Understanding Relationship Roles

Role Assessment Scales for Engaged & Married Couples

- Roles & Responsibilities (10-items, married couples) – evaluates individual’s satisfaction and feelings about marital and family roles and responsibilities. This scale also measures Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) for the couple and is scored the same way as other core categories, including Special Focus Items.
- Relationship Roles (10-items, engaged couples) – evaluates an individual’s beliefs, attitudes and expectations about future marital and family roles. While it measures Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) for the couple, it also places each individual in one of three roles categories including equalitarian, transitional, and traditional.

What does the Roles & Relationship (married) category measure?
A high individual score on Roles & Relationships indicates the person has higher satisfaction about marital and family roles and responsibilities, while a low individual score indicates the person is less satisfied. Use the role sharing exercise to explore differences in roles and understand how to handle roles for increased satisfaction.

What does the Relationship Roles (engaged) category measure?
A high individual score on Relationship Roles indicates the person prefers an equalitarian role relationship, while a low individual score indicates the person prefers a more traditional role relationship. Those who score in the mid-range are referred to as transitional and reflect a combination of both traditional and equalitarian attitudes.

What is the difference between equalitarian and traditional roles?
An equalitarian role relationship is one in which partners desire a shared approach to leadership and decision-making. The distribution of household tasks and responsibilities is determined by interests and skills rather than by traditional male/female roles.

Couples in a traditional role relationship prefer roles that are based on gender, with the husband being more dominant in leadership and decision-making. The husband may be the main breadwinner, while the wife typically stays home and does housework and childcare.

Why are roles important to discuss?
Roles are an important area to discuss because they directly affect each partner’s behaviors and responsibilities in everyday life. This category encompasses a variety of issues from household chores and child-care, to leadership and decision-making. All of these issues have the potential to create conflict and tension in a relationship if both partners don’t agree on how their roles should be defined and implemented.