

PREPARE/ENRICH Program: Customized Version (2009)

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Reference: Olson, D.H., Larson, P.J., Olson, A.K. (2009) *PREPARE/ENRICH Program: Customized Version*. Minneapolis, Minnesota, Life Innovations, Inc.

Abstract

The Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH is the fifth version and the distinctive features are that it is online and it is tailor made to each couple. It is called the PREPARE/ENRICH Program because it contains both a couple assessment and couple skill building exercises. The program has 10 core scales and over 100 other scales that tap into important aspects of the couple relationship. The goal of the program is to help increase a couples' awareness of their relationship strengths and growth areas and to provide them with skills so that they can improve their relationship.

PREPARE/ENRICH has been scientifically developed and has high reliability, high validity, and large national norms with couples from various ethnic groups. Numerous studies have been published that demonstrate the rigor of the assessment and its relevance to couples from a variety of ethnic groups. The program has been adopted by professional counselors from various fields (marital and family therapy, psychologists, social workers) and clergy from many diverse religious groups.

The content of the Customized Version spans across many topics, allowing the couple to obtain as much helpful information about their marriage as possible. The 10 *Core Scales* create a base to start the couple's learning experience, which is then expanded upon by exploring *Relationship Dynamics, Couple and Family Scales, the SCOPE Personality Profile, Stress Profile, and Customized Scales*. By covering these many topics, the couple's assessment is very comprehensive and unique for each couple.

During the feedback process, the facilitator receives a **Facilitator's Report** (20-25 pages) and uses it to work with the couple. The couple is given by the facilitator their own **Couple's Report** (10 pages) and **Couple's Workbook** (25 pages) that contains couple exercises on the major areas from the assessment. The facilitator typically uses the six core scales of PREPARE/ENRICH, as well as supplemental exercises that focus on what the couple needs most out of the assessment process. This is just another way that both the assessment and the feedback process is customized to each couple.

OVERVIEW OF CUSTOMIZED VERSION

The Customized Version is an innovative approach to couple assessment since it is tailor-made to each couple. While this idea was conceived years ago, it is only with the advent of the internet that it has become possible to create this dynamic online system. The Customized Version was launched in 2009.

The Customized Version creates the most relevant variety of scales for each couple. Instead of the five versions in Version 2000, there is now the potential of several hundred versions of PREPARE/ENRICH because of the unique combination of scales provided to a given couple. In the previous Version 2000, there were five PREPARE/ENRICH inventories were: PREPARE (for premarital couples), PREPARE—CC (for Cohabiting Couples), PREPARE—MC (for Marriage with Children), ENRICH (for married couples) and MATE (for couples over 55 years of age).

The Customized Version is created for each couple based on background questions the couple answers online about their relationship. The first main category is the stage of their relationship—whether they are dating, engaged or married. Additional questions relate to their age and whether there are children involved in the relationship.

All couples are given several core scales and they include 10 core scales from the previous versions of PREPARE/ENRICH, the Couple and Family Map, four scales in Relationship Dynamics, five new personality scales called SCOPE and a new Personal Stress Profile. The 10 core scales consist of the following: Idealistic Distortion, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Partner Style and Habits, Financial Management, Leisure Activities, Affection and Sexuality, Family and Friends, Relationship Roles, and Spiritual Beliefs.

New scales that were created for the Customized Version include Cultural/Ethnic Issues, Interfaith/Interchurch, Forgiveness and a variety of scales for parenting based on the age of the child and parenting situations (Becoming Parents, Children, Step Parenting, Intergenerational Issues). This includes just a sample of the new scales created for the Customized Version. A complete list of all the scales is discussed later.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical assumption is that the quality of the marital relationship can be predicted from the premarital relationship. Therefore, we can identify the relationship factors that, if improved, will make a difference to the quality of a marriage (Fowers and Olson, 1986). Version 2000 of

the PREPARE/ENRICH Program is a comprehensive premarital program which has a theoretical and empirical foundation with clinical relevance to couples.

This program applies four important characteristics of an effective preventative approach. First, factors which relate to marital success need to be identified. Second, couples need to be assessed on those critical variables. Third, feedback and exercises need to be given to couples, which will help them deal with problem areas. Fourth, couples need skill building exercises focusing on communication and conflict resolution skills. Additional couple exercises can be offered based on the needs of the couple.

An assessment and program which attempts to improve a couple's relationship should obtain information on the most critical factors in premarital relationship development that are predictive of later marital satisfaction. In a recent study, Stahmann and Hiebert (1997) identified factors which relate to marital success. A diverse group of 238 clergy who did premarital counseling were asked to estimate the percentage of and premarital couples experiencing problems or complaints in 29 possible areas. For first marriages, the five problem areas ranked as occurring most frequently were: communication (63%), unrealistic expectations of marriage or spouse (62%), money management/finances (60%), decision making/problem solving (55%), power struggles (51%). For remarriages, the five problem areas ranked as occurring most frequently were: communication (57%), children (57%), problems related to previous marriage (49%), power struggles (48%), and money management and finances (47%). All these topic have been systematically integrated into PREPARE/ENRICH.

Larson, Holman, Klein, Busby, Stahmann & Peterson (1995) reviewed five premarital assessment questionnaires (PAQs) available to educators and premarital counselors. The authors evaluated the five PAQ's based on theoretical and psychometric criteria pertaining to their usefulness in educational and counseling settings. Building on Larson and Holman's (1994) previous and extensive review of literature, they evaluated each PAQ for the inclusion of premarital items that were found to predict future marital success. PREPARE assesses most (85%) of the premarital factors defined in their research as good predictors of marital satisfaction and stability. Based on Larson and Holmann's evaluation of premarital assessment questionnaires, they found PREPARE to be "most psychometrically sound" and rated it as "the best instrument for premarital counseling" (1995, p. 251).

In summary, these reviews clearly demonstrate the importance of having a couple assessment tool and couple program that focuses on at least the following six areas: communication, conflict resolution, family-of-origin, finances and goals. The PREPARE/ENRICH Program builds on these important areas and provides both a couple assessment and couple exercises on these topics.

Preparing for and Enriching Marriage

Marriage is perhaps the most complex and challenging of all human relationships. The joining of two people in a relationship which is intended to last a lifetime can involve great effort to develop and maintain. There are many benefits for those who make the commitment to marriage and manage to maintain a successful relationship. Happily married couples tend to have better physical and emotional health, greater financial stability and increased wealth, more sexual satisfaction, and children that do better academically, relationally and emotionally than those of single or unhappily married couples (Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Antonovics & Town, 2004; Carlson, 2006). However, getting married is still very risky since the divorce rate continues to be at about 50%. The rate of divorce increases with the number of previous marriages. The rate of divorce is 40% first marriages, 60% for second marriages, and 73% for third marriages.

The number of people getting married is declining while the number of cohabiting couples continues to increase. There were approximately 2.3 million marriages and 1.2 million divorces in 2008. The percentage of people over 18 who are married has steadily declined, down 8% between 1970 and 2000. Cohabitation rates have risen by 1200% since the 1960's. In 2008, it was estimated that approximately 6.6 million couples were cohabiting, and over half of all couples cohabited before marriage (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008).

The divorce rates reveal that too often, couples are not equipped to deal with the challenges they face in marriage. A significant proportion of married couples are surprised to experience serious marital conflicts early in their relationships.

Quality premarital preparation, like PREPARE/ENRICH, can reduce the risk of divorce and increase relationship skills and satisfaction. In a survey of 3,334 couples, premarital education programs were found to reduce divorce by 31% (Stanley, Amato, Johnson, & Markman, 2006). Participants with premarital education had higher marital satisfaction, higher commitment, and lower marital conflict.

A meta-analysis of 13 studies of premarital programs by Carroll and Doherty (2003) found significant improvement in couples who received premarital education. In a systematic study of couples taking the PREPARE Program, couples who participated in the program improved their couple satisfaction and improved on 10 out of 13 areas of their relationship (Knutson & Olson, 2003). For more details, go to www.prepare-enrich.com and look under "Research." Similar outcomes have also been found in marriage education programs. In addition to experiencing improvement, participants report very high levels of satisfaction with these types of programs and indicate they would recommend them to other couples (Hawley and Olson, 1995).

New Features in the Customized Version

One of the new features of the Customized Version is that specialized versions were developed for various groups. We have different versions for various religious traditions including Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. There is also a scale which can be selected for couples in an interfaith/interchurch relationship.

Many couples and facilitators have requested a brief report which contains some of the major results which the couple could review and keep. A 10 page **Couple's Report** has been created which includes the core categories and Couple Type, the Couple & Family Maps, the SCOPE Personality scales, and the Personal Stress Profile.

Language translations for PREPARE/ENRICH have always been a challenge, but this has been overcome with the Customized Version. The goal is to ultimately have the Customized Version in many different languages. We have created an online translation system which will support multiple languages, allowing each person to take the inventory in the language they select. The facilitator can also choose the language in which they would like to print the Facilitator's Report.

As a companion to the Customized PREPARE/ENRICH assessments, there is a **Couple's Workbook** containing more than 20 exercises which cover 14 different content areas. In the workbook, there are six core Couple Exercises for giving feedback to couples. These couple exercises are designed to help the couple process and deal with the issues raised by the assessment. The six core Couple Exercises are:

1. Sharing Strength and Growth Areas
2. Creating a Wish List using Assertiveness & Active Listening
3. Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict
4. Couple & Family Map – Mapping your Relationship
5. Personal Stress Profile – Identifying Most Critical Issues
6. Personality Exercise – SCOPE out your Personality

In addition to these six couple exercises, the Customized Version contains many other exercises, many of which are new to the PREPARE/ENRICH Program. The new couple exercises include topics related to personality, stress, roles, expectations, and stepfamilies. The wide range of exercises allows the facilitator to further personalize the feedback experience to match the needs of each couple. These couple exercises are designed to be used in a feedback so that the couple can resolve current issues and learn skills to deal with future issues.

SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATION OF PREPARE/ENRICH

Historically, the items and scales in PREPARE/ENRICH have been rigorously tested for both reliability and validity, with excellent results. The national norm base is very large and a couple typology with premarital and married couples has been developed and validated with various ethnic groups. The norm base used is typically about 100,000 couples.

For more information and published research articles about PREPARE/ENRICH, go to the website www.prepare-enrich.com and click on “Research”.

High Levels of Validity:

Validity refers to the ability of an instrument to measure the characteristics it was designed to measure. A number of methods exist which attempt to assess validity and they have been used to validate the PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories.

Content or face validity is concerned with whether the items of a scale are relevant to the category being measured and whether the scale provides an appropriate number of items to adequately assess the concept under consideration. The PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories are intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of relationship functioning. An extensive review of the relevant literature was conducted prior to the construction of all versions of PREPARE/ENRICH to discover which areas were most often found to be problematic for couples. Scales were then developed to measure these various categories. The completed Inventory was submitted to a panel of clinicians who rated the relevance of the items for each of the subscales. In general, items from PREPARE/ENRICH were given high ratings in terms of their relevance to the factors being measured.

Concurrent validity determines the extent to which scores from a given instrument correlate with scores from an instrument assessing a similar dimension. Fournier (1979) found significant correlations between subscales of PREPARE and measures related to conflict, self-esteem, communication, empathy, equalitarianism, assertion, temperament, cohesion and independence. He also found significant correlations for all 12 subscales of PREPARE (Adaptability and Cohesion excluded) and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (1959)—a classic measure of marital satisfaction. A full description of these concurrent validity procedures and results is found in Fournier (1979).

Construct validity seeks to address whether a scale accurately measures the theoretical construct it proposes to measure. A common means of assessing construct validity is factor analysis—a statistical procedure that evaluates the degree of interrelatedness among items

measuring the same factor. Theoretically, separate factors should emerge for each of the categories measured.

Results of factor analysis on PREPARE revealed 11 unique factors among the 12 assessed dimensions (Adaptability and Cohesion were excluded from the analysis). Personality Issues and Communication combined to form one factor, accounting for the discrepancy. Intrascale factor analysis revealed that most scales reflected one significant factor, supporting the unidimensional nature of the scales. A complete description of the factor analysis is found in Fournier (1979). In general, this procedure supported the construct validity of PREPARE, although subsequent revisions were made to further strengthen the instrument based on these findings.

Predictive validity assesses the ability of an instrument to accurately predict a specific outcome like a happy marriage or success in college. An important criterion for PREPARE is whether it is able to predict future marital happiness and stability. Two separate studies have evaluated the predictive validity of PREPARE to distinguish between couples who are happily married and those who are unhappily married three years after marriage. This is done by using the results from PREPARE that they completed three to four months prior to marriage.

Fowers and Olson (1986) studied 164 couples recruited through clergy who used PREPARE. Couples were divided into four groups based upon their marital status and the results of a marital satisfaction questionnaire: married satisfied (n=59), married dissatisfied (n=22), cancelled marriage plans (n=52) and divorced/separated (n=31).

Discriminant analysis was used to determine ability to correctly classify the couples by group using their PREPARE scores. Using both REV and PCA Scores, PREPARE was able to correctly distinguish between the married-satisfied group and the other groups in 80-90 percent of the cases (separated/divorced=91%; married-dissatisfied=88%; cancelled/delayed=84%). In other words, PREPARE scores were able to accurately identify about 80-85% of the time how happy or unhappy a premarital couple would be 3 years after marriage.

As hypothesized, significant differences were found between the married-satisfied group and separated/divorced couples in ten scales (all except Children and Parenting), cancelled/delayed couples in 7 scales (Realistic Expectations, Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Sexual Relationship, Family/Friends and Equalitarian Roles) and married-dissatisfied couples in 6 scales (Communication, Conflict Resolution, Leisure Activities, Financial Management, Sexual Relationship and Equalitarian Roles).

Larsen and Olson (1989) replicated this study later using 179 couples divided into the same four groups (married satisfied, n=49; married dissatisfied, n=57; cancelled/delayed, n=37;

separated/divorced, n=36). Analyses of variance found differences among the groups for 9 of 11 scales (all except Children and Parenting and Religious Orientation). T-Tests comparing the married-satisfied group with the separated/divorced group found significant differences for 8 variables (Realistic Expectations, Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Leisure Activities, Family/Friends, Equalitarian Roles and Religious Orientation).

Results of the discriminant analysis were similar to those of Fowers and Olson. PREPARE was able to distinguish between the married-satisfied group and the other groups in over 80% of the cases using either PCA or REV Scores (PCA: divorced/separated = 84%; cancelled/delayed= 76%; married-dissatisfied= 85%; Individual: divorced/separated= 77%; cancelled/delayed= 79%, married-dissatisfied= 75%).

Both studies indicate that PREPARE has excellent predictive validity. It is able to determine with 80-85 percent accuracy couples who will tend to be satisfied with their marriages and couples who are likely to experience difficulties. While PREPARE is not intended to predict the marital success of specific couples, these studies do suggest that couples experiencing difficulties identified through the Inventory are more likely to continue problematic patterns of behavior after marriage unless they implement measures to change those patterns.

Concurrent validity examines the relationship between a given scale and other scales which are generally accepted as measuring similar concepts. High correlations between the scales would suggest that the instrument under consideration is an acceptable measure of the variable of focus when compared with an outside criterion.

In a national study of 1,200 couples, Olson, McCubbin, et al. (1989) compared the Marital Satisfaction subscale of ENRICH with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale—a classic measure of marital satisfaction. Good evidence of concurrent validity was found with correlations of .73 for individual scores and .81 for couple scores.

When used in a clinical setting, an assessment instrument needs to have the ability to distinguish between functional and dysfunctional populations. Discriminant validity attempts to determine the ability of a measure to discriminate between two or more groups by categorizing them according to an external criterion, then determining the extent to which the instrument categorizes them in the same way.

Fowers and Olson (1989) did a validation study using the Marital Satisfaction item from the background section of ENRICH as the external criterion measure. Couples where both partners satisfied were placed in one group (n=2,664); couples where both partners were dissatisfied were placed in the other group (n=2,375). Cases with split responses were discarded from the analysis

(n=2,222). The resulting sample was randomly split for purposes of cross-validation (validation group n=2,514; cross-validation group, n=2,525).

Discriminant analysis was carried out on both the validation and cross-validation groups to determine if they correctly classified satisfied from dissatisfied couples. Using individual scores, 92.9 percent of the validation group and 91.7 percent of the cross-validation group were correctly classified. Using couple scores, 91.2 percent of the validation group and 90.1 percent of the cross-validation group were correctly classified. These analyses suggest that ENRICH as an excellent capacity to discriminate between stressed and non-stressed couples.

ENRICH also has high validity. It can discriminate with 85% accuracy between couples with marriage problems with those who are happily married (Olson, Olson-Sigg, and Larson, 2008).

High Levels of Reliability:

Reliability for PREPARE/ENRICH is high in all of its scales. The following tables outline the Alpha reliability for the many scales used in the assessment across married, engaged and dating couples. Table 1 describes the reliability for the Core Scales (alpha reliability of .60-.89).

TABLE 1: Alpha Reliability of Core Scales in PREPARE/ENRICH

Scale Name	Married (n = 8,162)	Engaged (n =16,694)	Dating (n = 3,350)
Idealistic Distortion	0.88	0.80	0.85
Communication	0.89	0.83	0.86
Conflict Resolution	0.82	0.78	0.83
Partner Style & Habits	0.89	0.85	0.88
Financial Management	0.88	0.77	0.76
Leisure Activities	0.82	0.79	0.81
Family & Friends	0.74	0.75	0.79
Roles-Responsibilities	0.85	0.64	N/A
Spiritual Beliefs	0.89	0.86	0.84
Children & Parenting	0.82	0.60	N/A

Sexual Relationship	0.88	0.78	0.78
Forgiveness	0.89	N/A	N/A
Marriage/Relationship Expectations	N/A	0.70	0.73
Character Traits	N/A	N/A	0.83

Table 2: Alpha Reliability of Relationship Dynamics Scales

Scale Name	Married (n = 8,162)	Engaged (n=16,694)	Dating (n=3,350)
Avoidance	0.80	0.75	0.78
Partner Dominance	0.85	0.82	0.85
Assertiveness	0.84	0.77	0.80
Self Confidence	0.80	0.77	0.78

TABLE 3: Alpha Reliability of Couple and Family Map

Scale Name	Married (n=8,162)	Engaged (n=16,694)	Dating (n=3,350)
Couple Closeness	0.91	0.78	0.85
Couple Flexibility	0.79	0.67	0.73
Family Closeness	0.91	0.91	0.91
Family Flexibility	0.71	0.71	0.70

Table 4: Alpha Reliability of SCOPE Personality Scales

Scale Name	Married (n=8,162)	Engaged (n=16,694)	Dating (n=3,350)
Social	0.77	0.75	0.75
Change	0.70	0.68	0.70
Organized	0.75	0.73	0.72
Pleasing	0.62	0.66	0.65
Emotionally Steady	0.76	0.73	0.74

Table 5: Alpha Reliability of the Customized Scales

Scale Name	Married (n=8,162)	Engaged (n=16,694)	Dating (n=3,350)
Intergenerational Issues	0.75	0.67	N/A
Cultural/Ethnic Issues	0.77	0.72	0.72
Health Issues	0.81	0.77	N/A
Role Transitions (Over 55)	0.89	0.82	N/A
Sexual Relationship (Over 55)	0.90	N/A	N/A
Spiritual Beliefs (Catholic)	0.85	0.85	0.87
Spiritual Beliefs (Jewish)	0.76	0.78	N/A
Spiritual Beliefs (Protestant)	0.87	0.90	0.86
Interfaith	0.79	0.67	0.73
Step Parenting (minor stepchild)	0.80	0.73	N/A
Parenting Expectations (no kids yet)	0.65	N/A	N/A
Parenting Expectations (Catholic)	0.70	0.67	N/A
Becoming Parents (Expecting)	0.57	0.50	N/A

Financial Management	0.88	N/A	N/A
Cohabitation Issues (Living together)	N/A	0.70	0.82
Previous Marriage (Previous divorce)	N/A	0.74	N/A
Sexual Expectations (Catholic)	N/A	0.72	N/A
Sexual Expectations (Protestant)	N/A	0.74	N/A

Table 6: Alpha Reliability for the Unique Scales

Scale Name	Married (n=8,162)	Engaged (n=16,694)	Dating (n=3,350)
Personal/Premarital Stress	0.89	0.90	0.89
Abuse	0.73	0.70	0.73
Commitment	0.74	0.69	0.70

Couple Typology for Premarital and Married Couples

PREPARE couple types are highly predictive of which couples eventually become separated /divorced, unhappily married or happily married (Fowers, Montel, and Olson, 1996). These four types are called Vitalized, Harmonious, Conventional, and Conflicted (see Figure 1). Five married couple types were identified using ENRICH (Olson and Fowers, 1993). The five types are called Vitalized, Harmonious, Conventional, Conflicted, and Devitalized (see Figure 2).

The couple typology was created by using the *positive couple agreement* (PCA) scores from the PREPARE and ENRICH Inventories using cluster analysis. Using data from 5,030 premarital couples who took PREPARE and 6,267 married couples who took ENRICH. It was validating to find that the four premarital types identified from the PREPARE inventory also emerged from the ENRICH inventory, with one additional type (Devitalized).

An important replication study of the types from ENRICH was done with a sample of 450 African-American married couples was completed by William Allen (1997). Cluster analysis replicated the same five types of couples from the Caucasian couples. This replication not only supported the five couple types, but the percentage of African American couples in the various types were very similar to the Caucasian couples

FOUR TYPES OF PREMARITAL COUPLES



Figure 1. Four types of premarital couples based on PREPARE

Vitalized couples: The Vitalized couples were the happiest couple type because they had the highest positive couple agreement (PCA) scores on many of the areas. They had many strengths (high PCA scores) and few growth areas (low PCA scores).

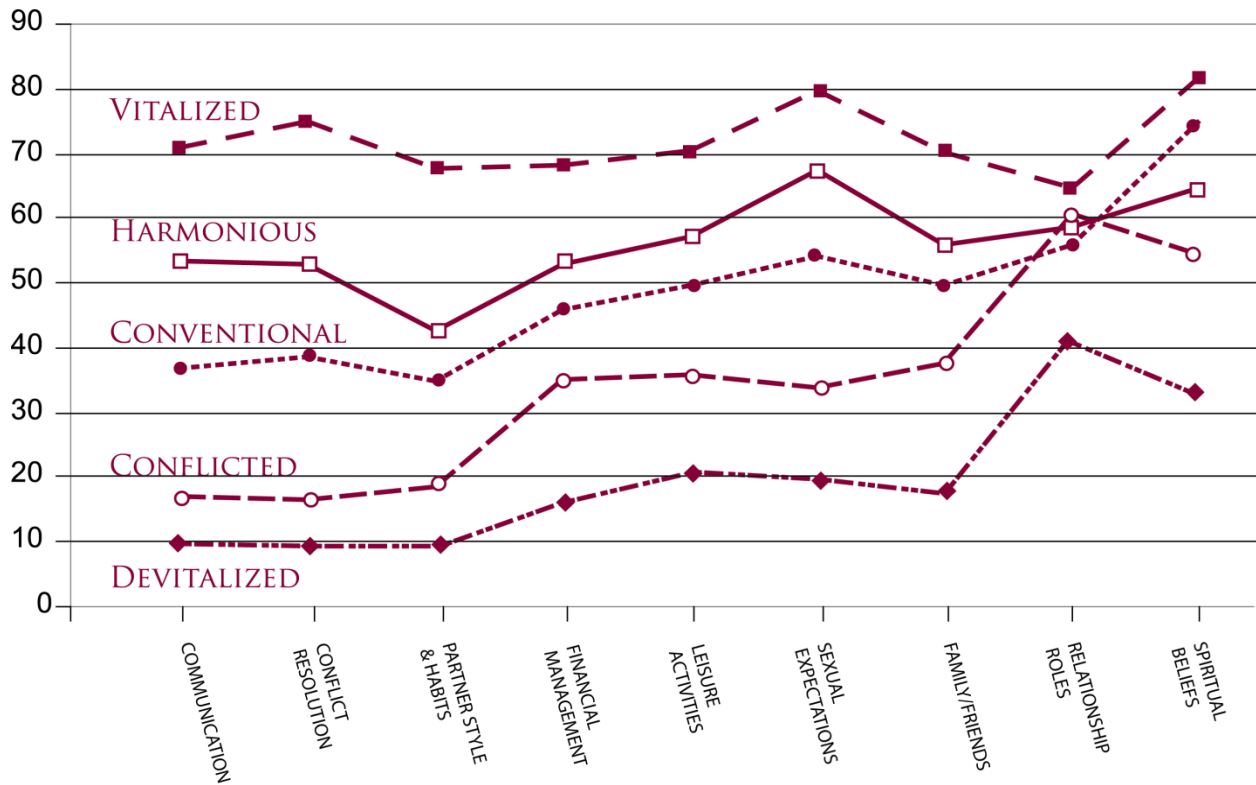
Harmonious Couples: The Harmonious couples had many strengths, but not as many as the Vitalized couples. They like many areas of their relationship, but often have low scores in the Children & Parenting area.

Conventional Couples: These couples are called traditional because they had more strengths in traditional areas including Children & Parenting, Family & Friends, Traditional Roles and Spiritual Beliefs. However, they had lower scores on more internal dynamics where they indicated problems with Personality Issues, Communication, and Conflict Resolution.

Conflicted Couples: These couples had numerous growth areas and few relationship strengths. They were called conflicted since they seemed to disagree about many areas and they had low scores on communication, conflict resolution and many of the other areas. As premarital couples, they are high risk for divorce and for married couples; they are a common type that seeks marital therapy (Fowers, Montel, & Olson, 1996).

Devitalized Couples (only from ENRICH): These couples had growth areas in almost all aspects of their relationship. They are typically very unhappy and have few strengths as a couple, although they might have had strengths earlier in their relationship. These couples are also a common type that seeks marital therapy.

FIVE TYPES OF MARRIED COUPLES



Validation of the Four Premarital Types from PREPARE

In order to validate the four premarital types, 328 premarital couples were followed for three years after marriage to assess their marital success (Fowers, Montel & Olson, 1996). These 328 couples were classified into the four premarital types and outcome measures focused on whether they were *happily married*, *separated/divorced* and *a group that canceled their wedding plans*.

The most significant validation of the value of the typology was the finding related to the marital outcomes of the premarital couples (see Table 7). As hypothesized, the *Vitalized* types of couples had the highest percentage of happily married couples (60%) and the lowest percentage of separated and divorced couples (17%). Conversely, the *Conflicted* types of couples had the most separated/divorced couples (49%) and least number of happily married couples (17%). The *Traditional* types had the lowest percentage of separated/divorced couples (6%), but the highest percentage of unhappily married couples (50%).

Table 7 Premarital types based on PREPARE and marital outcomes

Premarital Type	Happily Married		Unhappily Married		Separated Divorced		Total Percent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Vitalized	38	60%	15	23%	11	17%	100%	
Harmonious	30	46%	19	29%	16	24%	100%	
Conventional	17	34%	25	50%	8	16%	100%	
Conflicted	10	17%	18	30%	32	49%	100%	
Totals	95		77		95		239	

There were 89 couples who *canceled their wedding plans* as a result of taking PREPARE and receiving feedback. As predicted, the highest percentage of those who canceled their wedding were from Conflicted types (35 couples; 40%) followed by Traditional types (23 couples; 26 %), then Harmonious types (20 couples; 22%) and least often were Vitalized types (11 couples; 12%).

VALUE OF PREPARE/ENRICH TO FACILITATORS AND COUPLES

The PREPARE/ENRICH Program offers a number of advantages for facilitators and for their couples who are completing the program.

For Facilitators:

- Provides a wealth of diagnostic information about a couple’s relationship.
- Enhances a facilitator’s ability to work with both premarital and married couples.
- Provides a detailed summary of important relationship issues.
- Provides facilitator with a perspective on both “his” and “her” view of the relationship and the amount of agreement between them.
- Offers an effective and efficient way to learn more about a couple.

For Couples:

- Helps increase awareness of both strength and potential growth areas.
- Stimulates discussion concerning issues vital to their relationship.
- Primes couple for learning valuable communication and conflict resolution skills.
- Functions as a preventive tool to help couples become aware of important issues before they turn into major problems.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CONTENT AREAS

Each Core and Customized scale in the inventories is made up of 10 statements, referred to as “items”, which together assess a content area of couple relationships (e.g. communication, finances). This section briefly summarizes each of the areas in the PREPARE/ENRICH Customized Version. The Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH presents the same Core Scales to the couples who take it, regardless of the couple’s status (dating, engaged, married), unless otherwise noted.

Core Scales

Communication *measures each individual’s beliefs, feelings and attitudes about communication in his/her relationship.* Items focus on the level of comfort felt by each partner in being able to share important emotions and opinions with one another, perceptions of their partner’s listening and speaking skills and perceptions concerning their own abilities to communicate with their partner.

Conflict Resolution *evaluates an individual’s attitudes, feelings and beliefs about the existence and resolution of conflicts in the relationship.* Items pertain to the openness of partners in recognizing and resolving issues, the strategies and processes used to end arguments and the level of satisfaction with the manner in which problems are resolved.

Partner Style and Habits *assesses each individual’s perception and satisfaction with the personal habits and behavioral traits of their partner.* Items focus on issues such as: temper, moodiness, and stubbornness. In addition, this scale considers a spouse’s general outlook, dependability and tendency to be controlling.

Family & Friends *assesses feelings and concerns about relationships with relatives, in-laws and friends.* Items focus on the attitudes of family and friends toward the marriage, expectations regarding the amount of time spent with family and friends, comfort felt in the presence of the partner’s family and friends and perceptions of the situation as characterized by conflict or satisfaction.

Financial Management *focuses on attitudes and concerns about the way economic issues are managed within the couple’s relationship.* Items assess the tendencies of individuals to be spenders or savers, awareness and concern with issues of credit and debts, the care with which financial decisions on major purchases are made, agreement regarding financial matters, money management, and satisfaction with their economic status. There are different scale versions for dating, engaged, married, and older couples.

Leisure Activities *evaluates each individual's preferences for using free time.* Items focus on social versus personal activities, active versus passive interests, shared versus individual preferences and expectations as to whether leisure time should be spent together or balanced between separate and joint activities.

Sexual Expectations (for premarital couples)/ Sexual Relationship (for married couples) *assess an individual's feelings and concerns about affection and the sexual relationship with his/her partner.* Items reflect satisfaction with expressions of affection, level of comfort in discussing sexual issues, attitudes toward sexual behavior, birth control/family planning decisions and feelings about sexual fidelity.

Spiritual Beliefs *assesses attitudes, feelings and concerns about the meaning of religious beliefs and practices within the context of the relationship.* Items focus on the meaning and importance of religion, involvements in church/synagogue activities and the expected role religious beliefs will have in the marriage. The Customized Version offers both non-sectarian and group specific (e.g., Protestant, Catholic, Jewish etc.) versions of this scale.

Marriage Expectations/Relationship Expectations *assesses an individual's expectations about love, commitment and conflict in his/her relationship.* The intent is to assess the degree to which expectations about marriage and relationships are realistic and based on objective ideas. Marriage Expectations is designed for engaged couples, while Relationship Expectations is designed for dating couples.

Relationship Roles (engaged couples) *evaluates an individual's beliefs, attitudes and feelings about marital and family roles.* This scale is based on numerous studies that demonstrate equalitarian roles are positively related to successful marriage in our culture.

Roles & Responsibilities (married couples) *evaluates an individual's beliefs, attitudes and feelings about marital and family roles and responsibilities.* This category measures satisfaction with how household chores and decision making are shared.

Character Traits (dating couples only) *measures each individual's level of satisfaction or concern regarding their partner's character, values and behavior.* It looks at various issues including dependability, goals, priorities, and how others are treated.

Forgiveness (married couples only) *measures a couple's perception of their ability to forgive one another following a conflict, betrayal, or hurt.* It looks at how well they both *request* and *grant* forgiveness in their relationship. Taking responsibility, apologizing, re-establishing trust, and moving forward are important components of this scale.

Relationship Dynamics

Four personal and interpersonal relationship dynamics are assessed in the PREPARE/ENRICH Customized Version. They are defined below:

Assertiveness — a person's ability to express his/her feelings to their partner and be able to ask for what they would like.

Self Confidence — focuses on how good a person feels about himself/herself and their ability to control things in their life.

Avoidance — a person's tendency to minimize issues and reluctance to deal with issues directly.

Partner Dominance — focuses on how much a person feels his/her partner tries to control them and dominate his/her life.

These scales are designed to increase the facilitator's understanding of each partner and how each partner's characteristics are related to the underlying couple dynamics. These four interrelated areas together provide a rather comprehensive picture of each partner.

Research has demonstrated (Olson and Olson, 2000) successful couples tend to be those in which both partners are high in self confidence, low in partner dominance, high in assertiveness and low in avoidance.

Couple & Family System

Couple and Family Closeness describe the level of emotional closeness experienced in a couple and among family and the degree to which they balance togetherness and separateness. Items deal with family members helping each other, spending time together and feelings of emotional closeness.

Couple and Family Flexibility measure the ability of a couple to change and be flexible when necessary. Items deal with leadership issues and the ability to switch responsibilities and change rules when needed.

Couple & Family Map provides a pictorial representation of a couple's relationship. Based on the couple's responses on closeness and flexibility, The Couple & Family map depicts the relationship between the couple and their families of origin. This will be described more in detail later.

SCOPE Personality Profile

The Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH includes a personality section based on the Five Factor Model of Personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Widiger & Trull, 2007). The acronym used in PREPARE/ENRICH is called SCOPE, reflecting the five personality dimensions: ***Social, Change, Organized, Pleasing, and Emotionally Steady***. There are seven Items in each scale, all with alpha reliability in the statistically acceptable range. The SCOPE profile will be discussed later into more detail.

Social (S) — reflects an interest in people and social activities.

Change (C) — reflects openness to change, personal flexibility, and interest in new

Organized (O) — reflects how organized and persistent a person is in their daily life, work, and pursuit of goals.

Pleasing (P) — reflects how considerate and cooperative a person is in their interactions with others.

Emotionally Steady (E) — reflects the tendency to stay relaxed and calm even when faced with stressful situations.

Customized Scales

Parenting Expectations (no children yet)/Children & Parenting (children together)

measures an individual's attitudes and feelings about having and raising children. Items reflect a couple's awareness of the impact of children on their relationship, satisfaction with how parental roles and responsibilities are defined, compatibility of philosophies toward discipline of children, shared goals and values desired for the children and agreement on the number of children preferred. There are distinct scale versions for couples who don't currently have children but plan to have them and for couples who already have children together. There are also slight modifications for the Catholic version of these scales.

Step Parenting Expectations (engaged)/Step Parenting Issues (married) *measures agreement*

on issues related to having and raising children in a stepfamily. Items reflect a couple's awareness of the impact of children on their relationship, satisfaction with how step parenting roles and responsibilities are shared and defined, compatibility of philosophies toward discipline of children, and agreement on how to provide for the children. There are unique Step Parenting scales for both engaged and married couples.

Intergenerational Issues (all children over 18) *focuses on how much time, money and overall involvement the couple feels they need to provide to their children and/or their parents.* The more a couple has resolved the issues resulting from being the “sandwich” generation, the higher they will score in this category.

Becoming Parents *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 as a couple has their first child.

Interfaith/Interchurch *measures how a couple from different faith traditions or churches will manage the differences in their practice and expression of spiritual beliefs.* This category looks at the capacity for individuals to be respectful and loving toward one another, despite their differences. It also explores how they plan to manage their differences.

Cultural/Ethnic Issues *measures how concerned each individual is about differences in their ethnic or cultural background will negatively affect their relationship.* This category looks at the capacity for individuals and their families to be respectful and accepting of one another’s background.

Health Issues (over 55) *assess a couple’s level of comfort with their current health and with how aging will affect their relationship.* The more optimistic partners are about their own and their partner’s physical and emotional health, the higher their score will be in this area.

Role Transitions (over 55) *measures satisfaction with how roles and responsibilities are handled in the relationship of older couples facing transitions.* More specifically, this category looks at how older couples feel about managing the role transitions associated with retirement.

Previous Marriage *measures concern that a previous relationship could interfere with the health and happiness of their marriage.* This scale is designed for engaged couples where one or both partners have been previously divorced. It considers if both individuals have had enough time to work through past hurts, understand the reasons for previous break-ups, and feel confident in their current relationship.

Cohabitation Issues *evaluates each partner’s awareness of and reactions to the experience of living together.* Items focus on how the couple has viewed cohabitation and whether the experience has negatively affected their relationship and expectations about marriage.

VALUE OF FEEDBACK PROCESS

The PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories have been designed so facilitators can give constructive feedback to couples. The feedback process is designed to help facilitators work more effectively with couples. While we encourage facilitators to follow this process initially, you should also feel free to experiment and build upon it.

Four Advantages of Feedback

1. Completing the assessment instrument raises a natural curiosity in many couples concerning “how they did.”

Couples often have concerns about whether they are “normal,” what strengths and weaknesses the evaluation revealed and whether the assessment showed any information that may be helpful in improving their relationship. Offering them feedback can ease any doubts and fears raised by the assessment.

2. Feedback is often a valuable piece of the change process.

Through feedback, couples are made aware of the areas in most need of change. Goals may become clearer through the use of an assessment instrument. Couples can also become aware of their strengths, which will be a resource in their continued progress. In addition, couples often place greater credence in the guidance from the facilitator if they are supported by an objective evaluation tool.

3. Feedback provides a couple with insights into their relationship.

Couples will typically learn a great deal about their relationship and how they each perceive it. This learning process is a valuable part of the feedback and it helps them better understand each other. One area that couples typically enjoy discussing is their family of origin and it often gives them greater insights into their own relationship.

4. Feedback includes teaching relationship skills.

Two of the most common relationship skills that are integrated into PREPARE/ENRICH are **Communication** and **Conflict Resolution skills**. For Communication skills, we emphasize the skills of assertiveness and active listening. For conflict resolution, we have a Ten Step Model for resolving couple conflict.

COUPLE AND FAMILY MAP

Two other relationship skills that PREPARE/ENRICH highlights are **Couple Closeness** and **Couple Flexibility** (based on the Couple Map, see Figures 3). These are two skills that couples can learn to use more effectively in their relationship. We have provided in the Couple's Workbook suggestions for increasing and decreasing the levels of closeness and flexibility in a couple.

Maps are Built on the Circumplex Model

The Couple and Family Maps are based on the two key concepts of closeness and flexibility. The Maps are derived from the *Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems*, originally developed by David H. Olson, Douglas Sprenkle and Candyce Russell (1980). This chapter provides an overview of the Model including descriptions of the basic concepts and hypotheses. A comprehensive overview of the Circumplex Model can also be found at the website: www.facesiv.com

Historically, the *Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems* identified 16 types of couple and family relationships. It was developed in an attempt to bridge a gap that typically exists among research, theory and practice. One major approach used to bridge this gap has been the systematic development of self-report scales based on the Circumplex Model called **FACES** (Versions I, II, III and IV), which is an acronym for *Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale*. Over 1,000 studies have been done using FACES and it has become one of the most popular self-report scales for assessing family functioning. See www.facesiv.com for a historical overview and the latest updates.

The Couple and Family Maps used in PREPARE/ENRICH are a revised and simplified version of the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems. The theoretical ideas and scales used in the Couple and Family Maps are still very similar to the original Circumplex Model, which was developed for marital and family therapists and used more clinical language related to family system theory.

Because the revised Couple and Family Maps are designed to be shared directly with couples, the Maps are simplified from the original Circumplex Model in several ways:

- The descriptive terminology in the Couple and Family Maps has been simplified and the clinical terms replaced. "Closeness" replaces Cohesion and "Flexibility" replaces Adaptability. Descriptive terms related to closeness and flexibility are used instead of the clinical terms (e.g., enmeshed, disengaged, chaotic, rigid).

- The number of levels of cohesion and flexibility have been increased from four to five levels. Increasing the number of levels from 4 to 5 on both dimensions increased the number of types of couples and family systems from 16 to 25. This higher number of types provides a more accurate representation of the range of normal and clinical families.
- The layout has changed from a circular design to a square design

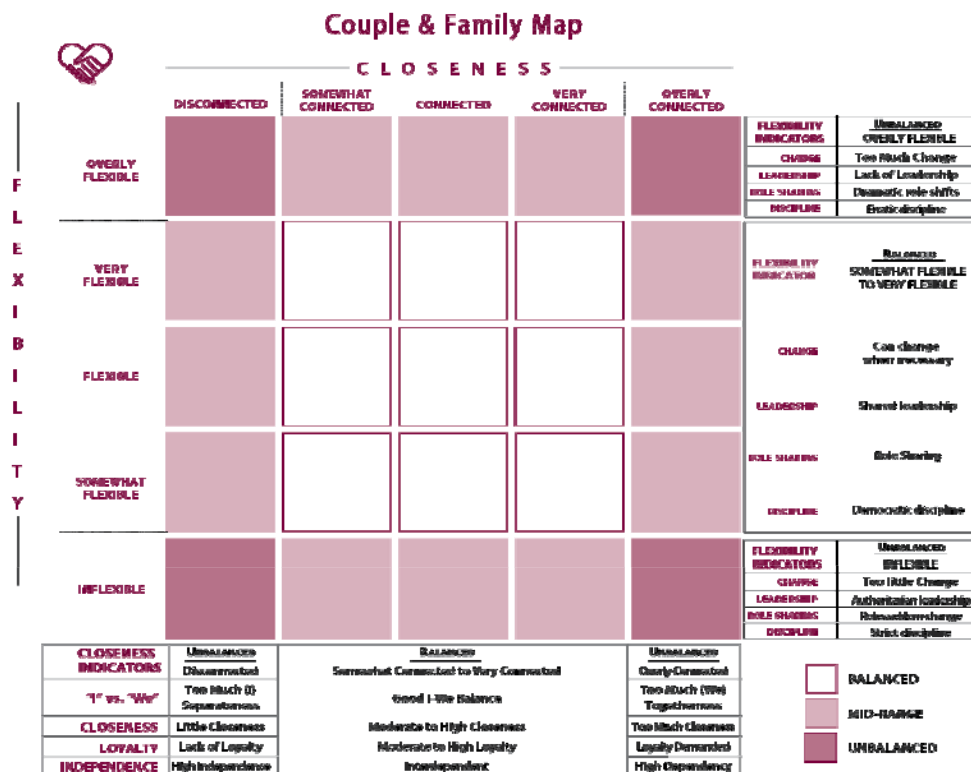


Figure 3: Couple & Family Map

Couple and Family Flexibility

Flexibility is the amount of change in leadership, role relationships and relationship rules. The specific concepts designed to measure flexibility include: change, leadership role sharing and discipline. The five levels of flexibility range from *inflexible* (very low) to *somewhat flexible* (low to moderate) to *flexible* (moderate) to *very flexible* (moderate to high) to *overly flexible* (very high).

Flexibility focuses on how systems *balance stability with change*. As with closeness, it is hypothesized central or balanced levels of flexibility (somewhat flexible, flexible, and very flexible) are more conducive to good couple and family functioning, with the extremes (inflexible and overly flexible) being the most problematic for couples and families as they move through the life cycle.

Four indicators are used to assess flexibility in couples and families: change, leadership, roles, and discipline (see Map). A summary of the dynamics of balanced and unbalanced couple/family types is provided in the following paragraphs.

Balanced couple and family systems are able to manage both stability and change. A *somewhat flexible relationship* tends to have democratic leadership characteristics with some negotiations including the children. Roles are stable with some role sharing and rules are firmly enforced with few changes. A *flexible relationship* has an equalitarian leadership with a democratic approach to decision-making. Negotiations are open and actively include the children. Roles are shared and there is fluid change when necessary. Rules can be changed and are age appropriate. A *very flexible relationship* has a tendency towards sharing in leadership and roles. Rules are very flexible and adjusted readily when there is a need for change.

Unbalanced couples and families tend to be at either the extreme of too much stability (inflexible) or too much change (overly flexible). In an *inflexible relationship*, one individual is in charge and is highly controlling. There tend to be limited negotiations with most decisions imposed by the leader. Roles are strictly defined and rules do not change. An *overly flexible relationship* has erratic or limited leadership. Decisions are impulsive and not well thought out. Roles are unclear and often shift from individual to individual.

In summary, very high levels of flexibility (overly flexible) and extremely low levels of flexibility (inflexible) tend to be problematic for individuals and relationship development in the long run. Relationships having moderate scores (somewhat flexible to very flexible) are able to balance change and stability in a more functional way.

Couple and Family Closeness

Closeness is defined as the *emotional bonding that couple and family members have toward one another*. There are five levels of closeness ranging from disconnected (very low) to somewhat connected, connected, very connected, to overly connected (very high)—see Map.

It is hypothesized the three central or *balanced* levels of cohesion (somewhat connected, connected, and very connected) make for optimal marriage and family life. The extremes or unbalanced levels

(disconnected or overly connected) are generally more problematic for relationships over the long term.

Closeness focuses on how systems balance separateness versus togetherness. In the model's balanced area of cohesion families are able to strike equilibrium moderating both separateness and togetherness. Individuals are able to be both independent from and connected to their families.

Four indicators are used to assess closeness in couples and families: separateness (I) vs. togetherness (We), closeness, loyalty, and independence vs. dependence (see Map). A summary of the dynamic balanced and unbalanced couple/family types is provided below.

Couples and families experiencing marital problems often fall into the disconnected or *unbalanced* areas of too much separateness. Disconnected people “do their own thing,” with limited attachment or commitment to their relationship. When cohesion levels are very high (overly connected), there is too much consensus/emotional closeness within the family and too little independence.

Balanced couple and family systems (somewhat connected, connected, and very connected) tend to be more functional across the life cycle. They are able to balance both the I (separateness) and the We (togetherness) in their relationship. At the lower balanced side there is more separateness and at the upper side more togetherness. In terms of loyalty, it increases from the somewhat to the very connected levels. There is higher independence in somewhat connected relationships and higher dependence in the very connected levels. All balanced levels, however, have some degree of interdependence.

The poem “on marriage” by Kahil Gibran from *The Prophet* clearly describes the concept of balance of separateness versus togetherness.

*“Sing and dance together and be joyous
But let each of you be alone—
Even as the strings of a lute are alone
Though they quiver with the same music
But let there be spaces in your togetherness
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.”*

Unbalanced levels of cohesion are at the extremes of being either extremely low (disconnected) or extremely high (overly connected). A *disconnected relationship* often has extreme emotional

separateness and very little closeness. There is a lack of loyalty and most people are generally independent. There is little involvement among family members and a great deal of personal separateness and independence. In an *overly connected relationship* there is an extreme amount of emotional closeness and loyalty is demanded. Individuals are very dependent on and reactive to one another. There is a lack of personal separateness and little private space is permitted. The energy of the family is focused inside the family and there are few outside individual friends.

In summary, very high levels of closeness (overly connected) and very low levels of closeness (disconnected) tend to be problematic for individuals and relationship development in the long run. On the other hand, relationships having moderate scores are able to balance being separate and together in a more functional way. Many relationships will have problems if they function at either extreme levels for too long. Also, it is expected couple and family systems will change levels of closeness over time.

Couple and Family System Types

The Couple and Family Map describes 25 types of couples and families. There are five levels of closeness and five levels of flexibility and when they are put together in the Map they create 25 types. There are 9 balanced types, 12 mid-range types and 4 unbalanced types (see Map).

The 9 balanced types are found in the balanced levels (3 central areas) of both closeness and flexibility. These couples and families are considered the most functional and healthy. They are able to balance both separateness versus togetherness (Closeness) and stability versus change (Flexibility).

The 12 mid-range types are balanced on one dimension (closeness or flexibility) and unbalanced on the other. These couples and families generally function well until they are under stress. Then they often tend to slip into a more Unbalanced level.

The 4 unbalanced types are found in the unbalanced levels of both closeness and flexibility. These couples and families are considered the most dysfunctional and unhealthy. They tend to be stuck at the extremes, being either “Disconnected” or “Overly connected” (Closeness) and either “Inflexible” or “Overly flexible” (Flexibility).

Everybody Loves Raymond: An “Overly Connected & Inflexible” Family

Everybody Loves Raymond revolves around Ray Barone, a successful sportswriter living on Long Island with his wife, Debra, daughter, Ally, and twin sons, Geoffrey and Michael. Ray’s

parents, Frank and Marie, live directly across the street, which provides plenty of opportunity to intrude upon Ray's life.

Brother Robert, a divorced policeman, is constantly moving in and out of his parents' house, and loves to drop over and resent Ray's successful career and happy family life. His jealousy is captured in his belief that Marie, their mother, has always viewed Raymond as her favorite son. The family displays a great deal of enmeshment (being overly connected) in as much as Ray's parents and brother are constantly at his house. As is typical in an enmeshed family, Debra and Ray's personal lives and relationship are often the topic of family conversation. Family members also have difficulty differentiating themselves from the enmeshed system. Debra hopelessly pursues more space and autonomy from Ray's parents, but seldom gets it without paying the price of Marie's signature guilt trips.

Marie is the matriarch of the family and she tries to control others, a typical pattern in a rigid system. In-laws have a hard time breaking into this family. The inflexibility of their system is also seen in the inability of the boys to make any changes in their own lives or to ever go against their mother's wishes without paying a relational price.

As is characteristic of an unbalanced system, the communication is poor, filled with secrets, and characterized by indirect messages and put-downs. In fact, you rarely see examples of positive and healthy communication in the family.

Six Core Couple Exercises

Based on past research and the expertise of the developers, these six exercises have been found to be highly effective and important for building knowledge and relationship skills. While you may not use all six of the core exercises with every couple, it is recommended that you include several of them with each couple. The core exercises and related assessment categories include:

Six Core Couple Exercises	Relevant Category
1. Sharing Strength and Growth Areas	Overall Awareness
2. Creating a Wish List using Assertiveness & Active Listening	Communication
3. Identifying Most Critical Issues	Personal Stress Profile
4. Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict	Conflict Resolution
5. Mapping Your Relationship	Couple and Family Maps
6. SCOPE out your Personality	Personality

Exercise One: Sharing Strength and Growth Areas

Couples independently choose from three areas of the 12 PREPARE/ ENRICH scales that they feel are relationship strengths, and three areas they feel are relationship growth areas. Then each partner is encouraged to share what he/she believes the strengths are in their relationship. One partner proposes a strength area, discusses the strength, then the other partner indicates one strength they have selected. This process is repeated until all three strength areas have been discussed by both partners. As partners share their perceptions, the counselor interjects the results found in the Inventory regarding the strengths and illustrates them with some specific items.

The same discussion process is used to share and discuss growth areas. After the couple has shared their strength and growth areas, they are encouraged to discuss questions such as, “Did your partner’s responses surprise you?” When the partner’s perceptions concur with Inventory results, the counselor should interject one or two specific items from the area to generate discussion about how the area under consideration is problematic or beneficial for the couple. If the Inventory results do not concur with the partner’s perceptions, the counselor may have the couple discuss the concern more fully with one another.

Sharing strength and growth areas help the couple to understand each other better, by increasing each other’s awareness of how they each view the relationship. This exercise also encourages communication, and clearly defines relationship strengths which can be built upon in the future.

Exercise Two: Creating a Wish List using Assertiveness & Active Listening

Assertiveness and *Active Listening* are two specific communication skills emphasized in Couple Communication Exercise II. By teaching assertiveness and active listening skills, it helps increase the positive cycle of increasing assertiveness and self-confidence and reduce the negative cycle of avoidance and partner dominance for both the individuals and the couple (based on four personality scales).

Partners each make a Wish List of three things they would like their partner to do more often and they take turns sharing these wishes. Sharing their wishes with each other encourages each partner to be assertive with each other. As the couple share their wishes with each other, the counselor provides them with feedback related to their assertiveness and active listening skills. The counselor would also give feedback from the four personality scales (Assertiveness, Avoidance, Self-Confidence, Partner Dominance) and the Communication scale. The counselor would conclude by giving the couple positive feedback about their assertiveness and active listening skills and how to continue to build these skills.

A typical example is Susan and Michael who shared their wishes with each other. Susan asked Michael “*Would you tell me more often how you are feeling and what you are thinking.*” Michael said “*I will try, but I will need to be reminded.*” Michael had a special request for Susan

and he said: “*I wish you would be willing to come to a baseball game with me.*” Susan responded: “*I will go to a game if you let me know a couple of weeks in advance so I can plan for it.*” In both of these cases, the partner not only showed they understood the request, but were willing to comply with the request. Agreeing is not a necessary step in active listening since the goal is only to demonstrate that they understand what the other person had requested.

Exercise Three: Identifying Most Critical Issues

In this exercise, couples will identify stressors in their lives. Stressors are events that cause an emotional and/or physical reaction. Stress can be positive (wedding, job promotion) or negative (loss of job, car accident). This exercise will help the couple manage the many stressors, in their lives. They will prioritize the issues that are most important to them, decide what issues can be changed, resolved, or neither. Ultimately, the couple will become aware of and focus on the high priority issues and those that can be changed.

Exercise Four: Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict

For this exercise, the counselor would walk the couple through the Ten Steps exercise during a feedback session using an issue from one of their Growth Areas to introduce the process. Then the couple would select an issue to work on as a homework assignment to be reviewed at the next session. Table 8 identifies the *Ten Steps for Resolving Couple Conflict* which was developed based on current research and theory regarding relevant steps that have been used in a variety of conflict resolution models.

Ten steps for resolving couple conflict

1. Set a time and place for discussion.
2. Define the problem or issue of disagreement.
3. How do each of you contribute to the problem?
4. List past attempts to resolve the issue that were not successful.
5. Brainstorm: List all possible solutions.
6. Discuss and evaluate these possible solutions.
7. Agree on one solution to try.
8. Agree on how each individual will work toward this solution.
9. Set up another meeting.
10. Reward watch other as you each contribute toward the solution.

Exercise Five: Mapping Your Relationship

Using the Couple and Family map, the couple will compare their descriptions of their own couple relationship, as well as compare their family of origins. They will look at the similarities and differences in flexibility and closeness in their families of origin. This will allow the couple to better understand and discuss their couple relationship and families (see Figure 4).

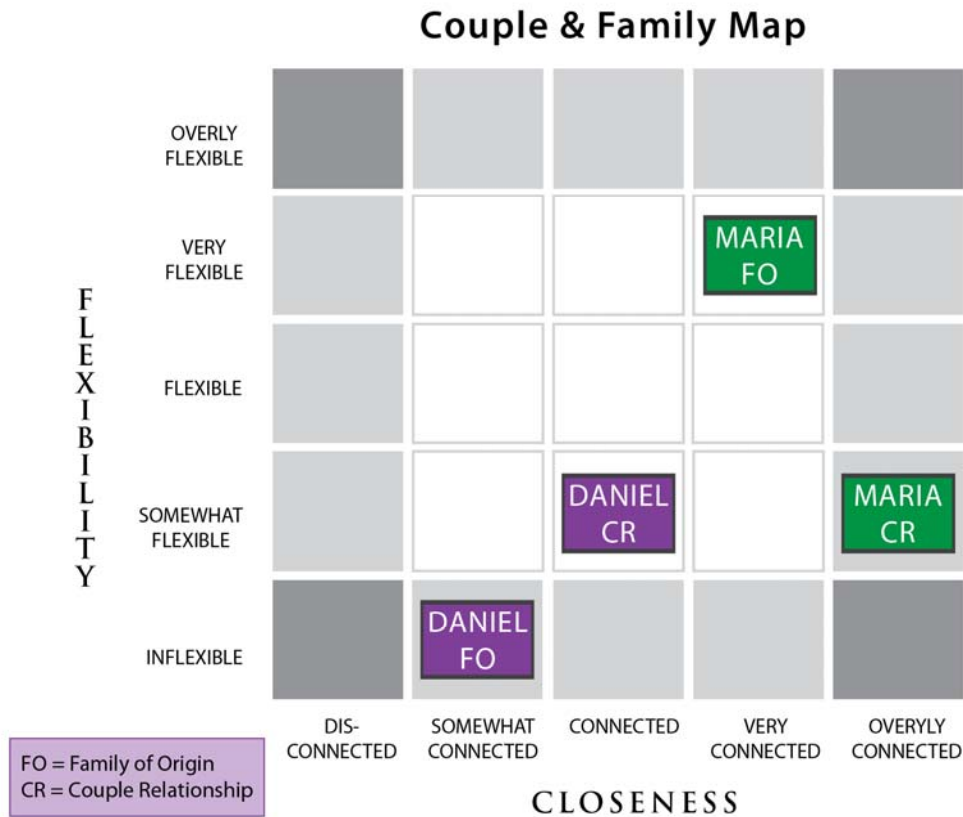


Figure 4 Example from Couple’s Report

Couple and Family Map

Couple Closeness is defined as the emotional closeness one feels toward their partner. On this dimension, relationships can range from *disconnected* to *overly connected*.

- **Daniel** describes this relationship as **Connected**. These individuals experience a healthy balance of "We" and "I", or closeness and separateness, which reflects an interdependent relationship. Most healthy marriages not only foster connection, but also leave room for each partner to continue to grow and develop as individuals.
- **Maria** describes this relationship as **Very Connected**. Very connected couples often have a good balance of closeness and separateness, which reflects an interdependent relationship. Healthy marriages foster connection, but also leave room for each partner to pursue individual interests and activities.

Couple Flexibility is defined as the ability to adjust to changes in roles and leadership in response to life's demands. On this dimension, relationships can range from *inflexible* to *overly flexible*.

- **Daniel** feels the relationship is **Somewhat Flexible**, with more stability and less openness to change. They may sometimes resist changes in leadership or roles and may need to remember that healthy relationships often require the ability to be flexible while meeting the demands of busy lives.
- **Maria** feels the relationship is **Very Flexible**, with a good balance between stability and change. They may often share decision making and are able to adjust to ongoing issues. Most couples function well with this level of flexibility.

Family Closeness is defined as the emotional closeness one felt growing up in their family of origin. On this dimension, family relationships can range from *disconnected* to *overly connected*.

- **Daniel** grew up in a family that was **Somewhat Connected**. These individuals experienced some family closeness, with plenty of freedom to be an individual and pursue outside relationships.
- **Maria** grew up in an **Overly Connected** family. These individuals often describe feeling a high level of closeness in their family of origin, with closeness and loyalty being the priorities. At times they may have experienced too much connection and wished for more freedom from their family.

Family Flexibility is defined as a family's ability to adjust to changes in roles, leadership and discipline. On this dimension, family relationships can range from *inflexible* to *overly flexible*.

- **Daniel** experienced a family of origin that felt **Inflexible**. These families are not very open to change. Family members are often too rigid and resist changes in leadership, roles, and routines. These families also have trouble adjusting to stress and finding new ways to deal with issues.
- **Maria** experienced a family of origin that felt **Somewhat Flexible**. These families maintain a high level of structure and organization. Leadership, decision-making, and roles are clearly defined with little flexibility. They can have some difficulty adjusting to stress and finding new ways to deal with challenges.

Exercise Six: SCOPE out your Personality

This exercise helps the couple understand the question “Do opposites attract?” Using their SCOPE personality profiles, the couple will discuss how their similarities and differences can be a strength or cause problems. They will also discuss if they believe that the roles they fulfill in the relationship match their personality strengths (e.g. Does the person who scored high on organization manage the checkbook?).

Eighteen Additional Exercises

There are 18 other exercises included in the workbook that have not been marked as “core exercises”. This does not mean these exercises are less valuable for couples. In some cases, you may want to replace a core exercise with one of the other exercises because it is more relevant to the couple’s relationships.

As time permits, consider adding 2-3 more exercises to the 6 core exercises as you provide feedback to couples. You can also select certain exercises they complete as homework between feedback sessions. The remaining exercises and the related assessment categories are listed below:

<i>Eighteen Additional Couple Exercises</i>	<i>Relevant Category</i>
Daily Dialogue and Daily Compliments	Communication
Balancing your Priorities	Personal Stress Profile
Wedding Stress	Personal Stress Profile
How to Take a Time-Out	Conflict Resolution
Seeking and Granting Forgiveness	Conflict Resolution/ Forgiveness
Budget Worksheet	Financial Management
The Meaning of Money	Financial Management
The Dating Exercise	Leisure Activities
The Foundation for Intimacy	Sex and Affection
Sharing Roles	Relationship Roles
Your Spiritual Journey	Spiritual Beliefs
Managing your Expectations	Marriage Expectations
Planning to Have Children	Parenting Expectations
Planning a Weekly Family Conference	Children and Parenting
Stepfamilies: Choosing Realistic Expectations	Children and Parenting
Closeness Exercise	Couple and Family Maps
Flexibility Exercise	Couple and Family Maps
Achieving your Goals Together	Overall Goal setting

SCOPE PERSONALITY PROFILE

Personality Defined

Personality can be thought of as the characteristics of a person that lead to consistent patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving (Pervin and John, 2001). This definition, while simple, generally provides a good framework from which to understand personality.

Counselors who adequately understand personality are better able to predict how certain individuals will typically respond to others, to conflict and to life in general. Different views of personality allow researchers and counselors to funnel large amounts of information about an individual into smaller, more digestible terminology that offer useful descriptions of behavior and functioning.

An important aspect of personality is that it tends to be relatively stable over time. A common misperception is you can change personality traits if you don't like them. While one might achieve slight adjustments in personality over time, personality traits are largely stable throughout life.

For couples, this means a person should not try or expect his/her partner to change their personality traits. Relationship skills can be learned and improved. An individual can learn to communicate or manage finances more effectively. But an extrovert should not be expected to somehow become an introvert. Couples who set out to change one another's personality will embark on a journey of frustration.

No matter how much a couple has in common, it is impossible two individuals would think, feel, and behave in exactly the same ways. Not only are there gender and background differences, but every personality is unique. Exploring personality similarities and differences can be a fascinating and fun process. There are no "right" or "wrong" combination of personality traits for a successful relationship, but some couples face more challenges as they have very different preferences in their approach to life.

SCOPE and the Five Factor Model

The Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH includes a personality section based on a simplified expression of the Five Factor Model of Personality, considered the most robust and commonly referenced personality assessment framework in current psychological literature (Costa & McRae, 1992; Goldberg, 1990; Widiger & Trull, 2007).

The “Big Five” refers to the five most documented aspects of personality functioning and commonly remembered using the acronym OCEAN. Unlike other personality approaches, which begin with a theoretical model of how personality is organized and then construct a matching assessment, the Big Five approach began with no theory in mind. Instead, researchers conducted statistical analysis of every adjective in the English language to see what patterns or “factors” emerged. The resulting five factors have now been replicated in many other languages and cultures.

The SCOPE acronym consists of five scales: Social, Change, Organized, Pleasing and Emotionally Steady. SCOPE is used in PREPARE/ENRICH instead of the Big Five OCEAN acronym since the names of the scales were changed to make the language more accessible and memorable. The SCOPE categories are positive and easy to remember: Non-clinical language was purposefully used in naming each category to make the scale more understandable to a general population. Clinicians and academicians can rest assured the SCOPE is based on a wealth of personality research done on the Big Five model.

One aspect of the SCOPE Personality scales that is unique is the possibility for a person to score high on all five scales or low on all five scales. This demonstrates the scales are empirically and practically independent of each other.

Advantages of the SCOPE Personality Scales

- SCOPE is built on years of empirical research
- The acronym SCOPE is easily remembered by counselors and couples alike
- The intentional usage of non-clinical language makes the subscales easily understood
- The scales are geared in a positive direction, allowing couples and facilitators to focus on strengths instead of weaknesses
- The subscales are easily explained to and understood by couples with no previous exposure to personality assessment
- The SCOPE scales correspond closely with the Big Five Model, so researchers and counselors familiar with this terminology can easily switch between models
- SCOPE allows easy comparison between various personality models

Table 9 provides a more detailed operational definition of each of the five scales in SCOPE. For each scale, there is an interpretation for a high and low score on that scale. For example, on the Social scale, a high score indicates an extrovert and a low score indicates an introvert. Some of the primary descriptors for persons scoring high on these scales are also provided.

Social	Change	Organized	Pleasing	Emotionally Steady
<i>Extraverted vs. Introverted</i>	<i>Open to Change vs. Conventional</i>	<i>Conscientiousness vs. Less Organized</i>	<i>Agreeable vs. Forceful</i>	<i>Calm vs. Reactive</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled in handling social situations • The life of the party • Comfortable around people • Makes friends easily • Often on the go • Loves large parties • Doesn't mind being center of attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers variety to routine • Like to begin new things • Enjoys visiting new places • Values flexibility • Enjoys thinking of new ways to do things • Comfortable with change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always prepared • Makes plans and sticks with them • Carries out plans • Seldom wastes time • Gets chores and tasks done right away • Likes order • Tries to follow the rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respects others • Doesn't like to be pushy • Believes in the good intentions of others • Accepts people as they are • Values cooperation over competition • Loves to help others • Has a good word for everyone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not easily bothered by things • Seldom gets mad • Rarely complains • Seldom feels blue • Comfortable in unfamiliar situations • Feels comfortable with self • Remains calm under pressure

Table 9 High Scores Interpretations of SCOPE Scales