

“COMMUNICATION” IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION

When a couple comes for Marriage Preparation, Communication as a topic is a very important thread running through this course. It helps couples to see that being able to communicate clearly and with respect and sensitivity enables them to strengthen their love. They can then be there for each other through difficult and trying times as well as being able to share in their hopes and dreams for their future together.

Firstly they discuss their Expectations of Love in their forthcoming marriage. It is good to see how they can show love and appreciation verbally or through little acts of kindness and consideration.

Many ways of communicating are non-verbal; body language, voice tone, a look, silence both comfortable and controlling. This area is also discussed around the “all picture no sound” mode where one partner may be more inclined to retreat into a mood or sulk than the other, and it takes one of them if not both to break the ice and resolve the issue.

Unhealthy communication, i.e. criticism, is a non-runner in any relationship. John Gottman describes the down-hill slide in four stages: Criticism, Defensiveness, Contempt and Stonewalling as the Four Horses of the Apocalypse. This may not be spoken of in the Marriage Preparation when a couple are good listeners and don't criticize each other, but would be kept in mind if it were otherwise, by the counsellor facilitating the course.

When it comes to discussing their own and their partner's Personal Strengths and Limitations, it is good for them to remember to affirm each other and that their strengths are more important to keep in mind than their shortcomings.

Many good/bad habits of communication come from our own parenting. This is also discussed as to what to bring to their own relationship and later on, parenting their own children, as ways of helping them mature into confident young adults.

Finance in today's world of recession, and unemployment is another important topic to discuss and how this can be done with each partner being open and supportive about their money matters. Also the expense of childcare versus one partner choosing to be a full-time parent/home-maker may be a dilemma.

Sexuality is another important area of communication. Also the couple's idea of what intimacy means to them in terms of emotional closeness.

The area of Traditional Roles within a relationship and how they grew up is also discussed. The couple sees how they can change those roles and talk about what they'd like to do for each other in their own marriage.

Each partner learns and discusses how their own emotional needs may be met within and outside the relationship, and to understand what those emotional needs are.

Finally, each partner discusses what they understand the word Commitment to mean and how to continue to communicate well throughout their married lives.

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