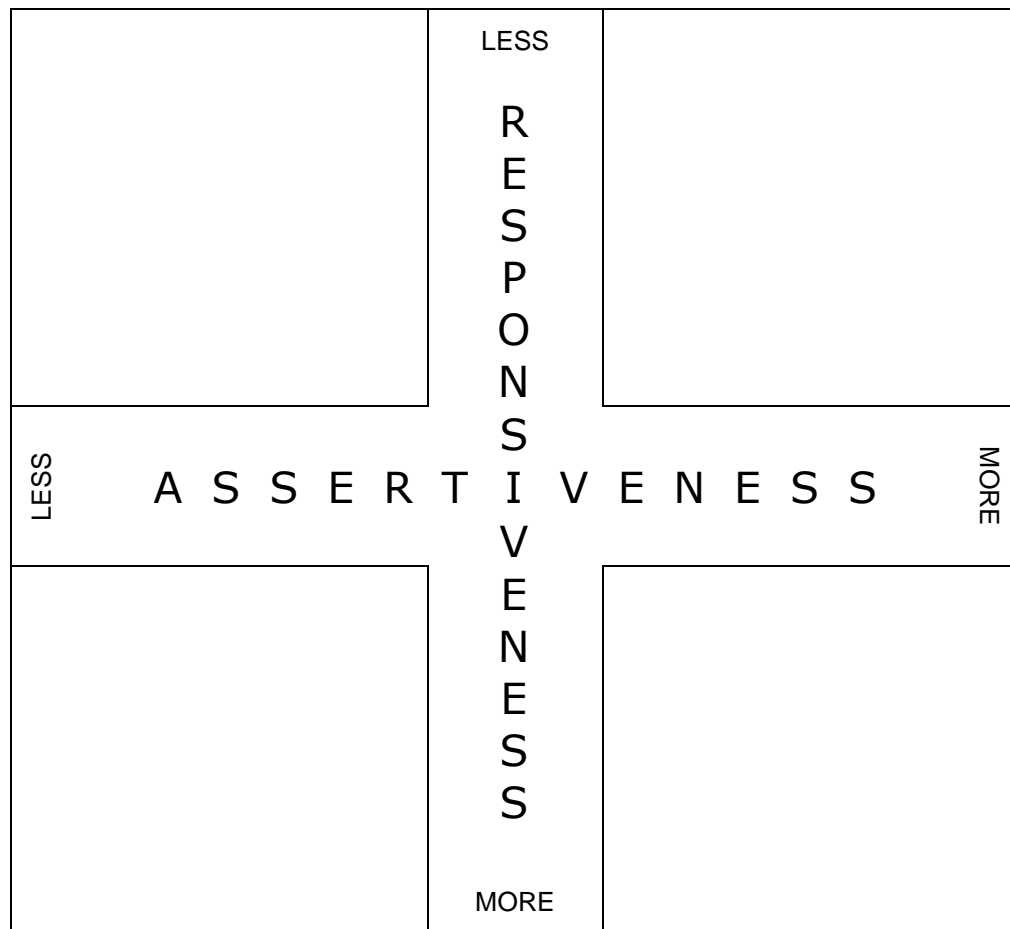
LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this session, couples will be able to

- Identify individual personal social style
- Identify how family of origin communication pattern impacts marriage
- Practice an active listening in communication

SOCIAL STYLES

Adapted from *People Styles at Work* (Bolton & Bolton, 1996)



What I learned about myself:

What I learned about marriage:

As a result, I want to:

WEEK #5--CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

LESSON PLAN

FOCUS: Conflict can be resolved well and create intimacy and connectedness

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Couples will be able to

- Identify common areas of conflict
- Cite an example of how individual social style is active in conflict
- Practice a conflict resolution strategy

ALIGN WITH COUPLES

1. Revisit *Cinderella, the Sequel*
Use the basic communication pattern to discuss the nature of their conflict
What could have happened if they had used active listening?
How did my communication tip from last week play out in their interaction?
2. Brainstorm together areas of conflict among couples

UNDERSTAND COUPLES

1. Teach about social styles under stress
2. Have couples review the characteristics of their social style from the information on their unit sheet and discuss together as couples using the basic communication pattern and active listening

INSIGHT

1. Teach about principles of conflict resolution using information from Dreikurs from *Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy*, p. 244-45 (Dinkmeyer, Pew, & Dinkmeyer, Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy, 1979)
2. Teach conflict resolution strategy using information from PREPARE/ENRICH Couple Workbook (prepare-enrich.com) and discuss what to do when the this strategy gets off track

REORIENT/REEDUCATE

1. Have couples role play practice the conflict resolution strategy using one of the issues brainstormed earlier

WRAP-UP

1. Using their unit overview sheet, have couples complete the "I learned" sections
2. During the week: Choose another issue from the brainstorm list to practice the strategy

HAND-OUTS

1. Unit sheet
2. Social Styles

UNIT SHEET: WEEK #5--CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

FOCUS: Conflict can be resolved well and create intimacy and connectedness

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this session, couples will be able to

- Identify common areas of conflict
- Cite an example of how individual social style is active in conflict
- Practice a conflict resolution strategy

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Adapted from *The Challenge of Marriage*, Rudolf Dreikurs, M.D.

1. Show mutual respect. Not fighting or giving in, but acknowledging that resolution results from understanding and respecting each person's point of view--not winning or losing
2. Pinpoint the issue. What is behind the conflict--threat to personal status, prestige, concern about winning or deciding who is right
3. Reach a new agreement. Perpetual conflict is an *agreement* to fight; find something new to agree on where each partner can say, "I am willing to do this."
4. Participate in decision making. Both partners take part in both the decision-making process and in assuming responsibility for the decision

What I learned about myself:

What I learned about marriage:

As a result, I want to:

SOCIAL STYLES

Adapted from *People Styles at Work* (Bolton & Bolton, 1996)

Analytical--

- Less assertive, less responsive
- Under stress: avoid, autocratic
- Strengths
prudent
painstaking
task-oriented
systematic
- Strengths overused
indecisive
nitpicky
impersonal
bureaucratic

Amiable--

- Less assertive, more responsive
- Under stress: acquiesce, attack
- Strengths
diplomatic
dependable
supportive
people-oriented
- Strengths overused
avoid conflict
dependent
permissive
inattentive to task

Driver--

- More assertive, less responsive
- Under stress: autocratic, avoiding
- Strengths
independent
results-oriented
candid
pragmatic
- Strengths overused
poor collaborator
impersonal
abrasive
shortsighted

Expressive--

- More assertive, more responsive
- Under stress: attack/acquiesce
- Strengths
articulate
fast-paced
visionary
fun-loving
- Strengths overused
poor listener
impatient
impractical
distancing

WEEK #6--COOPERATION**LESSON PLAN**

FOCUS: Cooperation is critical for good marriage

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Couples will be able to

- Recognize the power dynamic in cooperation
- Identify qualities in cooperation
- Decide how to cooperate around household tasks

ALIGN WITH COUPLES

1. Revisit *Cinderella, the Sequel*
Discuss "What did you notice about their cooperation?"
2. Share story of German method for finding out if couple is prepared for marriage using information from *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*, p. 438 (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956)
3. Discuss in large group how couples think they might do with this exercise using questions from *Intimacy: a task for two*, p. 11-12 (Wingett, 2010).

UNDERSTAND COUPLES

1. Have couples do self-assessment using the *Power Sharing* scale using the hand-out, "Snapshots About Cooperation"

INSIGHT

1. Teach about the qualities of cooperation using information from *Adlerian Therapy Theory and Practice*, p. 178-79 (Carlson, Watts, & Maniaci, 2006)

REORIENT/REEDUCATE

1. Have couples use the list on their unit sheet to discuss and decide who will be responsible for each chore; they should use the basic communication pattern and active listening

WRAP-UP

1. Using their unit overview sheet, have couples complete the "I learned" sections
2. Distribute letters to those who have been there all six weeks
3. Announce opportunities for continuing exploration
Flyers announcing Marriage Maintenance group (once a month, open group)
PREPARE/ENRICH--invitation to go deeper to use assessment + 2 sessions

HAND-OUTS

1. Unit sheet
2. Snapshots about Cooperation
3. Letters of certification for state discount
4. Flyer about Marriage Maintenance group
5. My business card

UNIT SHEET: WEEK #6--COOPERATION

FOCUS: Cooperation is critical for good marriage

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this session, couples will be able to

- Recognize the power dynamic in cooperation
- Identify qualities in cooperation
- Decide how to cooperate around household tasks

Which of these chores will you be responsible for?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| ☞ Prepare breakfast | ☞ Do small repairs |
| ☞ Cook dinner | ☞ Maintain cars |
| ☞ Set table | ☞ Mow the lawn |
| ☞ Do dishes | ☞ Rake leaves |
| ☞ Do laundry | ☞ Plan/plant garden |
| ☞ Handle pet care | ☞ Do garden maintenance |
| ☞ Sort mail | ☞ Do home maintenance |
| ☞ Water plants | ☞ Organize garage |
| ☞ Make the bed | |
| ☞ Do errands | ☞ Family paperwork |
| ☞ Buy groceries | ☞ Pay bills |
| ☞ Buy household supplies | ☞ Deposit checks |
| ☞ Return DVDs, videos, library books | ☞ Manage investments |
| ☞ Pick up dry cleaning | ☞ Manage phone, cable, internet accounts |
| ☞ Mail parcels | ☞ Manage insurance policies |
| | ☞ Make doctor/dentist appointments |
| | ☞ Manage charities/volunteering |
| ☞ Manage garbage/recyclables | |
| ☞ Clean the kitchen | ☞ Make weekend plans |
| ☞ Clean the refrigerator | ☞ Arrange vacations |
| ☞ Clean the bathroom | ☞ Make restaurant reservations |
| ☞ Vacuum | ☞ Send birthday and other cards |
| ☞ Dust | ☞ Plan holidays |
| ☞ Change the sheets | ☞ Manage religious commitment |
| ☞ Replace light bulbs | |

What I learned about myself:

What I learned about marriage:

As a result, I want to:

SNAPSHOTS ABOUT COOPERATION

SHARING POWER

Open fighting Passive control	Frequent power shifting	Mutually shared power	Power play by one	Hierarchical authoritarian
1	2	3	4	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent fighting over same things • “Winner” mindset • Argue over “we” decisions • Each may assert control over other in certain area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggle results in power shift back & forth • Go easily to “own corners” & assert control over what each wants • Unwilling to move & negotiate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complimentary roles • Accept influences & strengths • Negotiate tasks with adaptability • Strong collaborative decision-making • Accept negotiation of differences • Recognize wants & needs of self & partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds on to own thoughts, feelings and wants easily in disagreements • Tendency for one to have power more frequently • Fighting for power becomes increasingly one-sided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One becomes over-controlling & the other gives in • One takes charge quickly without consensus • One assumes authority is rightful place

- Healthy couples share power equally, acknowledging complimentary roles and accepting the influence and strength of each other. They tend to make decisions collaboratively and negotiate tasks with adaptability.
- Imbalanced couples will struggle for power—resulting in either going to their individual corners and taking power where they can get it, or else a “loser” emerges quickly and the victor quickly identifies him/herself.
- In unhealthy couples, on one extreme one partner will over-use their personal power to gain control in an authoritarian role. On the other extreme the couple may engage in a stand-off, still fighting about the same things, permanently locked into their own perspectives. One or both may independently take power where they can get it.

QUALITIES IN COOPERATION

Adapted from *The Challenge of Marriage*, Rudolf Dreikurs, M.D.

POSITIVE COOPERATION

- Expression of a sense of belonging together
- Sense of self-confidence
- Sense of confidence in each other
- Element of courage

NEGATIVE COOPERATION

- Hostility
- Distrust
- Inferiority feelings
- Fear

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