Facilitator Follow-up Questions

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* Categories appear in the order they are presented in the Facilitator’s Report
Introduction

The Follow-Up Questions for Couples are intended to be used by PREPARE/ENRICH Facilitators and Mentor Couples giving feedback PREPARE/ENRICH. These questions should be used in combination with the exercises from the Workbook for Couples.

The open-ended questions contained in this document can provide effective discussion starters that will help couples talk to each other as they increase their awareness and share their feelings about their relationship. It will also help them identify issues that need further attention and growth.

Do not go through every item and question in the inventory with your couples.

Process for Using Follow-Up Questions

1. Spend 30-60 minutes reviewing the Facilitator’s Report as you prepare to meet with your couple.
2. Plan to provide balanced feedback by selecting 2-3 categories that represent Strength Areas and 2-3 categories that represent Growth opportunities.
3. Review each individual’s responses to the items within the selected categories.
4. Balance your feedback as you discuss these categories.
   a. Whenever possible, highlight 2-3 Positive Couple Agreement Items within the category.
   b. Next, point out 2-3 Disagreement, Indecision, or Special Focus items. Use the Follow-up Questions at this point to increase dialogue about specific issues.
5. Proceed to the relevant exercise in the Workbook for Couples.

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Communication

The **Communication** category measures how couples feel about the quality and quantity of communication in their relationship. It explores how they share feelings, understand, and listen to one another.

- When do you find it difficult to share your feelings with your partner?
- Why is sharing feelings valuable for relationships and for you?
- When your partner talks about his/her feelings, how do you respond?
- Can you share with your partner when it is that you have difficulty believing all that he/she tells you?
- What do you need to do that will enable your partner to have confidence in what you say?
- Do you feel your partner is not telling the truth or is exaggerating the truth?
- Has your partner done something that has betrayed your faith in him/her and if so can you share it?
- What makes it difficult for you to express your true feelings to your partner?
- How do you feel when your partner fails to share his/her feelings with you?
- What can you do to help your partner share his/her feelings?
- What can your partner do that will help you to share your feelings?
- How do you handle problems that arise in your relationship?
- Why do you sometimes avoid dealing with a problem when it arises?
- What does it mean to be silent or refuse to talk about problems?
- How do you feel when your partner refuses to talk about a problem?
- What is it that your partner does that makes you feel he/she is not listening?
- What can you do to let your partner know you care and are listening?
- Can you share the reason why you find it hard to ask your partner for what you want?
- How do your respond when your partner asks you for what he/she wants?
- What happens when you tell others what you want?
- In what ways do you believe that assertiveness is related to relationship satisfaction?
- How does your partner respond when you do share negative feelings with him/her?
- How do you respond when your partner shares his/her negative feelings with you?
- What could you each do to make it easier for negative feelings to be shared?
- Would you share with your partner what he/she says that makes you feel put down?
- What happens to your dreams for your relationship when you feel put down by your partner?
- How could you express your concerns or displeasure without putting your partner down?
- What triggers you to make such comments?
- How do you (or will you) know when your partner understands your feelings?
- How often do you take time to share your feelings or listen to your partner?
- How do you let your partner know that you understand how he/she feels?
Conflict Resolution

The Conflict Resolution category looks at a couple’s ability to discuss and resolve differences. It measures how effectively couples share opinions, ideas, and feelings, even during times of conflict.

- When is conflict most likely to happen?
- Even if an issue seems unimportant, how important are the feelings that fuel the dispute?
- When there is a disagreement between you how do you respond to your partner's concerns?
- How do you know your partner is not taking a disagreement seriously?
- When sharing thoughts over a disagreement, what can you do to let your partner know you care?
- What are some things about which you seriously disagree?
- How do you respond to each other when you are discussing a problem?
- When discussing a problem, what helps you know that your partner understands you?
- What do you do to let your partner know you understand your partner's opinions and ideas?
- Why is it important to you that your partner understands your opinions and ideas?
- How does anger impact your ability to share feelings and ideas productively?
- At what point in a disagreement do you recognize your need for a time-out?
- Why is it important to be able to share your feelings with your partner?
- Can you share with your partner how you feel about conflict?
- How do you feel about yourself and your relationship when you avoid a conflict?
- What could you both do to resolve a conflict rather than avoid it?
- Are you handling conflict in a way that is similar to your parents?
- Why do you think you end up feeling responsible for conflicts?
  - Share with your partner a time when you felt this way.
- What is your response when you disagree with your partner?
- Are you more interested in winning the argument than resolving the dispute?
  - When you win and your partner loses, what happens to your relationship?
- What does it mean to you to “give in too quickly”?
- How often do you choose to “give in” to end an argument – rarely, sometimes, often, always?
- How do you feel when you give in too quickly to your partner?
- What prevents a good resolution to your differences?
- What could you do differently the next time there is a difference between you?
- How does it feel for you to leave things unresolved?
- Can you accept your partner’s difference and still love each other?
- What concerns you most about hurting your partner’s feelings?
- What is the short-term gain for saying nothing?
- What is the long-term price of silence for your relationship?
- Is there room in your relationship for both of you to be assertive?
- Share what you believe to be the best way to solve a disagreement.
  - Why do you feel that this way is the best?
- Describe your “different ideas” about solving your disagreements?
- What can you both do in solving a disagreement that would result in a win-win situation?
- If you find that you are not able to resolve a disagreement would you seek help? If so where would you go?
Partner Style and Habits

The **Partner Style and Habits** category measures each person’s satisfaction with the personal characteristics and habits of their partner. It looks at each person’s relationship style and habits as expressed in their behavior.

- What behaviors are you aware of that upset your partner?
- What behavior on the part of your partner embarrasses you?
- When you are embarrassed, how do you share your feelings with your partner?
- How will you respond if this behavior does not change?
- Can you share with your partner some specific things on which you would like to see more follow through?
- How have each of you addressed this lack of follow through?
- Why do you suppose you choose not to follow through on these things?
- Can either of you describe a specific time when you felt your partner was too stubborn?
  - How does this affect your relationship?
- What does being “too stubborn” mean to you?
- What are you each willing to change about how you deal with one another?
- Describe the times when you feel most unhappy and withdrawn.
  - How can your partner be supportive during these times?
- Whose responsibility is it to make your partner feel happy and involved?
- What is most concerning to you about your partner’s temper?
- What are you aware of that seems to trigger your temper?
  - How do these temperamental outbursts impact your relationship?
- Do you ever feel out of control? What methods can you use to establish more self-control?
- How do you feel about yourself and your relationship when your partner is critical or negative?
- What topics seem to generate the most criticism or negativity?
- How can you be honest and assertive without being overly negative or critical?
- How do you define “too controlling”?
- How do you respond to controlling behavior?
- How can you change the way decisions are made so each person feels they are sharing equally in the process?
- What scares you most about not being in control?
- How do you respond to your partner’s moodiness?
- Can you talk about what triggers your moodiness?
- How do the two of you communicate during these times of moodiness?
- Have you talked openly about which habits bother you?
- What are you each willing to do to change those habits that bother your partner?
- How will you respond if your partner does not change?
- How realistic is it to find someone with no habits or traits that bother you?
Financial Management (Engaged)

The Financial Management category looks at having realistic financial plans and agreement in the area of finances. It explores opinions about spending habits, savings, debt, and making financial decisions.

- Do you believe it is better to combine your finances or keep them separate? Why?
- What concerns do you have about combining your finances?
- What are your spending habits now?
- What were the spending habits of your family?
- How do both of you believe money should be spent? Do you agree or disagree?
- What factors influence how you spend money?
- What will happen 15 or 20 years down the road if there is no change in your spending habits?
- Who will make the decision in regards to how you handle your finances?
- How will you set up your checking account(s)?
- How do you plan to spend, save, and/or give away a portion of your income?
- How can you work toward a financial plan?
- What do you do or say if you disagree with how your partner is spending their money?
  - How do these words or actions serve your relationship?
  - How might these words or actions harm your relationship?
- What percentage of your income would you each like to save?
- Have you discussed your savings goals as a couple?
- Would you be willing to seek professional help in developing a financial plan for the future?
  - To whom would you go for help?
- What kind of plan do you have in regards to spending each month?
- How will you decide on how to use your money?
- How will you keep track of your monthly spending?
- Do you know how much money you will have budgeted for spending each month?
- Have each of you shared the details of your expected income and expenditures after you marry?
- What are your greatest concerns about your future income?
- Do you plan to make any adjustments to your lifestyle after marriage?
- What are your spending habits now? How are they different from your partner's?
- What were the spending habits of your family?
- How do both of you believe money should be spent? Do you agree or disagree?
- Have you looked at what your combined total income will be after the wedding?
- Are you taking on more debt because of wedding bills?
- Have you given thought to the expenses you will have that come with marriage?
- Do you need help in developing a budget or a plan for handling your finances?
- Will each of you provide the other with an itemized account of your debts or bills?
- What specific debts are there that give you concern?
- How and when will you decide to resolve this issue of unpaid bills or debts?
- As you enter into a marriage, are you willing to take on the debts of your partner as your own?
Financial Management (Married)

- How long have you had these financial concerns?
  - Have you shared these concerns with your partner?
- What could you do to reduce these concerns you have?
- What could your partner do to reduce these concerns you have?
- What are your spending habits now?
- What factors influence how you spend money?
- What does money mean to each of you? (See “Meaning of Money” exercise in Workbook)
- What do you believe may happen in 10 years if there is no change in your spending habits?
- Is this a good or bad thing for you? Why?
- What do you believe may motivate your partner’s behavior?
- How may the way you each orient yourselves around money influence this issue of control?
- When do disagreements around finances arise?
- What do you do or say when you disagree with how your partner is spending?
- How do these words or actions serve your relationship?
- How might they harm your relationship?
- What percentage of your income would you each like to save?
- What do you believe would be some positive results of a savings plan that satisfies you?
- Has it always been this way?
- What is your explanation for this?
- What needs to happen in order for you to be able to save money?
  - Has this always been true?
- What wisdom have you learned about credit cards that you could give a younger couple?
- What do these concerns about finances stop your partner from knowing about you?
  - What is one thing you each could do to reduce these concerns?
- What specific debts give you concern?
- How can this debt(s) be worked into your budget in a way that will satisfy you?
Leisure Activities

The **Leisure Activities** category measures a couple’s satisfaction with the amount and quality of leisure time spent together. It looks at similarities in interests, and satisfaction with the balance of time spent together and apart.

- What recreational activities would like your partner to do with you?
- What do you enjoy doing together?
- What do you enjoy doing alone or with others?
- What do you feel needs to change in order for you to have more time and energy for recreation together?
- Share with each other your idea of a good time.
- How does your partner’s idea of a good time affect your relationship with each other?
- Can you come to an agreement about certain activities you both enjoy?
- Can you share why you find it difficult to make new friends?
- Where could you go to meet others couples who share your interests?
- Have you considered becoming involved in a community service group or agency?
- How is your background different from each other regarding social and recreational activities?
- Are you willing to develop new social and recreational skills you could do together?
- Can you agree on a specific activity you could begin together?
- How do you think it would impact your relationship if you shared more social and recreational activities?
- As individuals, what recreational activities do you each enjoy?
- What types of activities did you see your parents enjoy together?
- Can you share with your when you feel pressured to participate in an activity?
- Can you share with each other which activities you enjoy doing that do not require your partner to participate?
- Why is it important to have your partner participate with you in an activity that interests you?
- Talk about those activities you both enjoy and how you plan to pursue them?
- What constitutes “too many activities or hobbies”?
- Are these activities or hobbies shared or are they pursued apart from each other?
- How are your activities or hobbies interfering with your relationship?
- What social and recreational activities do you both enjoy?
- Which of you leads the way in thinking of things to do together?
- What makes it difficult to think of things you could do together?
- Can you agree on a specific activity you could do together?
- What makes you feel that the two of you do not have a good balance of leisure time?
- What would be a good balance of time together and time apart?
- Do you feel that your partner would rather be alone at times? If so, how do you respond to that?
- How do your distinct personalities relate to your needs for time together and apart?
- How do you feel your partner’s activities interfere with your time together?
- Have you discussed your concerns with your partner? How has he/she responded?
- Do you feel a need to spend more time together than you are presently spending?
- Are you able to give your partner some free time to do some things alone?
Sexual Expectations (Engaged)

The **Sexual Expectations** category measures a couple’s satisfaction with the affection in their relationship. It also looks at their comfort in discussing sexual issues, expectations, and history.

- How does the language used when discussing sexual issues make you feel?
- Do you show patience and respect to each other when talking about sexual issues?
- Is it *talking with your partner* about sex or is it *talking about sex in general* that feels uncomfortable?
- Describe a time when your partner gave you affection that was satisfying to you.
- What are the different ways you can demonstrate your affection for your partner?
- How can you share your needs for affection with your partner?
- Do you talk about how you can meet each other’s need for affection?
- What does it mean to you for your partner to “use affection unfairly”?
- What do you see as the relationships between communication, intimacy, and affection?
- How do you feel when affection is refused?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to be affectionate?
- What leads you to think your partner has difficulty remaining faithful?
- What can you do to strengthen your love for each other?
- What changes do you need to make to create more trust?
- What makes it difficult to talk openly about your sexual expectations?
- How can your partner be responsive to your sexual expectations if you do not express yourself?
- Are you aware that your partner struggles to share his/her sexual expectations?
- What is your definition of sexually explicit material?
- Do you believe pornography is wrong or “no big deal”?
- Can you describe how you feel when your partner views pornography?
- How does sexually explicit material impact your relationship?
  - Are you willing to live with this behavior if it does not change?
- How willing are you to openly discuss your sex and affection preferences with one another?
- Do you understand one another’s preferences for non-sexual touch and affection?
- How do you think your partner’s interest in sex might be different than yours?
- What do you believe is the basic difference in the way you each approach sex?
- Can you share with your partner what your sexual expectations are?
- Do you agree on when you would like to start a family?
- How many children would you like to have?
- Have you discussed with your doctor the best method of birth control or family planning for you?
- What are your feelings about using birth control?
- When do the two of you plan to discuss family planning and birth control?
- What do you believe the boundaries of your sexual activity should be?
- How can you both take steps to respect these boundaries?
- What makes you uncomfortable with your current level of sexual activity?
- Do you believe sex is intended for marriage, or anyone in a loving relationship?
Sexual Expectations (Catholic)

• How does the language used when discussing sexual issues make you feel?
• Do you show patience and respect to each other when talking about sexual issues?
• Is it talking with your partner about sex or is it talking about sex in general that feels uncomfortable?
• Describe a time when your partner gave you affection that was satisfying to you.
• What are the different ways you can demonstrate your affection for your partner?
• How can you share your needs for affection with your partner?
• Do you talk about how you can meet each other’s need for affection?
• What does it mean to you for your partner to “use affection unfairly”?
• What do you see as the relationships between communication, intimacy and affection?
• How do you feel when affection is refused?
• Why is it sometimes difficult to be affectionate?
• What leads you to think your partner has difficulty remaining faithful?
• What can you do to strengthen your love for each other?
• What changes do you need to make to create more trust?
• What makes it difficult to talk openly about your sexual expectations?
• How can your partner be responsive to your sexual expectations if you do not express yourself?
• Are you aware that your partner struggles to share his/her sexual expectations?
• What is your definition of sexually explicit material?
• Do you believe pornography is wrong or “no big deal”?
• Can you describe how you feel when your partner views pornography?
• How does sexually explicit material impact your relationship?
  • Are you willing to live with this behavior if it does not change?
• How willing are you to openly discuss your sex and affection preferences with one another?
• Do you understand one another’s preferences for non-sexual touch and affection?
• How do you think your partner’s interest in sex might be different than yours?
• What do you believe is the basic difference in the way you each approach sex?
• Can you share with your partner what your sexual expectations are?
• Do you agree on when you would like to start a family?
• How many children would you like to have?
• How well do you understand natural family planning?
• When do the two of you plan to discuss natural family planning?
• What do you believe the boundaries of your sexual activity should be?
• How can you both take steps to respect these boundaries?
• Are you both comfortable with your current level of sexual activity?
• Do you believe sex is intended for marriage, or anyone in a loving relationship?
Sexual Expectations (Protestant)

• How does the language used when discussing sexual issues make you feel?
• Do you show patience and respect to each other when talking about sexual issues?
• Is it talking with your partner about sex or is it talking about sex in general that feels uncomfortable?
• Describe a time when your partner gave affection that was satisfying to you.
• What are the different ways you can demonstrate your affection for your partner?
• How can you share your needs for affection with your partner?
• Do you talk about how you can meet each other’s need for affection?
• What does it mean to you for your partner to “use affection unfairly”?
• What do you see as the relationships between communication, intimacy and affection?
• How do you feel when affection is refused?
• Why is it sometimes difficult to be affectionate?
• What leads you to think your partner has difficulty remaining faithful?
• What can you do to strengthen your love for each other?
• What changes do you need to make to create more trust?
• What makes it difficult to talk openly about your sexual expectations?
• How can your partner be responsive to your sexual expectations if you do not express yourself?
• Are you aware that your partner struggles to share his/her sexual expectations?
• What is your definition of sexually explicit material?
• Do you believe pornography is wrong or “no big deal”?
• Can you describe how you feel when your partner views pornography?
• How does sexually explicit material impact your relationship?
  • Are you willing to live with this behavior if it does not change?
• What does being affectionate mean to you?
• How willing are you to openly discuss your sex and affection preferences with one another?
• Do you understand one another’s preferences for non-sexual touch and affection?
• How do you think your partner’s interest in sex might be different than yours?
• Can you share with your partner what your sexual expectations are?
• Do you agree on when you would like to start a family?
• How many children would you like to have?
• Have you discussed with your doctor the best method of birth control or family planning for you?
• What are your feelings about using birth control?
• When do the two of you plan to discuss family planning and birth control?
• What do you believe the boundaries of your sexual activity should be?
• How can you both take steps to respect these boundaries?
• Are you both comfortable with your current level of sexual activity?
• Do you believe sex is intended for marriage, or anyone in a loving relationship?
Sexual Expectations (Over 55)

• What is your explanation for discussing your sexual expectations?
• Is it the matter of talking with your partner about sex or talking about sex in general that feels uncomfortable?
• Describe a time when your partner gave affection that was satisfying to you
• What are the different ways you can demonstrate your affection for your partner?
• How can you share your needs for affection with your partner?
• Do you talk about how you can meet each other’s need for affection?
• What does it mean to you for your partner to “use affection unfairly”?
• What do you see as the relationships between communication, intimacy and affection?
• How do you feel when affection is refused?
• Why is it sometimes difficult to be affectionate?
• What leads you to think your partner has difficulty remaining faithful?
• What can you do to strengthen your love for each other?
• What changes do you need to make to create more trust?
• What makes it difficult to talk openly about your sexual expectations?
• How can your partner be responsive to your sexual expectations if you do not express yourself?
• Are you aware that your partner struggles to share his/her sexual expectations?
• What is your definition of sexually explicit material?
• Can you describe how you feel when your partner views sexually explicit material?
• How does sexually explicit material impact your relationship?
  • Are you willing to live with this behavior if it does not change?
• What does being affectionate mean to you?
• How willing are you to openly discuss your sex and affection preferences with one another?
• Do you understand one another’s preferences for non-sexual touch and affection?
• How do you think your partner’s interest in sex might be different than yours?
• What do you believe is the basic difference in the way you each approach sex?
• Can you share with your partner what your sexual expectations are?
• What are your concerns?
• Can you share your concerns with your partner?
• What do you believe the boundaries of your sexual activity should be?
• How can you both take steps to respect these boundaries?
• What makes you uncomfortable with your current level of sexual activity?
• Do you believe sex is intended for marriage, or anyone in a loving relationship?
Sexual Relationship (Married)

The **Sexual Relationship** category measures a couple’s satisfaction with the affection in their relationship. It also looks at their comfort in discussing sexual issues, expectations, and history.

- Can you share with your partner what your discomfort is about around sexual issues?
- How can you show each other patience and respect when talking about sex?
- What is your favorite way that your partner expresses affection to you?
- How does “using affection unfairly” affect your relationship?
- How does it feel for you when your affections are refused?
- Do you agree or disagree with the statement “Some people want sex in order to feel intimate and other people want to feel intimate before sex”?
- What were the thoughts, feelings, and impressions you had about sex and sexual discussions when you were growing up?
- Are you comfortable discussing sex with your partner?
- What would you change about how you and your partner discuss sexual topics?
- What are your beliefs about pornography and how it impacts relationships?
- Are you willing to live with this behavior if it does not change?
- What does affection look like to you?
- What kind of affection makes you feel most loved?
- Do you understand one another’s preferences for non-sexual touch and affection?
- What role did sexual attraction once play in your relationship that you may be missing now?
- Are there other ways you have found your relationship nourished other than sexual attraction?
- How does your view on sex affect the way you think about yourself, your partner, and your relationship?
Sexual Relationship (Married - Over 55)

• What is your explanation for your comfort in discussing sexual issues with your partner?
• Has it always been this way?
• Is it the matter of talking to your partner about sex or talking about sex in general that feels uncomfortable?
• Describe a time when your partner gave you affection that was satisfying to you.
• What are the different ways you can demonstrate affection for your partner?
• What are your concerns about the ways your sexual relationship will change as you age?
• Many couples’ sexual relationships change as they age. When did you first realize this was happening in your relationship?
• What would you change if you could about how you and your partner discuss sexual issues?
  • What would this change require from you?
• Is it more important to you that your sexual interaction occurs with variety in time, place, and approach or is it more important for you to feel that your partner’s efforts are passionate and loving?
• What arouses your sexual fantasies?
• What is your definition of sexually explicit material?
• Can you describe how you feel when your partner views sexually explicit material?
• How does sexually explicit material affect the way you feel about yourself and your relationship?
  • Are you willing to live with this behavior if it does not change?
• How do you like to show affection?
• How do you like to receive affection?
• How do you think your partner’s interest in sex may be different than yours?
• What do you believe to be the basic difference in the way you each approach sex?
• Can you share with your partner what your sexual expectations are?
• When do you feel most intimate with your partner?
• Which statement resonates most with you: “Feelings of intimacy sometimes result in intercourse” or “Intercourse results in intimacy”?
• Do you experience cycles of greater and lesser sexual satisfaction? And if so, how often, and under what circumstances?
• How important or unimportant a role does your sexual relationship play within your relationship?
Family and Friends (Engaged)

The Family and Friends category measures relationship satisfaction with relatives and friends. It looks at each individual’s opinions of the other’s family and friends, as well as the level of influence and/or interference experienced from these relationships.

- What concerns do you have about your partner’s family?
- What is it that you could do to make the time together more enjoyable?
- Has spending time with your future relatives-to-be become a problem between you and your partner?
- Can you share with your partner what it is that you don’t enjoy about his/her friends?
- Have you discussed developing new friends whom both of you would enjoy?
- What can you do to develop a better relationship with friends of your partner?
- What makes you believe that your partner does not get along well with most of your friends?
- Ask your partner to share with you what he/she feels is the problem?
- What do you as a couple have in common with your friends?
- Have you discussed developing new sets of friends who have more in common with you?
- Describe the concerns you have regarding your partner spending time with some friends or co-workers.
  - What do you believe should be done about this issue?
  - What are you willing to do about this issue?
- In what ways do you see your partner depending upon his/her family?
  - How does your partner feel about this influence from his/her family?
- What can the two of you do to enable you to become more independent from the family?
- Why do you feel that your family does not accept you?
  - How do they communicate this to you?
- What decisions have you made that you believe your family does not respect?
- Are there things about yourself that you have difficulty accepting?
- How much influence does your family have on the decisions you make?
- Can you share with your partner how you believe their friends or family interferes with your relationship?
- How do you respond to your partner’s family or friends when they interfere?
- Which family members are more likely to assist you financially?
- When do you feel it is appropriate to accept either their financial assistance or their advice?
- What are the positive or negative aspects of accepting their help?
  - Do you agree on how both of you will handle this?
  - How can you say “No thanks” without rejecting them?
- Which family members do you anticipate will cause problems in your marriage?
  - Have you discussed these concerns with your partner?
  - Is your relationship strong enough to overcome these potential challenges?
- What boundaries could you agree to set with your families that will help you avoid trouble?
- What are some of the concerns expressed by your relatives or by your friends about your marriage?
  - How important to you are the concerns of others?
  - How do you respond to these concerns?
Family and Friends (Married)

The **Family and Friends** category measures relationship satisfaction with relatives and friends. It looks at each individual’s opinions of the other’s family and friends, as well as the level of influence and/or interference experienced from these relationships.

- What concerns do you have about your partner’s family?
- What could you each do to make the time together more enjoyable?
- What do you appreciate about your partner’s family?
- In what situations is being with your partner’s friends difficult for you?
  - Describe the difficulties.
  - How have you coped with these thus far?
  - How will you cope going forward?
- How have you been able to maintain friendships with people with whom your partner does not get along?
- What happens for you when concerns with your partner’s time spent with some friends or co-workers are present?
  - Is this an issue that you are able to amend? If so how?
- Do you see your partner being too involved with or influenced by his/her family as a good or a bad thing? Why?
  - How do you each respond when this situation presents itself in your relationship?
  - Is there another response you could choose that is worth trying?
- Do you see your partner’s friends or family interfering with your relationship as a good or bad thing?
- Do you believe that your partner’s (or your) family would call what they do “interfering”? If not, what do you believe they may call it?
- Which family members are likely to give advice and/or assistance?
- What are the positive or negative aspects of accepting their help?
- Do you agree on how both of you will handle this?
- How can you say “No, thank you” without rejecting them?
- What is your explanation for one or both of your families causing trouble in your marriage?
- What boundaries could you agree to set with your families that would help protect your marriage?
- How long have you had the desire of wanting more friendships with other married couples?
  - Why is this important to you?
  - What needs to happen in order for these friendships to develop?
Relationship Roles

The **Relationship Roles** category measures a couple’s expectations about how decision making and responsibilities will be shared. It looks at each individual’s preferences for traditional or equalitarian roles in their relationship.

- Can you share why having a career is important to you?
- Do you see your partner’s career being more important than yours and if so why?
- How will you balance your career(s) with your family life?
- Do you feel that your roles are too flexible or too rigid? If so, why?
- What do you feel needs to be done to handle your roles and responsibilities better?
- What types of roles and responsibilities are you used to fulfilling?
- Have you discussed your feelings about leadership and decision making?
  - On what do you base your opinion in this area?
- How did your parents balance leadership and decision making?
- What does “equal” mean to you?
- Are there some areas of the relationship where you prefer to take the lead?
- Are there some areas of the relationship where you prefer to let your partner lead?
- How would you define “power” in a relationship?
- How would you prefer to balance the power in the relationship?
- What factors do you believe lead to happiness in a marriage?
- How do you plan to balance your work with household chores and responsibilities?
- Are there certain chores that neither of you like to do?
  - What would need to happen in this area to make it feel most fair?
- Who made the decisions in your home growing up?
- How do you make important decisions today?
- Would you be willing to allow your partner to make all the important decisions?
- How would you feel if you were not included in making important decisions?
- What adjustments would you be willing to make when it comes to roles and responsibilities?
  - What adjustments do you hope your partner will be willing to make?
  - What type of adjustments you are not willing to make?
  - Have you talked about the adjustments both of you will have to make when you are married?
- Why do you feel that you are doing/will do more than your share of the tasks?
- What do you feel is a fair share of the household tasks?
- What can both of you do now to resolve this issue?
- What roles did your parents choose in regards to household chores?
- What do you see your role to be and what do you see your partner’s role to be?
- Share with each other what you would like for your roles to be regarding household chores.
Role Transitions (Over 55)

For couples where one or both are over 55, the Role Transitions category measures satisfaction with how roles and responsibilities are handled in the relationship. More specifically, this category looks at how older couples feel about managing role transitions associated with retirement.

• Share with each other what changes you expect regarding spending time together.
• Share how you feel about the possibility of your partner spending more time at home.
• What do you feel the role adjustments will be as your lifestyles change?
• How will your lifestyle change?
• What are the changes that give you concern?
• What role changes do you believe your partner will face?
• How have you handled matters of power and control in the past?
• What would you suggest to arrive at an agreement on sharing power in your relationship?
• Discuss how power can be shared so you both win.
• Share with your partner how you feel when he/she makes most of the decisions.
• What joint decisions have been made regarding your lifestyle?
• How can you both begin to share in these decisions?
• How do concerns about doing more than your share of the household tasks impact your couple relationship?
  • What do these concerns stop your partner from knowing about you?
  • What can both of you do now to resolve this issue?
• Do you feel that leadership in your relationship is too flexible or too rigid? If so, why?
• What do you feel needs to be done to improve the ways in which you share leadership?
• How did your parents share leadership?
• Do you feel that your roles are too flexible or too rigid? If so, why?
• What do you feel needs to be done to have a better role relationship?
• What types of roles and responsibilities are you most open to fulfilling?
• Who made the decisions in your home growing up?
• How do you make important decisions today?
• Would you be willing to allow your partner to make all the important decisions?
• How would you feel if you were not included in making important decisions?
• What are the changes in your relationship to which you have difficulty adjusting?
• Which of you has more difficulty adjusting to change?
• Share with your partner the changes that give you trouble and the changes you find easy to accept?
• How do the two of you discuss and set new goals?
• What can each of you do to share more equally in setting new goals?
• If your partner makes most of the decisions, how do you feel about this?
Spiritual Beliefs (Standard)

The **Spiritual Beliefs** category measures how satisfied or involved couples are with the practice and expression of spiritual beliefs in their relationship. This category looks at similarities in spiritual beliefs and whether they are a resource or a source of tension.

- Have you clearly expressed your values and beliefs to each other?
- What spiritual rituals or practices help you express your beliefs?
- What needs to happen in order for you to feel satisfied with how you express your spiritual beliefs?
- What spiritual beliefs do you agree on? What do you disagree on?
- What were the spiritual beliefs of your parents?
- Can you allow each other to have their beliefs without trying to change them?
- What are the differences in your spiritual beliefs that seem to cause tension?
- When you discuss your spiritual beliefs do you feel your partner listens and understands you?
- Can you accept your partner’s spiritual differences?
- How do you plan to handle your differences?
- Have you shared your spiritual beliefs with each other?
- Are you able to listen to each other without criticizing or arguing about your differences?
- Are you both part of the same religious community?
- What is your religious background?
- What is the relationship between your spiritual beliefs and the commitment you feel to your partner?
- How do you spiritual beliefs inform your view of marriage?
- Describe your commitment to one another? Is your commitment a permanent one?
- Are you active in a church/synagogue now?
- How would you respond to your partner if they disagreed with you on this issue?
- How important is it to you to be active in the same church/synagogue?
- What does it mean to you to be an active participant?
- How do you rely on your spiritual beliefs during difficult times?
- How do you arrive at the best decision when faced with a mutual problem?
- Where do you turn for help when you have exhausted all of your resources?
- What gives you hope?
- What spiritual values do you hold in common?
- How do shared spiritual values impact your relationship?
- What factors help your relationship grow?
- Have you taken the time to listen to each other in regards to your spiritual beliefs?
- How comfortable are you if partner to hold spiritual beliefs that are different from yours?
- What would you be doing that you are not doing now if your spiritual beliefs added to your feelings of closeness?
- How would you respond if your partner expressed a desire to share spiritual beliefs in an effort to strengthen your relationship?
- How important are your spiritual beliefs – individually and as a couple?
- How willing would you be to discuss your spiritual beliefs if your partner wanted to discuss them?
- What impact do your spiritual beliefs have on your relationship?
Spiritual Beliefs (Catholic)

- Have you shared your spiritual beliefs with each other?
- Are you able to listen to each other without criticizing or arguing about your differences?
- Are you both part of the same religious community?
- What is your religious background?
- What are the differences in your spiritual beliefs that seem to cause tension?
- When you discuss your spiritual beliefs do you feel your partner listens and understands you?
- Can you accept your partner’s spiritual differences?
- How do you plan to handle your differences?
- How important are your Catholic beliefs – individually and as a couple?
- How willing would you be to discuss your spiritual beliefs if your partner wanted to discuss them?
- What impact do your Catholic beliefs have on your relationship?
- Are you active in a church now?
- How would you respond to your partner if they disagreed with you on this issue?
- How important is it to you to be active in the same church?
- What does it mean to you to be an active participant?
- How do you rely on your faith during difficult times?
- How do you arrive at the best decision when faced with a mutual problem?
- Where do you turn for help when you have exhausted all of your resources?
- What gives you hope?
- What questions do you have about the sacrament of marriage?
- Are you prepared to fully embrace this teaching?
- How do you handle differences in your spiritual beliefs?
- Have you discussed this foundational belief with one another?
- How comfortable are you with the idea that marriage is a “permanent commitment”?
- Have you discussed how your Catholic beliefs inform this commitment?
- Have you had good examples or role models for marital commitment in your life?
- How does the practice of going to Mass nurture your faith?
- How often do each of you typically attend Mass?
- Have you openly discussed your views on this issue with one another?
- What do you believe about the importance of prayer in your life and marriage?
- How comfortable are you praying alone versus praying with others?
- Have the two of you ever prayed together? If yes, how was that experience? If not, why?
- What do you each believe about the practice of financially supporting the church?
- Have you discussed your feelings and opinions about giving with one another?
- What percentage of your income does each of you feel is an appropriate amount to give?
- What other groups or causes do you support? What is the benefit of giving?
Spiritual Beliefs (Protestant)

- Have you shared your spiritual beliefs with each other?
- Are you able to listen to each other without criticizing or arguing about your differences?
- Are you both part of the same religious community?
- What is your religious background?
- What are the differences in your spiritual beliefs that seem to cause tension?
- When you discuss your spiritual beliefs do you feel your partner listens and understands you?
- Can you accept your partner’s spiritual differences?
- How do you plan to handle your differences?
- How important is your faith – individually and as a couple?
- How willing would you be to discuss your spiritual beliefs if your partner wanted to discuss them?
- What impact do your spiritual beliefs have on your relationship?
- Are you active in a church now?
- How would you respond to your partner if they disagreed with you on this issue?
- How important is it to you to be active in the same church?
- What does it mean to you to be an active participant?
- How do you rely on your faith during difficult times?
- How do you arrive at the best decision when faced with a mutual problem?
- Where do you turn for help when you have exhausted all of your resources?
- What gives you hope?
- What Christian beliefs do you agree on? What do you disagree on?
- What were the spiritual beliefs of your parents?
- Can you allow each other to have their beliefs without trying to change them?
- Is your spiritual faith a foundational part of your commitment to one another?
- How comfortable are you with the idea that marriage is a permanent commitment?
- Have you discussed how your beliefs inform this commitment?
- Have you had good examples or role models for marital commitment in your life?
- Have you taken the time to listen to each other in regards to your spiritual beliefs?
- Are you able to allow your partner to hold spiritual beliefs that are different from yours?
- What makes you and your partner feel closer or more secure in your relationship?
- How would you respond if your partner expressed the desire to share more spiritual beliefs in an effort to strengthen your relationship?
- What do you believe about the importance of prayer in your life and marriage?
- How comfortable are you praying alone versus praying with others?
- Have the two of you ever prayed together? If yes, how was that experience? If not, why?
- What do you each believe about the practice of financially supporting the church?
- Have you discussed your feelings and opinions about giving with one another?
- What percentage of your income does each of you feel is an appropriate amount to give?
- What other groups or causes do you support? What is the benefit of giving?
Spiritual Beliefs (Jewish)

• Have you openly discussed your views on the issue of accepting some of the major teachings of your religion with one another?
  • Which teachings are the most challenging for you to accept?
• Are you willing to allow your partner to have their own beliefs without trying to change them?
• How important is it to you that you agree about religion?
• What does religion mean to you?
• What role will religion play in your future should you start a family?
• What Jewish values do you hold in common?
• Can you talk about the Jewish values that you do not hold in common?
• What helps your relationship grow?
• Is your Jewish faith a foundational part of your commitment to one another?
• How comfortable are you with the idea that marriage is a “permanent commitment”?
• Have you discussed how your beliefs inform this commitment?
• Have you had good examples or role models for marital commitment in your life?
• What does it mean to you to be an active participant in a synagogue?
  • Have you openly discussed your views on this with one another?
  • How would you respond to your partner if they disagreed with you on this issue?
• Which practices/traditions cause disagreements in your relationship?
  • How do you plan to handle these differences?
• Can you allow each other to have their beliefs without trying to change them?
• How did your families practice their traditions?
• Share with one another how you feel about observing religious celebrations in your home?
• What does it mean to you to be an active participant in your Jewish faith?
• How did your families observe traditional Jewish celebrations?
• How does your relationship provide deeper meaning in your life?
• How is loving your partner a sacred part of your life?
• How is love related to your spiritual beliefs?
• How important is it to you that you agree about all aspects of Jewish teachings?
• How realistic is it that you’ll agree on everything?
• How do you handle things when you don’t agree?
• How can your cultural/religious heritage draw you closer together as a couple?
• What type of shared activities typically foster closeness in your relationship?
Interfaith/Interchurch

The **Interfaith/Interchurch** category measures how satisfied couples are with the practice and expression of spiritual beliefs in their interfaith/interchurch relationship. It also explores how well they manage their differences.

- What spiritual beliefs do you agree on? What do you disagree on?
- What were the spiritual beliefs of your parents?
- Can you allow each other to have their beliefs without trying to change them?
- Where do you find common ground?
- Are there specific values that are non-negotiable for you?
- What concerns do you have about your partner’s religious traditions?
- How do you handle disagreements when it comes to religious/faith issues?
- How does it feel knowing you may never agree on some things?
- Can you accept and live with these issues present in your relationship?
- What are the differences in your spiritual beliefs that seem to cause tension?
- When you discuss your spiritual beliefs do you feel your partner listens and understands you?
- Can you accept your partner’s spiritual differences?
- How do you plan to handle your differences?
- Are you active in a place of worship now?
- How important is it to you to be active in the same place of worship?
- What does it mean to you to be an active participant?
- How do your families feel about your religious differences?
- How have you responded to your families?
- How do you feel about the concerns they are expressing?
- How can you each be respectful of one another’s faith?
- When do you feel least respected?
- What would respect and honor look like in terms of your faith differences?
- What does it mean to you to attend faith-based activities together?
- How will the two of you negotiate your differences when it comes to attending activities?
- How do/will children factor in to this aspect of your faith traditions?
- What differences make it difficult to attend worship together?
- Share some ideas for handling this situation in a productive way?
- What do you believe the challenges will be with having an interfaith family?
- Have you discussed a plan for how to handle parenting in an interfaith family?
- Share some your concerns about exposing your children to more than one faith tradition?
Marriage Expectations

The **Marriage Expectations** category measures how realistic or unrealistic each individual is about love, marriage, and the typical challenges that all married couples face.

- What makes you feel like you know everything there is to know about your partner?
- Do you believe your partner knows everything there is to know about you?
- Are there things you could share about yourself that you believe he/she doesn’t know yet?
- Why do you believe that time will resolve most of your problems?
- How could you begin resolving problems now rather than waiting?
- Who would be most disappointed if a problem you have been having doesn’t get resolved?
- What happens to your relationship when you spend time apart with other friends?
- Would it be a good thing for you or a bad thing for you if your partner expected you to meet all of his/her needs for friendship? Why?
- How can having friendships with others enrich your marriage?
- How will spending more time together automatically improve your relationship?
- How will you need to balance time together and time apart after you are married?
- What are some other things you could do other than spend more time together that would improve your relationship with your partner?
- What do you believe is the difference between romantic love and mature love?
- How important are expressions of romantic love in your relationship?
- How will you communicate your needs for romance to your partner?
- What other qualities of your relationship will you appreciate when romantic love fades somewhat?
- Have you had any problems arise so far and if so how did you resolve them?
- How would you define a “serious problem” in a marriage?
- Should a serious problem occur in your marriage, how would you handle it?
- Why do you feel that getting married will solve any difficulty you are experiencing now?
- What are some of the difficulties you are facing now prior to marriage?
- What will you do if you discover those difficulties you were aware of before marriage, still exist?
- Why was love not enough for couples who report being in love but eventually divorce?
- Describe your recipe for a happy relationship.
- Have you ever seen two people who love one another, yet struggle to have a happy relationship?
- What would your response be if your partner betrayed your trust in a significant way?
- How would you respond to your partner should your partner be unresponsive to your love?
- Do you believe you are more certain of this than most couples, or less?
- Do you ever feel disappointed or frustrated with others?
- How realistic is it to expect no frustration or disappointment in marriage?
- How might expecting disappointment or frustration as a normal part of marriage act as a buffer against disappointment?
Parenting Expectations

For couples who expect to have children in the future, the Parenting Expectations category measures agreement on issues related to having and raising children. This category explores opinions about starting a family, handling discipline, and sharing parenting responsibilities.

• Share with each other your thoughts or feeling about having children.
• Have you discussed family planning and/or birth control?
• If you are unable to give birth, have you considered adopting children?
• If you do not want to have children, can you share with your partner how you have come to this conclusion?
• What do you see as your role and responsibilities when it comes to raising children?
  • What do you see as your partner’s role and responsibilities?
  • Do you disagree on what your responsibilities will be?
• How does your partner relate to children?
• Can you share with your partner why you struggle to relate to children?
• What do you believe are the qualities needed as a parent to be effective with children?
• Would you like to have children? When?
• Can you share your thoughts and feelings about starting a family with your partner?
• What are the biggest influences in shaping your ideas about having children?
• In what ways do you imagine your lifestyle will remain the same after you have children?
• How do you believe your lifestyle will change after you have children?
• How will you handle the additional demands of children and their emotional, physical, and spiritual needs?
• What type of religious education did you have as a child?
• Share with each other what type of religious education you want your children to have.
  • If you do not agree, how will you compromise? How important is religious education for your children?
• Whose responsibility will it be to teach your children religious values?
• Share with each other how you were raised.
• Do you believe that the way you were raised is the way you want to raise your children?
• How do you hope your future family will be similar and or different from the family of your childhood?
• Why do you believe that having children could help you improve your relationship?
• What kinds of things exist between you now that improve your relationship?
• What would you do if having children didn’t help improve things?
• Share with each other if, when, and how many children you’d like to have.
• How many children were there in your families?
• How will you handle your different preferences on this issue?
• How did your parents or the adult that raised you handle discipline?
• How similar to your own upbringing are your thoughts about how to handle discipline?
• Where do the two of you agree and disagree on the subject of discipline?
Parenting Expectations (Catholic)

• Share with each other your thoughts or feeling about having children.
• Have you discussed family planning and/or birth control?
• If you are unable to give birth, have you considered adopting children?
• If you do not want to have children, can you share with your partner how you have come to this conclusion?
• What type of Catholic values do you feel are important to pass on to your children?
• Are there certain Catholic teachings you struggle with?
• How did you learn your values?
• Whose responsibility will it be to teach your children Catholic values?
• How does your partner relate to children?
• Can you share with your partner why you struggle to relate to children?
• What do you believe are the qualities needed as a parent to be effective with children?
• What is your opinion of Catholic education?
• What did you like about your education and what did you feel was lacking?
• How will you compromise if your partner disagrees with you on this issue?
• In what ways do you imagine your lifestyle will remain the same after you have children?
• How do you believe your lifestyle will change after you have children?
• How will you handle the additional demands of children and their emotional, physical, and spiritual needs?
• What type of religious education did you have as a child?
• Share with each other what type of religious education you want your children to have?
  • If you do not agree, how will you compromise? How important is religious education for your children?
• Whose responsibility will it be to teach your children religious values?
• What do you see as the responsibilities of the father?
• What do you see as the responsibilities of the mother?
• Do you agree on what your responsibilities will be?
• What do you see as your responsibilities?
• What do you see as your partner’s responsibilities?
• Do you agree on what your responsibilities will be?
• Share with each other if, when, and how many children you’d like to have.
• How many children were there in your families?
• How will you handle your different preferences on this issue?
• How did your parents or the adult that raised you handle discipline?
• How similar to your own upbringing are your thoughts about how to handle discipline?
• Where do the two of you agree and disagree on the subject of discipline?
Becoming Parents

For couples expecting their first child, the Becoming Parents category looks at a couple's readiness for the transition to parenthood. This category explores feelings and expectations about roles, support networks, and how the challenges associated with caring for an infant will be managed.

- How familiar are you with the demands of parenting?
- How well do you function on a reduced amount of sleep?
- What types of things add stress to your life now?
- What aspects of your life do you anticipate will change once your child arrives?
- Describe your current lifestyle. Are you planning on keeping things pretty much the same?
- How well do you handle change?
- What financial challenges are you facing as you prepare for the new baby?
- Do you have a budget? How will you need to update your budget once your child arrives?
- What are you doing to plan for the increased expenses associated with raising a child?
- In terms of becoming parents, have you shared your thoughts and feelings with one another?
- What steps are you taking to prepare for the arrival of your child?
- Who do you consider to be part of your support network?
- What type of support do you anticipate needing from family and friends?
- How comfortable are you asking for and accepting help?
- What roles and responsibilities can you share in order to balance the load?
- How well do you typically take care of yourself in times of stress?
- What childcare options are you planning to use?
- Are you in agreement with one another on your childcare options?
- What concerns do you have about your childcare options?
- How can you continue to invest in your relationship once the baby arrives?
- How will you balance your relationship with the time needed to care for your child?
- What can you do to develop and strengthen your love for each other now?
- What do you see as your roles and responsibilities?
- What do you see as your partner’s roles and responsibilities?
- Do you agree on your roles and responsibilities as new parents?
- What current demands compete with your time to prepare for the baby’s arrival?
- How are you working together as a team and getting the help you need to prepare for the baby?
Children & Parenting

For couples who already have children together, the **Children & Parenting** category measures agreement on issues related to having and raising children. This category explores opinions about discipline, parenting responsibilities, and how children have impacted marriage satisfaction.

- What are some of the problems children create in your relationship?
- What can you do as a couple to resolve some of those problems?
- What can you do to reduce the likelihood that your children create problems in your relationship?
- How has having children affected your relationship?
- Who comes first in your family, your children or your partner?
- How can parenting bring you closer together as a couple?
- What does each of you see as your responsibility in raising your children?
- What happens inside yourself and/or to your feelings about your relationship when you feel dissatisfied with how childrearing is shared?
- What can you do to work toward a more satisfying balance of childrearing responsibilities?
- As a parent, how much time do you spend with your children? What gets in the way?
- What are some things you could do in order to spend more time with the children?
- How does the amount of time you spent with your parents when you were a child inform your own desires to parent?
- How do your parenting styles differ from one another?
- In what ways could different parenting styles be a positive thing for your children?
- What type of religious education did you have as a child?
- Share with each other what type of religious education you want your children to have,
- If you do not agree how will you decide? How important is religious education for your children?
- Whose responsibility will it be to teach your children religious values?
- Describe how you experience related to each other now compared to how you did before you had children.
  - How have these changes impacted the way you feel about yourself and your relationship?
  - What is one thing you can do to help restore this area?
- Share your thoughts about providing financially for your children
- When should they begin providing for themselves financially?
- Are there times after your children are grown that you would consider providing financial assistance?
- How did your parents handle discipline?
- How similar to your own upbringing are your thoughts about how to handle discipline?
- Where do the two of you agree and disagree on the subject of discipline?
- What do believe is the difference between discipline and punishment?
- What aspects of your marriage are being neglected?
- How do you balance your relationship with the time needed to care for your children?
- What do you need to do to develop and strengthen your love for each other?
Intergenerational Issues

For couples with children over 18, the **Intergenerational Issues** category explores the challenges middle-aged couples face as they are positioned as a resource to their adult children and/or aging parents. More specifically, this category looks at how time, attention, and assistance are balanced.

- Are other family members aware of how you feel about caring for your children and/or parents and how much resources it requires?
  - How can you both help resolve this issue?
- What are the advantages or disadvantages of staying close with children and grandchildren?
- How does the location of where you live affect your connection with other family members?
- What decisions have you made to help foster ongoing connection with your children & grandchildren?
- What challenges do you face in balancing your time as a couple and with your families?
- Which family members tend to be the most challenging?
- How will you work this out between yourselves and your families? What boundaries will you set?
- Who expects more attention from you, your parents or your children?
- Why do you think they are expecting so much of your time and energy?
- What can you do to find a balance and set some boundaries?
- Can you approach your children or family to resolve the issue?
- What factors prevent your adult children from achieving independence?
- Are there ways the two of you have contributed to this problem?
- In relationship to this issue, what can you both agree to do differently in the future?
- Does the need for assistance arise out of their failures or because of things they cannot help?
- How can you assist them without allowing them to become totally dependent on you?
- Are your finances limited such that it creates problems when you offer assistance?
- Share with each other what your thoughts are regarding helping your children financially?
  - Is this something they have requested or something you have offered?
  - How can you help them without robbing them of their sense of independence?
  - What can you do to avoid them becoming too dependent on you?
- Do you feel too close or too disconnected from other family members?
- As a couple, do you both feel the same way about other family members?
  - How have you attempted to handle this issue? Has it worked?
- How do you see your role changing as parents and grandparents?
- Share with each other your thoughts about these changing roles.
- What do you see your roles to be in the future?
- What concerns do you have about discussing inheritance with your children?
- Are you concerned how they will accept your decisions?
- How can you include your children in discussing inheritance issues?
Step Parenting Expectations

For couples forming a stepfamily, the Step Parenting Expectations category measures agreement on issues related to having and raising children in a step-family. This category explores opinions about creating a stepfamily, handling discipline, and sharing parenting responsibilities.

- What problems will child custody and visitation arrangements cause?
  - Have you discussed these problems?
- What is the relationship like between you and your former spouse regarding the children?
- What kind of parent was your partner to his/her children previously?
- How do your children relate to your future spouse?
- Does your future partner accept your children and do they accept your partner?
- What gives you concern regarding the relationship between your children and your future spouse?
- How do your parenting styles differ?
- Have you shared these feelings with your partner? How have your concerns been received?
- What could you each do to increase your teamwork?
- What type of religious education did you have as a child?
- Share with each other what type of religious education you want your children to have.
- If you do not agree, how will you compromise? How important is religious education for your children?
- Whose responsibility will it be to teach your children religious values?
- How does your partner relate to children?
- What can you each do to improve your parenting skills?
- What qualities do step parents need to be effective with children?
- How does your marriage represent another type of loss for your children?
- How might the children respond differently to your marriage than to your courtship?
- How do you respond when your children express a negative attitude?
- How do the children impact your relationship now?
- How do you balance your relationship with the time needed to care for your children?
- What do you need to do to develop and strengthen your love for each other as a couple?
- Can you discuss what your role will be in regards to disciplining your children and stepchildren?
- How will you handle disciplining your stepchildren?
- How did you discipline your children in your former marriage?
- How will you handle disagreements in the future regarding disciplining the children?
- What do you see as your responsibilities in regards to raising your children and step children?
  - What do you see as your partner’s responsibilities?
  - Do you disagree on what the responsibilities will be?
- How will your parenting responsibilities change once you’re married?
- What type of conversations have you had about step parenting?
- What can you do now to develop and strengthen your love for each other?
- How are you educating yourselves about the challenges of stepfamilies?
Cohabitation Issues

For couples who are currently living together, the **Cohabitation Issues** category explores how living together has impacted their relationship. This section looks at commitment, closeness, and additional stress placed on the relationship due to cohabitation.

- What are some of the new issues that have been created since you began living together?
  - How have you dealt with these new issues?
  - How are these issues impacting your relationship?
- What were you expecting from this relationship when you began living together?
- What has been the greatest challenge you have faced since you began living together?
- What are your ideas for dealing with these challenges?
- What level of commitment are you expecting in your relationship?
- How has living together weakened your commitment?
- How would you compare the commitment you expect in this relationship to the commitment level in a marriage?
- What is it about living together that has made you be more certain about your relationship?
- What are your expectations for the future of your relationship?
- What would need to change in order to have more confidence in the future of your relationship?
- If living together has not brought you closer together, can you identify the reasons why?
- What changes would you need to make to strengthen your relationship?
- What helps you feel closer to your partner?
- Did you feel you needed to “test” this relationship before committing to marriage?
- How do you think an actual marriage commitment would be different?
- How do your parents feel about your living together?
- How is the “test” going? What grade (A, B, C) would you give your relationship?
- Can you share with your partner the habits that bother you?
  - What do you plan to do about those habits that you find annoying?
- Can you accept your partner’s bothersome habits and not try to change them?
- What are you willing to do about your own habits?
- Can you share with your partner what your feelings are when he/she criticizes you?
- Are you aware that you are being critical of your partner? What triggers the criticism?
- What are the issues you are facing financially since you began living together?
- Why do you have more financial issues now? What could you do differently?
- Will these financial issues affect your future plans?
- How do you handle matters of power and control in your relationship?
- How has living together exacerbated power struggles?
- How can you maximize teamwork and minimize competition?
Previous Marriage

In cases where one or both partners have been divorced before, the **Previous Marriage** category measures a couple's concern that a previous relationship could interfere with the health and happiness of their future marriage together.

- Can you share with your partner why you are fearful of another breakup?
- Are there things about this relationship that give you concern?
- What can you do to overcome these fears? How can your partner help?
- Have you discussed what brought about the divorce from your former spouse?
- How do you see the former partner interfering in your relationship?
- What is the relationship like between you and your former spouse?
- What boundaries need to be set with your former partner?
- Can you share why you lack confidence in your present relationship?
- What do you believe you need to do to strengthen your relationship?
  - How could your partner be helpful?
- How long have you been experiencing this lack of confidence?
- Can you share with your partner how you feel when he/she talks about their previous relationship?
- How long has it been since the previous relationship or marriage was terminated?
- Talk about how you can limit these conversations about past relationships.
- Have you talked openly with one another about your concerns of financial settlements from a previous marriage?
- Are you both willing to accept the complexity these financial settlements will bring into your life?
- What strategies can the two of you use to deal with this financial challenge?
- Can you share with your partner what you mean by “too involved with or influenced by. . .”?
- How do each of you relate to this previous partner? What needs to change?
- Which past relationships concern you most? Why?
- Can you share your concerns with your partner?
- After marriage, how will the two of you handle problems that arise out of your past relationships?
- What have you learned about yourself from past relationships or marriages?
- How have you grown since your past relationship ended?
- What do you want to be sure not to repeat in your future relationship?
- Have you been willing to listen to your partner about past hurts in previous relationships?
- Do you feel that your partner understands your feelings?
- Can you share some of those issues and hurts from past relationships?
- What can you do to resolve those issues or let go of those hurts?
- What is your understanding of the reasons why past relationships or marriages failed?
- What part did you play in why past relationships didn’t work out?
- What will you do differently in this relationship?
Health Issues (Over 55)

The Health Issues category explores relationship challenges faced as couples grow older. More specifically, this category looks at attitudes towards having a long, healthy and active life together.

- Share with each other your concerns about your quality of life as you age.
- What can both of you begin doing now to prepare for changes ahead?
- In what ways do you expect to support and care for one another as you age?
- How do you support and care for one another now?
- Share with your partner any concerns you have about this issue.
- Share with your partner what concerns you about decreasing independence.
- What are your thoughts about becoming the primary care giver?
- Where can you look now for help in the future?
- What specific concerns do you have about your partner’s health?
- Are there things you wish your partner were doing differently now to help prevent later health complications?
- What concerns do you have about your own aging?
- What concerns do you have about your partner’s aging?
- What can you begin doing now in preparation for growing old?
- Share with your partner your concerns about your health.
- What can both of you do to ensure a long and healthy life together?
- Is there something specific you are fearful about?
- How do you each take care of yourself physically?
- Does your partner encourage you to take better care of yourself? How do you respond?
- Discuss with your partner how you feel about his/her lifestyle.
- Which of your partner’s habits concern you?
- What unhealthy habits do you have that you are willing to change?
- Share with your partner how you feel about his/her unhealthy habits.
- How do you feel about an active and healthy lifestyle?
- Describe your perception of an active lifestyle.
- How closely does yours match this description?
- What are your unhealthy habits?
  - How long have you struggled with these unhealthy habits?
- What can each of you do to change your unhealthy habits?
Health and Wellness

The Health and Wellness category explores challenges and attitudes towards maintaining a healthy and active life together.

• Share with each other your concerns about growing old together.
• What can both of you begin doing now to address those concerns?
• What are your concerns do you have around your quality of life?
• How do you support and care for one another?
• Do you feel you are supportive of your partner’s health?
• Why do you feel your partner is not supportive of your health?
• What specific concerns do you have about your partner’s wellness habits?
• Are there things you wish your partner were doing differently in regards to his/her wellness habits?
• What can you both do to ensure a long and healthy life together?
• Does your partner encourage you to take better care of yourself? How do you respond?
• What unhealthy habits do you have that you are willing to change?
• How do you feel about an active and healthy lifestyle?
• Describe your perception of an active lifestyle.
• What are your unhealthy habits?
  • How long have you struggled with these habits?
• What can each of you do to change your unhealthy habits?
Cultural/Ethnic Issues

The Cultural/Ethnic Issues category measures how concerned each individual is about differences in their ethnic or cultural background negatively affecting their relationship.

- What differences seem to cause the most relational strain?
  - How do you handle these differences?
    - Have you shared your thoughts and feelings about this with one another?
- Where do you find common ground?
- How do you plan to handle differences in your beliefs and values?
- How do others react to the two of you as a couple?
- How do you handle negativity directed your way?
- How do you support one another regarding this issue?
- What does it mean to you to share traditions, rituals, and holidays?
- How will you negotiate your differences when it comes to traditions, rituals, and holidays?
- How do/will children factor into these decisions?
- How do your families feel about your ethnic/cultural differences?
- How have you responded to your families?
- How important is your family’s approval to you?
- What does cultural sensitivity mean to you?
- Are there some specific ways your partner could be more respectful of your background?
- Have you shared your concerns before? How were they received?
- How can differences add richness to your lives?
- What has been most challenging about your different ethnic/cultural heritages?
- What is your plan for handling these challenges?
- What specific things about your background would you like your partner to understand better?
- Have you tried teaching one another about various roles, traditions, and rituals?
  - How has that been received?
- What do you believe the challenges of raising children in a family with a diverse ethnic/cultural background will be?
- Have you discussed a plan for how to handle parenting in an ethnic or culturally diverse family?
- Share some your ideas for exposing your children to more than one ethnic or cultural identity?
- How do you balance growing closer while maintaining your own individual identities?
- What would help you feel most support in maintaining your own ethnic or cultural identity?
Forgiveness

The **Forgiveness** category measures a couple’s perception of their ability to forgive one another following a conflict, betrayal, or hurt. It looks at how well they request and grant forgiveness in their relationship.

- Have you thought about why you or your partner may have a hard time letting go of past disappointment and hurt? What hunches have you come up with?
- Has it ever been useful in the past to hold on to hurt and disappointment? If so, describe.
- When are you most likely to revisit past hurts and disappointments?
- How can your partner support your process of letting hurt and disappointment go?
- Tell me about a time when you were able to forgive each other.
  - How are these (current) situations different than previous ones? How are they similar?
  - What can you apply (from times you were able to forgive) to this situation?
- How have unresolved issues robbed you of joy in your relationship?
- Who would be most pleased if these issues were resolved? Why?
- What is one thing you could each do that would take you one step forward in resolving an ongoing issue?
- What purpose do you believe grudge-holding may serve for you or your partner?
- What does ‘grudge-holding’ tell you about yourself that you otherwise may not have known?
- How do you respond to ‘grudge-holding’?
- Is your preference to forgive but not to forget?
  - Do you see this as a good or a bad thing? Why?
- What have you learned about forgiveness that you could share with newly dating or married couples?
- In what ways do you imagine your perception of forgiveness may be different than your partners?
- What does forgiveness mean to you?
- Is lack of forgiveness moving your relationship in a direction you would rather not go?
- How do you believe that moving toward forgiveness will impact your relationship?
- Do you both agree that your partner has a hard time admitting that he/she is at fault?
- If this issue were resolved for you, how do you imagine that would affect your relationship?
- If there is no change in this area, how do you believe your relationship will be affected?
- Has it always been true that tension remains in your relationship, even after you work through hurts and disappointments?
  - Describe this tension.
  - What do you believe may be the ‘message’ in this tension?
  - What does this tension stop your partner from knowing about you?
- Why do you feel closer to your partner after you work through a disappointment?
- What needs to happen for you in order for you to feel closer to your partner after working through disappointment? What will you be doing that you are not doing now?
- When “distrust” is present in your relationship, what happens to your dreams of your future together?
- Tell me about a time when “distrust” was not an issue?
  - What was different then?