

C U S T O M I Z E D   V E R S I O N

PREPARE  ENRICH®  
• *building strong marriages* •

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**FACILITATOR'S MANUAL**

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PREPARE  ENRICH®  
LIFE INNOVATIONS, INC.





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# *Chapter One:* **PREPARE/ENRICH: CUSTOMIZED VERSION**

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## OVERVIEW OF THE CUSTOMIZED VERSION

The Customized Version is an exciting 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 and to use this dynamic online system.

The Customized Version creates the most relevant scales for each couple. Instead of five static inventories the previous version, you now have the potential of several hundred versions of PREPARE/ENRICH. The previous inventories in 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 tailored based on background questions the couple answer about their relationship. The first main category is the stage of their relationship—dating, engaged or married. Additional questions relate to their age and whether there are children involved in the relationship.

All couples are given core relationship scales plus the Couple and Family Maps, four scales in Relationship Dynamics, five personality scales and a Personal Stress Profile. The 10 core scales are 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.

Other customized scales 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). A complete list of all the scales included in the Customized Version are in chapter 2.

## FEATURES OF THE CUSTOMIZED VERSION

One of the features of the Customized Version is specialized versions of scales can be developed. Specialized spiritual beliefs scales have been developed 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. An optional **Couple's Report** has been created which includes a summary of strength and growth areas, 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 Customized Version is available in many different languages. Each person can take the inventory in the language they prefer and 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 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 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 on a variety of topics. The wide range of exercises allow a facilitator to further personalize the feedback experience to match the needs of each couple. These couple exercises are designed to be used in feedback so that the couple can resolve current issues and learn skills to deal with future issues.

## **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 high. The rate of divorce increases with the number of previous 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](http://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).

### **GOALS OF USING PREPARE/ENRICH**

- Help the couple explore their Relationship Strength and Growth Areas.
- Prime couples for feedback on their relationship.
- Promote honest and personalized dialogue about a couple’s relationship.
- Explore their couple relationship and their families-of-origin.
- Help couples learn important skills in the areas of Communication, Conflict Resolution, Financial Management, and Stress Management.
- Provide a personality assessment and comparison of the two individuals.
- Increase insight and awareness in important areas such as Expectations, Sexuality, Spiritual Beliefs, Roles, and Personality Differences.
- Help couples develop personal, couple, and family goals.

### **SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATION OF PREPARE/ENRICH**

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.

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

### ***High Levels of Validity:***

PREPARE has high validity in that it discriminates between premarital couples who get separated/divorced from those that are happily married with about 80-85% accuracy (Fowers and Olson, 1986). This study was done by Dr. Blaine J. Fowers and replicated in a separate study by Dr. Andrea S. Larsen (Larsen and Olson, 1989).

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 of PREPARE/ENRICH core category scores is high (alpha reliability of .75-.85).

Test/Retest Reliability of inventories is high (average correlation is .80).

### ***Large National Norm Base***

- 500,000 Couples for PREPARE
- 250,000 Couples for ENRICH

### ***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.

Five married couple types were identified using ENRICH (Olson and Fowers, 1993). The five types are called Vitalized, Harmonious, Conventional, Conflicted, and Devitalized.

See the Research Section of website for more details on reliability, validity, and other scientific studies. ([www.prepare-enrich.com](http://www.prepare-enrich.com))

## 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.

## INAPPROPRIATE USES OF PREPARE/ENRICH

While there are many reasons that PREPARE/ENRICH is useful to facilitators and couples, there are also ways in which the assessment should not be used.

- The assessment is not intended to predict the ultimate marital success or happiness of a couple, even though the scales have high predictive validity.
- The assessment cannot be passed or failed, although low scores on a majority of areas may indicate the need for further counseling.
- The assessment is not intended to replace professional judgment but rather to supplement it.

- The Facilitator’s version of the Computer Report should not be given to the couple. The Customized Version does include a Couple’s Report that can be given to the couple.

## **RATIONALE FOR COUPLE PAYING FOR ASSESSMENT**

We generally suggest the cost of PREPARE/ENRICH be passed along to the couple. The primary reason for this is financial and emotional investment. When couples pay for the experience, we have found that it often assumes greater value to them.

For premarital couples, payment has the additional benefit of helping them focus directly on their relationship. Often, engagement is a period when couples are distracted by the externals related to the wedding itself and they fail to prepare adequately for a long-term marriage. A financial investment in the couple assessment underscores the value of “marriage preparation” as well as “wedding preparation.”

Taking an assessment also requires an investment of time, energy, and emotions into the relationship. Discussion of payment can provide an excellent opportunity for the facilitator and the couple to talk about the need for multiple investments in a growing relationship.

## **PROFESSIONALS WHO USE PREPARE/ENRICH**

The following is a list of professional and lay facilitators who find the PREPARE/ENRICH materials of value in their work with couples.

- **Clergy/Pastoral Counselors:** typically deliver the majority of premarital training and perform weddings.
- **Mental Health Professionals:** such as professional counselors, psychologists, social workers, and marriage and family therapists.
- **Marriage Educators:** lay people who work with couples through their church or community.
- **Relationship Coaches:** typically involves a proactive approach to relationship help with an emphasis on solving problems and learning new skills.
- **Marriage Mentors:** lay couples who work with premarital or married couples in an organized church or community setting.
- **Lay Counselors:** lay people who may have completed a lay counseling course through their church, and volunteer to counsel others under the supervision of a pastoral counselor or

counselor in their church or community.

- **Deacons/Elders:** church leaders who are often in a position to oversee a marriage ministry.
- **Adoption Workers:** often use for screening prospective adoptive parents.

## HISTORY OF PREPARE/ENRICH

### 1977—Original Version of PREPARE

#### PREPARE (PREmarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation)

PREPARE was originally developed in 1977 as a result of considerable research into relevant issues for premarital couples. The authors were David Olson, David Fournier and Joan Druckman. The first version had 11 content areas and 1 area assessing relationship idealism. The 12 original PREPARE areas are as follows:

Idealistic Distortion	Conflict Resolution	Children & Parenting
Marriage Expectations	Financial Mgmt.	Family & Friends
Personality Issues	Leisure Activities	Role Relationship
Communication	Sexual Expectations	Spiritual Beliefs

In 1978, David Fournier's dissertation was a major validation study of PREPARE based on 1,000 premarital couples and 200 clergy. (Funds for the initial development of PREPARE were provided in part by Education for Marriage, Incorporated of Grand Rapids, Minnesota, directed by Ken Rudkin.) Fournier found that the PREPARE couple inventory was scientifically valid and reliable but noted that it could be improved in some ways.

### 1980—Second Version of PREPARE

Building on Fournier's validation study, PREPARE was revised in 1980 to improve the scientific rigor and usefulness for counselors working with engaged couples. Of the original 125 items, 55 were retained, 42 were revised and 28 new items were developed in the second version.

### 1981—ENRICH (ENriching Relationship Issues, Communication & Happiness)

ENRICH was developed for married couples and was completed in 1981 by David H. Olson, David Fournier and Joan Druckman. ENRICH provides a framework for dialogue on important relationship issues for couples who are already married or in a long-term cohabitating relationship.

With ENRICH, the Realistic Expectations area was replaced by a Marital Satisfaction scale. In

addition, two new scales on Marital Adaptability (change) and Marital Cohesion (togetherness) were developed based on the Circumplex Model of Family Systems. In developing ENRICH, the 125 items in PREPARE were reviewed for relevancy to married couples. Of the original 125 PREPARE items, 15 items were revised and 17 new items were added.

### **1981—PREPARE-MC (Marriage with Children)**

PREPARE-MC was developed in 1981 to address the special concerns of couples who were planning to marry and already had children from a previous relationship. This version was based in part on the research with step couples done by Richard Schultz. Of the original 125 PREPARE items used in producing PREPARE-MC, 90 were retained, 25 were revised and 10 new ones were added.

### **1986—Third Version: PREPARE, PREPARE-MC and ENRICH**

In the third version of PREPARE, items assessing Family-of-Origin were added using brief scales from FACES which is based on the Circumplex Model of Family Systems by David Olson, Candyce Russell and Douglas Sprenkle (1989). The two scales were used to assess family closeness (cohesion) and family flexibility (adaptability).

### **1995—MATE (Mature Age Transitional Evaluation)**

MATE was designed as an inventory for couples over 50 who were planning to marry or are already married. It was developed by David Olson and Elinor Adams because of the growing number of couples over 50 who were getting married but found some PREPARE items were irrelevant to them. MATE contained three new areas that directly addressed the concerns of older couples. They were: Life Transitions, Intergenerational Issues and Health Issues.

### **1996 Fourth Version: PREPARE/ENRICH—Version 2000**

In 1996, the fourth version of PREPARE/ENRICH was developed by David Olson and David Fournier and it contained the following improvements.

- The Couple Typology was added—4 premarital types & 5 marital types
- Four Interpersonal Scales added: assertiveness, self confidence, avoidance & partner dominance
- Abuse questions added
- Six Couple Exercises expanded
- Couple Workbook expanded into the Building A Strong Marriage workbook

### **2001—PREPARE-CC (Cohabiting Couples)**

PREPARE-CC was developed to address the need for assessing the relationship of cohabiting couples. PREPARE-CC was based on the PREPARE and PREPARE-MC inventories, but includes 54 new or revised items and a new category entitled, “Cohabitation Issues”. PREPARE-CC was developed in response to user requests for an assessment specifically designed to explore the unique aspects of long term premarital relationships in which partners have already been living together.

## **2008—Fifth Version: PREPARE/ENRICH—Customized Version**

In 2008, the Customized version was designed by David Olson & Peter Larson. It can dynamically create a tailor made set of scales for a couple based on how they respond to background questions regarding their relationship.

- This online system creates a customized version by using a set of core scales which is supplemented by several optional scales based on a couple's stage and family structure.
- Features include the SCOPE personality scales (based on the 5 Factor Model from psychology) a Personal Stress Scale, a commitment section; and faith-based scales.
- The Facilitator's Report is easier to read and interpret and the couple can receive a brief Couple's Report.
- Expanded couple exercises. In addition to the core couple exercises, there are more couple exercises from 14 categories. This allows counselors to adapt the feedback process depending on the unique needs of the couple.

### **CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPING THE CUSTOMIZED VERSION**

The following criteria were used in developing the Customized Version.

- Dynamic and Customized to Couple
- Online System
- Multiple Language compatibility
- Comprehensive
- Expanded content areas including Personality and Stress
- Focused on issues relevant to couples
- Sound scientific basis
  - High reliability and validity
  - Able to discriminate between happy and unhappy couples
  - National norms
- Designed for Couples at different stages
  - Dating
  - Engaged
  - Married
  - Couples over the age of 55
  - Unmarried Cohabiting Couples
- Practical and useful to couples
- Improved Facilitator's Report & Couple's Report
- Expanded Couple Exercises

The goal has been to make PREPARE/ENRICH the most relevant and valuable tool available for working with couples across the life cycle.

## DESIGN OF THE CUSTOMIZED VERSION

The PREPARE/ENRICH Customized Version integrates the multiple versions of the previous inventories into one dynamic system automatically tailored to assess the relevant stage and structure of a couple's relationship. Unlike previous assessment tools that assess overall couple functioning across a predefined inventory or set of scales, the Customized Version is dynamically generated based on the individual characteristics of each couple.

Couple relationships are quite complex and take on many variations such as dating, engaged, cohabiting, married, stepfamilies, and older couples. Instead of using a static assessment tool, there are many scale variations in the PREPARE/ENRICH customized version couples may need based on their stage and family structure. This ensures maximum relevance for each couple's relationship needs.

### *Relationship Stage*

Relationship Stage is assessed by asking couples to identify if they are dating, engaged, or married. Each of these relationship stages presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for couples.

- **Dating Couples** must evaluate the quality of their relationship as they attempt to determine their level of commitment to a future together. The Customized Version does not assume a dating couple will be getting married. Instead, it is designed to help them assess the health of their current dating relationship and consider their future together.

Beyond the normal core scales, dating couples also get a Character Traits scale, Finances, Relationship Expectations, and Stress scales revised for dating couples, and the SCOPE Personality section. Children & Parenting, and Relationship Roles, are dropped, while Cohabitation Issues, Interfaith/Interchurch, and Cultural/Ethnic Issues, are utilized when relevant for the couple. Spiritual Beliefs can also be customized by the facilitator.

- **Engaged Couples** have said "yes" to marriage and a higher level of commitment, but most engaged couples spend too much time planning their wedding and too little time preparing for their marriage. The relationship stage prior to marriage tends to be an exciting and busy one. Unfortunately, while many of those couples may be well prepared for the wedding, they are largely unprepared for the eventualities of marriage. Unrealistic expectations and reservations about exploring potential problems often contribute to difficulties in the early years of marriage. Marriage expectations are often unrealistically high. These couples must acquire the knowledge and skills to be ready for a successful marriage. They often have very limited insight into their own strength and growth areas.

The Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH presents engaged couples with all of the core scales plus a Premarital Stress scale and the SCOPE Personality section. Cohabitation Issues,

Step Parenting, Previous Marriage, Health Issues, Intergenerational Issues, Role Transitions, Interfaith/Interchurch, and Cultural/Ethnic Issues are used when relevant for the couple. The Spiritual Beliefs scale is customized by the facilitator.

- **Married Couples** enjoy the many benefits of married life together, but they also face the daily challenges of communicating effectively and resolving the issues involved with running a household, parenting children, and managing finances.

Along with the core scales, the Customized Version includes scales on Forgiveness, Personal Stress, and Personality for married couples. The standard Children and Parenting scale is interchanged with scales for Parenting Expectations, Becoming Parents, Intergenerational Issues, or Step Parenting when relevant. Health Issues, Role Transitions, Interfaith/Interchurch, and Cultural/Ethnic Issues are brought in when relevant for the couple. The Spiritual Beliefs scale is customized by the facilitator.

Whereas the focus of assessment with premarital couples tends to be preventive and educational in nature, evaluation with married couples is more varied. Some couples interested in enriching their relationships wish to use assessment tools as a means of learning more about their marriage. More often, evaluative instruments are used by counselors as a vital aid in marital therapy.



## *Chapter Two:*

# **DESCRIPTION OF PREPARE/ENRICH CONTENT AREAS**

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**Brief Description of Content Areas**

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**Core Scales**

**Relationship Dynamics**

**Personal Stress Profile**

**Couple & Family Scales**

**SCOPE Personality Scales**

**Customized Scales**

## **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 chapter briefly summarizes each of the areas in the PREPARE/ENRICH Customized Version, and provides some sample items from each scale. The following table provides a breakdown of the PREPARE/ENRICH Scales.

	<b>DATING</b>	<b>ENGAGED</b>	<b>MARRIED</b>
<b>Correction Scale</b>	Idealistic Distortion	Idealistic Distortion	Idealistic Distortion
<b>Core Scales</b>	Communication Conflict Resolution Partner Style & Habits Family & Friends Financial Management Leisure Activities Sexual Expectations Spiritual Beliefs Relationship Expectations Character Traits	Communication Conflict Resolution Partner Style & Habits Family & Friends Financial Management Leisure Activities Sexual Expectations Spiritual Beliefs Marriage Expectations Relationship Roles	Communication Conflict Resolution Partner Style & Habits Family & Friends Financial Management Leisure Activities Sexual Relationship Spiritual Beliefs Forgiveness Roles & Responsibilities
<b>Relationship Dynamics</b>	Assertiveness Self Confidence Avoidance Partner Dominance	Assertiveness Self Confidence Avoidance Partner Dominance	Assertiveness Self Confidence Avoidance Partner Dominance
<b>Stress Scales</b>	Personal Stress	Premarital Stress	Personal Stress
<b>Couple &amp; Family Map</b>	Couple Flexibility Couple Closeness Family Closeness Family Flexibility	Couple Flexibility Couple Closeness Family Closeness Family Flexibility	Couple Flexibility Couple Closeness Family Closeness Family Flexibility
<b>SCOPE Personality Scales</b>	Social Change Organized Pleasing Emotionally Steady	Social Change Organized Pleasing Emotionally Steady	Social Change Organized Pleasing Emotionally Steady
<b>Customized Spiritual Beliefs Scales</b>	Interfaith/Interchurch Catholic Spiritual Beliefs Protestant Spiritual Beliefs Orthodox Christian Beliefs Jewish Spiritual Beliefs	Interfaith/Interchurch Catholic Spiritual Beliefs Protestant Spiritual Beliefs Orthodox Christian Beliefs Jewish Spiritual Beliefs	Interfaith/Interchurch Catholic Spiritual Beliefs Protestant Spiritual Beliefs Orthodox Christian Beliefs Jewish Spiritual Beliefs
<b>Customized Parenting Scales</b>	Parenting Expectations Becoming Parents Children & Parenting Intergenerational Issues Step Parenting Expectations	Parenting Expectations Becoming Parents Children & Parenting Intergenerational Issues Step Parenting Expectations	Parenting Expectations Becoming Parents Children & Parenting Intergenerational Issues Step Parenting Expectations
<b>Over 55 Customized Scales</b>		Health Issues Role Transitions	Health Issues Role Transitions
<b>Other Customized Scales</b>	Cultural/Ethnic Issues Cohabitation Issues Commitment Previous Marriage	Cultural/Ethnic Issues Cohabitation Issues Commitment Previous Marriage	Cultural/Ethnic Issues Commitment

## CORRECTION SCALE

■ **Idealistic Distortion** *assesses the tendency of individuals to answer personal questions in a socially desirable manner.* It is based on the Edmonds Marital Conventionalization Scale. Originally there were 15 items in the initial version of PREPARE. This scale was reduced to seven items after reliabilities for the two versions were found to be virtually equivalent.

Higher scores (70 and above) indicate individuals are presenting their relationship in a highly favorable manner (e.g., seeing through “rose-colored” glasses). This may suggest an unwillingness to acknowledge problematic areas in the relationship and/or a defensive attitude in completing the Inventory. Low scores (30 and below) indicate a more realistic disclosure concerning relationship issues.

It is not uncommon for premarital couples to be somewhat idealistic and score lower on the Marriage Expectations scale. Higher scores in Idealistic Distortion for married couples can also indicate feelings of optimism and a positive attitude about the relationship.

### *Sample Idealistic Distortion Items:*

- *My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.*
- *My partner and I understand each other completely.*

### *Correction for Idealism on Core Scales*

A potential problem with self-report instruments similar to the PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories is the tendency for some individuals to respond in a manner which is socially acceptable. In order to adjust for this bias, each person’s individual score may be corrected downward on a core scale. One advantage of PREPARE/ENRICH is that it is the only couple inventory to systematically control for idealism. As a result the individual scores on each category are more valid.

## 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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect awareness and satisfaction with the level and type of communication existing in the relationship.

Individuals with high scores tend to feel understood by their partner and see themselves as being able to adequately express their feelings and opinions. Low scores (30 and below) reflect a deficiency in the level of communication essential to satisfactorily maintain a relationship and highlight the need to improve communication skills.

***Sample Communication Items:***

- *I am very satisfied with how my partner and I talk with each other.*
- *My partner is a very good listener.*

- **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect positive feelings about how well conflict is handled in the relationship. Low scores (30 and below) indicate concern about the number of conflicts and how disagreements are handled. Partners may feel their issues are difficult to resolve and/or may have a tendency to avoid disagreements.

***Sample Conflict Resolution Items:***

- *Even during disagreements, I can share my feelings and ideas with my partner.*
- *At times I feel some of our differences never get 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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect approval of the characteristics of the partner and general satisfaction with their personal behavior. Low scores (30 and below) indicate a low level of acceptance and/or lack of comfort with their partner's behavior.

***Sample Partner Style Items:***

- *My partner has some personal habits that bother me.*
- *I am sometimes concerned that my partner appears to be unhappy and withdrawn.*

- **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

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect comfortable relationships with family and friends. Low scores (30 and below) suggest discomfort with family and friends and may imply this area is problematic for them.

***Sample Family and Friends Items:***

- *My partner gets along well with most of my friends.*
- *My partner is too involved with or influenced by his/her family.*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect satisfaction with financial management and realistic attitudes toward financial matters. Low scores (30 and below) indicate a concern over the way finances are handled in the relationship.

***Sample Financial Management Items:***

- *I am satisfied with our decisions about how much money we should save.*
- *We usually agree on how to spend our money.*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect compatibility, flexibility, and/or consensus about the use of leisure time activities. Partners have similar interests and are balanced in the use of their time between shared and separate activities. Low scores (30 and below) indicate dissatisfaction with the use of leisure time. Partners may have different interests and are concerned with the amount of time they spend together.

***Sample Leisure Activities Items:***

- *My partner and I enjoy the same interests and recreational activities.*
- *My partner's activities (television, computer, sports, etc.) interfere with our time together.*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate satisfaction with affection and a positive attitude about the role of sexuality in the relationship. Low scores (30 and below) indicate dissatisfaction with expression of affection and concern over the role of sexuality in the relationship. They may also reflect concerns over sexual fidelity, pornography, or previous sexual experiences.

***Sample Sexual Items:***

- *I am completely satisfied with the amount of affection my partner gives me.*
- *I am concerned that my partner's interest in sex might be different from mine.*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) are indicative of high levels of spiritual compatibility and reflect the view that religion is a more important component of the relationship. Low scores (30 and below) reflect a more individualistic and less traditional interpretation of the role of religion.

A couple's satisfaction with their spiritual beliefs is not necessarily indicated by either a high or a low score but by the amount of agreement partners report. If both male and female scores are either high or low, they will tend to be satisfied with the role of religion in their relationship. If one partner is high and the other is low, a low degree of harmony is suggested, indicating this area is potentially problematic.

***Sample Spiritual Beliefs Items:***

- *We share very similar spiritual beliefs. (Standard version item)*
- *We rely on our spiritual beliefs during difficult times. (Standard version item)*
- *My partner and I feel closer because of our Christian faith. (Protestant version item)*
- *I understand what the Church teaches about marriage as a sacrament. (Catholic Version item)*
- *It is important to me to participate in a synagogue with my partner. (Jewish version item)*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) in this area reflect realistic expectations about relationship issues. Low scores (30 and below) suggest individuals are too romantic in their perception of marriage and their relationship.

***Sample Marriage Expectations Items:***

- *I believe I've already learned everything there is to know about my partner.*
- *I believe that most of the difficulties we've experienced before marriage will fade after we're married.*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) suggest the individual's values tend to be equalitarian in nature. Partners with high scores typically desire a shared approach to traditionally male/female roles. Low scores (30 and below) indicate the individual tends to value more traditional

male/female role behaviors and responsibilities.

Satisfaction with role relationships is suggested by the degree of agreement between partners. If both partners are either high or low on this area, they will tend to have a high degree of satisfaction with their roles. Conversely, one partner's scoring high and the other low indicates disharmony, suggesting this area is potentially problematic. For this reason, there are no Special Focus Items in this category.

***Sample Relationship Roles Items:***

- *In our marriage, I expect my partner to consult me when making important decisions.*
- *I am concerned about doing more than my share of the household tasks.*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) suggest the individuals are satisfied with how roles and responsibilities are being handled. Low scores (30 and below) indicate less satisfaction with roles and responsibilities and may be concerned about how they share leadership and decision-making.

*Sample Roles & Responsibilities Items:*

- *I feel good about how we have divided household chores.*
- *I am happy with how we share leadership in our relationship.*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect approval of the values, character and behavior of one's partner. Low scores (30 and below) indicate a low level of acceptance and/or lack of comfort with the values, character and behavior of one's partner.

***Sample Dating Issues Items:***

- *We have similar values and priorities in our approach to life.*
- *I often have to justify or make excuses for my partner's behavior.*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate a positive ability to request and grant forgiveness in the marriage. Low scores (30 and below) indicate dissatisfaction with the ability to request and/or grant forgiveness in the marriage. These partners tend to hold grudges, experience ongoing tension, and are more prone to bringing up old issues.

**Sample Forgiveness Items:**

- *I feel closer to my partner after we work through a disappointment.*
- *My partner does a good job of apologizing and asking for forgiveness.*

## 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.

**Sample Assertiveness Items:**

- *To avoid hurting my partner’s feelings during an argument, I tend to say nothing.*
- *I can express my true feeling to my partner.*

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

**Sample Self Confidence Items:**

- *I have a positive attitude about myself.*
- *I have little control over the things that happen to me.*

- **Avoidance** — a person’s tendency to minimize issues and reluctance to deal with issues directly.

**Sample Avoidance Items:**

- *To end an argument, I tend to give in too quickly.*
- *I go out of my way to avoid conflict with my partner.*

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

**Sample Partner Dominance Items:**

- *Sometimes my partner seems to be too controlling.*
- *Sometimes I am concerned about my partner’s temper.*

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.

*One goal in working with a couple is to try to help both partners become more assertive with each other.* Increased assertiveness will positively affect the other three personal and interpersonal characteristics assessed in the Inventories. If each partner becomes more assertive, this will reduce partner dominance and the tendency to use avoidance and increase individual self confidence.

## PERSONAL STRESS PROFILE

In our fast paced society, it is impossible to avoid stress in our lives. Stressors are external events that cause an emotional or physical reaction. The impact of the event depends on whether one views the event as positive or negative. When stress levels are high or chronic, it is common for physical symptoms (headaches, backaches) or psychological symptoms (anxiety, anger) to emerge.

There are 2 basic ways to cope with stress:

- **Eliminate the stressor:** Some stressors represent things that are controllable (working too many hours). In some cases, it is possible to make choices that actually eliminate the stressor (change jobs).
- **Change one's reaction to stress.** When a stressor cannot be eliminated, it is important to look at how one reacts in response to the stressor. Learning and using healthy coping mechanisms can help individuals respond to stress in healthier ways.

Olson & Stewart (1995) developed the Coping & Stress Profile for assessment, counseling and research. The Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH incorporates 25 checklist items from the Coping and Stress Profile to produce a Personal Stress Profile for each partner. There are both married and premarital versions of the Stress Profile in the inventories. There is also a premarital version designed for engaged couples which includes 10 items targeting stressors associated with wedding planning.

While taking the inventory, individuals are directed to read through the checklist and indicate how often each item has caused them stress over the past year. The five point response scale ranges from "Never" to "Very Often."

### *Sample Checklist Items:*

- *Your current housing arrangement*
- *Your Job*
- *Lack of sleep*

### *Sample Wedding Issues Items:*

- *Cost of the wedding*
- *Dealing with your parents*
- *Feeling disorganized*

## COUPLE & FAMILY SCALES

- **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 Closeness* assesses a couple's current relationship. *Family Closeness* measures closeness in the families-of-origin.

Very high scores reflect excessive closeness and overdependence on each other, which can be detrimental to healthy functioning. Moderate scores indicate a balance between togetherness and independence, a characteristic often found in well-functioning couples. Very Low scores suggest a lack of emotional closeness between people, which may also be problematic. If scores are either too low or too high (unbalanced), it indicates a couple are unable to balance their separateness and togetherness.

### ***Sample Family Closeness Items:***

- *Family members felt very close to one another. (balanced closeness item)*
- *Getting together as a family was a low priority for us. (disconnected item)*
- *Family members felt pressured to spend more time with one another. (overly connected item)*

### ***Sample Couple Closeness Items:***

- *Our togetherness is a top priority for us. (balanced closeness item)*
- *We seldom do things together. (disconnected item)*
- *I feel guilty when I spend time away from my partner. (overly connected item)*

- **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 Flexibility* evaluates a couple's current relationship. *Family Flexibility* assesses patterns of change in families-of-origin.

Very High scores reflect a tendency toward constant change, resulting in a lack of stability. Moderate scores reflect a balance between stability and change, a characteristic usually found in more functional relationships. Very Low scores suggest an inability to make changes when needed. If scores are either too high or too low (unbalanced), it indicates a couple lacks the capacity to make changes in a functional manner.

### ***Sample Family Flexibility Items:***

- *Family members compromised when problems arose. (balanced flexibility item)*
- *It felt like our family had a rule for every situation. (inflexible item)*
- *There was a lack of leadership in our family. (overly flexible item)*

**Sample Couple Flexibility Items:**

- *We are creative in how we handle our differences. (balanced flexibility item)*
- *One or both of us becomes frustrated when there is a change in our plans. (inflexible item)*
- *We seldom seem to get organized. (overly flexible item)*

## 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 7 Items in each scale, all with alpha reliability in the statistically acceptable range. These dimensions are described in more detail in the SCOPE Personality chapter.

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

*High Score:* Individual is an extrovert, and enjoys people, activities, and groups.

*Average Score:* Individual may find social settings enjoyable, but also values privacy.

*Low Score:* Individual is reserved or introverted, and less interested in social activities.

**Sample Social Items:**

- *I make friends easily*
- *I am the life of the party*

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

*High Score:* Individual is very flexible, unconventional, and open to new experiences.

*Average Score:* Individual balances new and creative ideas with more traditional approaches to life.

*Low Score:* Individual is more down to earth, practical, and less interested in new ideas or change.

**Sample Change Items:**

- *I like to solve new problems*
- *I am comfortable with change*

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

*High Score:* Individual is methodical, well organized, goal oriented and very reliable.

*Average Score:* Individual may be generally organized, but can also be flexible about their agenda.

*Low Score:* Individual is more spontaneous, less organized, and prefers not to make rigid plans.

*Sample Organized Items:*

- *I am always prepared*
- *I make plans and stick to them*

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

*High Score:* Individual is very friendly, cooperative, and values getting along with others.

*Average Score:* Individual can be warm and cooperative, but occasionally is more competitive, stubborn, or assertive.

*Low Score:* Individual tends to be more assertive, less cooperative and more competitive.

*Sample Pleasing Items:*

- *I accept people as they are*
- *I value cooperation over competition*

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

*High Score:* Individual tends to be more relaxed, calm, and less prone to distress.

*Average Score:* Individual will generally be calm and able to cope with stress, but may sometimes experience feelings of anxiety, anger, or depression.

*Low Score:* Individual is more emotionally reactive, moody, and may be prone to feelings of anxiety, depression, or anger in times of stress.

*Sample Emotionally Steady Items:*

- *I rarely complain*
- *I often feel blue*

## 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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect a consensus on childrearing values, satisfaction with the enactment of parental roles and responsibilities and a realistic evaluation of the impact of children on the relationship. Low scores (30 and below) indicate disagreement over values related to raising children, discomfort with perceptions of parental roles and responsibilities, and concerns over the impact of children on the relationship.

***Sample Children & Parenting Items:***

- *We agree on the number of children we would like to have. (Engaged item)*
- *We give more time and energy to our children than to our marriage. (Married item)*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect a consensus on childrearing values, satisfaction with the enactment of parental roles and responsibilities and a realistic evaluation of the impact of children on the relationship. Low scores (30 and below) indicate disagreement over values related to raising children, discomfort with perceptions of parental roles and responsibilities and concerns over the complexity of raising children in a step family.

***Sample Step Parenting Items:***

- *The child(ren) have a positive attitude toward our marriage. (Engaged item)*
- *Child custody and visitation arrangements have caused problems for us. (Married item)*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate how satisfied they are with the level of support they provide their children and their parents. Low scores (30 and below) indicate dissatisfaction or frustration with the level of support provided to their children and parents and the relationship with them.

***Sample Intergenerational Issues Items:***

- *It has been challenging to help our adult children achieve their own independence (financial, housing, etc.).*
- *Our children and/or parents expect too much assistance from us.*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate partners feel ready and prepared for the transition into parenthood. Low scores (30 and below) indicate partners are concerned about becoming parents, and may not have the personal, social or financial resources they feel they will need to be effective parents.

***Sample Becoming Parents items:***

- *We have a plan for how to manage the fatigue and stress associated with caring for a new baby.*
- *We have discussed and agreed on our childcare options (stay-at-home parent, daycare, etc.)*

- **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate partners feel good about how they will manage and accept their differences in faith expression and practice. These individuals tend to focus on what they have in common, as opposed to highlighting differences. Low scores (30 and below) indicate partners are concerned about their religious differences, which are likely a source of tension in the relationship.

***Sample Interfaith/Interchurch Items:***

- *We have discussed the challenges associated with raising children in an interfaith family.*
- *Despite our religious differences, we have found (or plan to find) a place of worship we can attend together.*

- **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate partners feel good about how they will manage and embrace their cultural/ethnic differences. These individuals respectfully view differences as adding richness and diversity to their lives. Low scores (30 and below) indicate individuals or their families are concerned about their differences, which are likely a source of tension in the relationship.

***Sample Cultural/Ethnic Issues Items:***

- *My partner is very sensitive and respectful toward my cultural background.*
- *Differences in our ethnic/cultural background can sometimes strain our relationship.*

- **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate partners feel good about how they are currently handling health issues and are optimistic about how aging will affect them. Low scores (30 and below) indicate partners are concerned about current and future health issues and are pessimistic about the impact of aging on themselves and their partners.

***Sample Health Issues Items:***

- *We both feel it is important to have an active and healthy lifestyle.*
- *My partner has some unhealthy habits that concern me.*

■ **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. Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) suggest the individuals are satisfied with how responsibilities are being handled and feel good about upcoming role transitions. Low scores (30 and below) indicate less satisfaction with roles and responsibilities and may reflect concern about how leadership and decision-making will be shared.

***Sample Role Transitions Items:***

- *As our lifestyle changes, I worry that power struggles may arise.*
- *We participate equally in setting new goals.*

■ **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.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) suggest the individuals are confident they are ready to move forward and have a successful relationship. Low scores (30 and below) indicate less confidence in the relationship, and perhaps some fear that a previous partner could interfere with their marriage.

***Sample Previous Marriage Items:***

- *We have both had sufficient time to work out the issues and hurts from our past relationships.*
- *Sometimes a former partner interferes with our 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.

Research suggests cohabitation is not a good way to prepare for marriage (Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006). For this reason, even high PCA scores are not referred to as “strengths” for the couple. Instead, the term “less disruptive” is used when couples score higher in positive couple agreement.

***Sample Cohabitation Issues Items:***

- *Living together has created some new issues for us.*
- *Living together has been more challenging than I had anticipated.*



## *Chapter Three:* **ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES**

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## ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES

The PREPARE/ENRICH Customized Version leverages computer technology to maximize accuracy, relevancy, and ease of use for facilitators. The online system makes it easy to set up a couple, efficient for each person to complete online and helpful as it notifies you once they have both completed the assessment. The system allows the assessment to be scored quickly, making the results available as soon as a couple's answers have been submitted.

An online administration and scoring FAQ is available at [www.prepare-enrich.com](http://www.prepare-enrich.com)

### INTRODUCE PREPARE/ENRICH TO COUPLE

Couples are sometimes anxious before completing an assessment instrument. To reduce their concerns, it may be helpful to spend a few moments introducing them to the assessment process. There are several items to which you may wish to call their attention:

- **PREPARE/ENRICH should not be viewed as a test.** Some couples perceive an assessment device as a test of whether their relationship is succeeding or failing. PREPARE/ENRICH is designed to evaluate their relationship in terms of strengths and areas of potential growth.
- **The identity of the couple will be protected.** No last names or physical addresses are entered as the facilitator registers a couple for the assessment. Only the facilitator can login to the secure website and access their results. The reports do not contain their last names, addresses, or email addresses; and it is only the facilitator who knows which report is theirs.
- **PREPARE/ENRICH is interesting and fun to take.** PREPARE/ENRICH has been used with millions of couples, and its effectiveness has been well attested by research.

The manner in which the inventory is introduced to a couple has a direct bearing on whether the couple perceives the experience as being worthwhile. In your introduction, be sure to emphasize PREPARE/ENRICH:

- Was designed to help you learn more about yourself, your partner and your relationship.
- Can identify some of the strength and growth areas in your relationship for you to discuss.
- Is not intended to predict your chances for marital success. Success is up to you.
- Is not a test. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. The usefulness of the PREPARE/ENRICH results to you and your partner depends on your willingness to respond fully and honestly and to answer all items according to your point of view.

## ADMINISTRATION & SCORING OPTIONS

The PREPARE/ENRICH Customized Version can be accessed by going to [www.prepare-enrich.com](http://www.prepare-enrich.com).

1) Login to the PREPARE/ENRICH website and access the Customized Version.

2) To add a new couple, click the “Add a Couple” button

- Enter First Names, Email Addresses, and select the language for your couple.
  1. **First names** are entered so the reports can be personalized for each couple. Please do not enter last names. If you have privacy concerns, you may enter their initials, or nicknames. The only requirement is that their names are different and can be distinguished from one another by the couple when they login, and the facilitator when reviewing the report.
  2. **Email Addresses** are entered so that the system can send the website link and login code directly to the couple. Again, if you have privacy concerns, you may enter your own email address and then forward the login information to the appropriate person/couple. A single email address can be entered twice if the couple shares an account.
  3. **Language** is the language the email will be sent in to the couple.
- Select a **Payment Type** option for your couple.
  1. **Couple Pay:** facilitators can register a couple to pay when they first login to complete their inventory.
  2. **Use a Pre-Paid** scoring from facilitator’s account: facilitators can purchase pre-paid scorings to cover the online administration/scoring fee.
  3. **Use your Free Scoring:** if you have recently been certified in PREPARE/ENRICH, you may have 1 free scoring credited to your account. You should use this scoring before it expires.
  4. **Purchase a Scoring:** you can purchase a scoring at the time you set-up the couple if you do not have a pre-paid or free scoring available.

- **Customize the Assessment**

1. **Facilitator selects a Faith-based Version:** The facilitator selects between the standard non-faith-based version or a specific faith-based version.
2. **Additional customizations:** When the first person from the couple logs in to begin their assessment, they will be asked several background questions about the stage and structure of their relationship, allowing the assessment to be further customized to accurately assess their unique relationship.

- **Review the Couple Settings and Send Login information to the Couple**

1. **Review Couple Information:** The online system allows you to review the information you have entered for the couple. If the information is incorrect, you can modify or delete the administration.
2. **Send Couple Their Login:** The final registration step involves sending the couple their login information (a link to the website and their unique couple login code they will use to access the inventory). There is a single login code shared by each couple. <Click on the red button reading “Send Login Code to Couple”>

- **Printing Reports and Accessing Feedback Materials**

Feedback Materials include a **Facilitator’s Report**, **optional Couple’s Report**, and **Couple’s Workbook**.

1. **Completed Assessment:** Once both partners have completed their assessments, the facilitator will be notified by email that the couple has completed their assessment and the report is ready to print. Facilitators may also login to the Manage Couples page to check on the progress (% completed) of couples who have not yet finished their assessment.
2. **Manage Couples:** Facilitators can log back into the Manage Couples section to view or print the **Facilitator’s Report** as well as the optional **Couple’s Report** with summary information intended for the couple to keep.

3. **Viewing/Printing/Saving the Facilitator's and Couple's Reports:** From the Manage Couples, reports are generated as PDF files which can be viewed online, printed (in color or black/white), and saved to your computer.

The system will save both the Reports for **one year**. You should save a copy of the Reports on your computer.

4. **Print or Order the Couple's Workbook:** Each individual should have their own copy of the Couple's Workbook for completing the couple exercises and answering discussion questions. These workbooks are available from the website as **free PDF downloads**. **Pre-printed workbooks can also be ordered from the online bookstore.**

The PREPARE/ENRICH assessment does include questions about abuse from one's partner. Some research has shown that perpetrators of abuse can become more dangerous if they believe abuse has been reported. If you have any reason to suspect abuse, it is advisable to have the couple complete the assessment in a neutral setting.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR COUPLE OVERVIEW

The Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH can be accessed from any computer with an internet connection. Items are presented in random order for each individual taking the inventory. This is designed to help reduce the possibility of couple collaboration while completing the inventory.

Once a facilitator has registered a couple, the couple will receive an email communication with a link to the website and a **single Couple Login Code** they will share. The login steps are:

- **Step 1:** From the email, click the link to the webpage.
- **Step 2:** Enter the Login Code (included in the email).
- **Step 3:** Enter payment (If facilitator did not use a pre-paid scoring)
- **Step 4:** Review and accept the Terms and Conditions.
- **Step 5:** First person answers background questions to customize their assessment.
- **Step 6:** Click on their name.
- **Step 7:** Review the directions and complete the assessment.

Couples can save their progress and login later to finish as needed. Individuals can also change their language options by selecting an alternate language from the drop-down menu. Facilitators can print the report in any language, regardless of which language an individual used.

### *Sample Background Questions used for Customizing the Assessment:*

*Are you dating, engaged, or married?*

*Do you or your partner have children from a previous relationship?*

*Are you and your partner living together?*

*Are either of you over the age of 55?*

## Privacy Concerns

In some cases, licensed therapists and counselors have restrictions on the type of electronic information that can be sent or used when working with couple. If you have privacy concerns, the following simple steps can be taken:

- Instead of entering first names, enter a generic identifier for each partner such as “male” or “female”. Make sure to keep a record of the Login Code for each couple so you can tell which report belongs to which couple.
- Facilitators should enter their own email address for forwarding the login information. This information can then be printed and hand-delivered to the couple.
- Use a pre-paid scoring from the Facilitator’s account.

*If you have questions, Customer Service is available Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Central Time; or you may use the FAQ on our website.*

**[www.prepare-enrich.com](http://www.prepare-enrich.com)**



## *Chapter Four:* **ORGANIZING AND GIVING FEEDBACK**

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*Know your Professional Limitations*

## FEEDBACK MATERIALS

Once a couple has finished taking the PREPARE/ENRICH assessment, you will be notified via email. After logging into your account, you can access their reports and the standard feedback materials. You also have the option to generate the materials in a second language. The feedback materials consist of:

**Facilitator's Report** is for you the trained facilitator to provide feedback to the couple.

The optional **Couple's Report** may be given to the couple to use during the sessions or to keep. No scores are included, but summaries.

If you are using the Group Program, the **Couple's Report Group Edition**. You can find more information about the group program online.

The **Couple's Workbook** contains over 20 feedback exercises designed to facilitate discussions, awareness, and the teaching of important relationship skills. Ideally, **each individual** will have a copy of the Couple's Workbook to refer to during the feedback process.

Since most facilitators will only cover some of the over 20 couple exercises, the couple will be able to use the Couple Workbook later to deal with future issues. The full **Couple's Workbook** can be downloaded from the website in PDF format. You can also order printed copies from our bookstore.

**Facilitator Feedback Guide** outlines how to organize 4-8 feedback sessions for your couples.

Additional supplemental materials can be found on our website including a **Couple's Workbook with Biblical Exercises**.

## FEEDBACK CAN BE CUSTOMIZED

Like the assessment component of PREPARE/ENRICH, the feedback can also be customized. Feedback can be based on assessment results, number of anticipated feedback sessions and the facilitator's skills and preference.

PREPARE/ENRICH offers a structured approach for providing feedback that includes many of the couple exercises. Based on a facilitator's skill, time and therapy goals, the most appropriate plan and exercises for providing feedback can be used with the couple.

## GOALS OF THE FEEDBACK PROCESS

The feedback process accompanying the PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories is intended to accomplish several goals:

1. *To help couples explore their Relationship Strength and Growth Areas.* The Sharing Strength and

Growth Areas Exercise has been designed to help couples identify and discuss several important areas in a couple's relationship.

2. *To help the couples learn useful communication skills.* The specific skills emphasized in the communication exercises focus on assertiveness and active listening.
3. *To help couples resolve conflicts.* Through the use of the suggested Ten Step Procedure, couples can increase their conflict resolution skills by discussing issues identified by the Inventory.
4. *To help couples discuss their couple relationship and families-of-origin as assessed by the Couple and Family Map.* Couples are introduced to the concepts of closeness and flexibility contained in the Couple and Family Maps and are able to explore their impact on their relationship.
5. *To help couples better understand their personality similarities and differences.* The feedback process is intended to help couples understand and accept one another's personality style, maximizing their ability to work together as a team.
6. *To help couples identify and cope with major stressors in their lives.* Couples seldom take time to talk about the stress they are each feeling and strategize ways they can best manage and cope with the major stressors they are each facing.
7. *To help couples develop a financial budget and set financial goals.* Most couples agree that a budget would be useful, but few take the time to establish a workable budget that will help them reach their short and long term financial goals.
8. *To help couples develop and share their personal, couple and family goals.* Couples seldom think about or discuss their various goals. The Goals Exercise provides them the opportunity.

## REVIEWING THE FACILITATOR'S REPORT

It is important to review the facilitator's report before meeting with your couple. You should plan on an hour to review the report and organize the materials for your first session. Determine which exercises to use with your couple based on their strength and growth areas. It is recommended to include the core exercises. The feedback guide can help you decide on exercises.

### *Customizations*

Make note of the inventory customizations for your couple based on their relationship stage and background. This section is found right before the Contents.

### *Background Information*

Review Background Information for *similarities* and *differences* and take note of any potential issues.

### ***Couple Typology/Strength and Growth Areas***

Review the couple relationship type and Strength and Growth Areas. The graph represents the core scales used to determine couple type. More information can be found in this manual.

### ***Overall Satisfaction/Idealistic Distortion***

Review each person's level of overall satisfaction and Idealistic Distortion and note any differences.

### ***Relationship Dynamics***

Review Relationship Dynamics to better understand each partner's relational tendencies (e.g., self confidence and assertiveness) and interaction patterns in their couple relationship. (e.g., partner dominance and avoidance). More information can be found in this manual. The Communication exercises in the Couple's Workbook will help teach assertiveness.

### ***Commitment***

Review each partner's responses to the commitment questions regarding how they feel about their own and their partner's level of commitment. Some facilitators will invite their couple to reflect on how commitment may affect their relationship.

### ***Abuse***

Review the questions about alcohol and drug use.

*Explore past and current issues with the couple. See "Knowing Your Professional Limitations" at the end of this chapter if there are serious concerns with alcohol or drug abuse.*

Review the four questions about verbal, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. See *"Dealing with Abuse Issues"* in this chapter if abuse is indicated on the report.

### ***Personal Stress Profile***

Review each individual's level of personal stress. Help couples identify positive coping resources within their relationship (communication, problem solving, flexibility and closeness) as well as more general stress management techniques (exercise, meditation, prayer, etc.).

### ***Relationship Categories***

Review each category, noting each partner's individual score and their level of positive couple agreement. *Note: Idealistic Distortion is used to correct individual male and female scores, but it is NOT used to correct Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) scores.*

Review their responses to the items in each category and prepare to offer balanced feedback highlighting the positives and potential issues.

- For each area, select 2-3 Agreement items to share with the couple.
- Next, select 2-3 Disagreement, Indecision, or Special Focus items to share with the couple.
- Suggested exercises will be listed at the bottom of each relationship category page.

## ***Couple and Family Maps***

Review the Couple & Family Maps for descriptions of the Couple Relationship and the Families of Origin. Couple Discussion ideas and suggested exercises are provided at the bottom of each page.

## ***SCOPE Personality***

Review all five dimensions and refer to the “Couple Results” summaries. Couples can use the Personality exercise to explore similarities and differences and how it affects their relationship.

## **PROVIDING FEEDBACK TO YOUR COUPLE**

At the beginning of your first feedback session re-establish rapport with your couple and discuss their experience in completing the inventory/assessment. For example, “What did you experience in taking PREPARE/ENRICH?”, “Were there any items or topics you discussed with your partner after taking it?”

It is also important to emphasize that PREPARE/ENRICH is *not* a test to be passed or failed. It is designed to help a couple evaluate their relationship in terms of their Relationship Strength and Growth Areas, increase awareness (of self and partner), and to build skills that contribute to a healthy relationship.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN GIVING FEEDBACK**

1. Feedback sessions are designed to help the couple learn more about their relationship. They are *not* designed for the facilitator to simply show the couple their results from the Inventory.
2. Ideally, the facilitator should help couples share information and talk directly with each other.
3. The couple should experience the feedback sessions as a positive experience where they learn about their relationship, practice speaking and listening skills, and are encouraged to continue practicing these skills outside of their sessions.

## **COUPLE’S WORKBOOK**

The Couple’s Workbook contains 24 couple feedback exercises covering 12-14 relationship categories. You can choose the exercises you would like to use with each couple.

*Note: Facilitators are not expected to cover all of the exercises with each couple.*

High quality premarital and marriage enrichment programs typically spend between 6 to 12 hours providing feedback and teaching relationship skills to couples. As the facilitator, you will determine which exercises to use and how many sessions you will need to provide feedback to your couple.

Each exercise can be used as single sheet hand-outs or in conjunction with the entire workbook. Each

partner should have their own copy of the workbook, or a copy of the exercise being completed. Couple Workbooks can be downloaded in PDF format from the website and copied as needed. Select pages can be printed from the PDF as needed.

Each exercise is designed to be self-explanatory for both the facilitator and couple to use. Some of the exercises are most effective when completed with the facilitator (e.g. Sharing Strength and Growth Areas), while others can be done alone by the couple and may work well as homework (e.g. the Budget Worksheet). Feel free to be creative and supplement the exercises with your own content and teaching, especially if you have professional training on specific areas or are working in a setting that emphasizes certain faith-based teachings and doctrines.

## **CORE EXERCISES**

In the Table of Contents for the Couple’s Workbook, exercises with an asterisk next to them are the recommended core exercises. Based on past research, these exercises have been found to be highly effective and important for building knowledge and relationship skills. While you may not use all 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:

<b>Core Couple Exercises</b>	<b>Relevant Category</b>
<b>1. Sharing Strength and Growth Areas .....</b>	<b>Core Categories</b>
<b>2. Creating a Wish List.....</b>	<b>Communication</b>
<b>3. Identifying Most Critical Issues .....</b>	<b>Personal Stress Profile</b>
<b>4. Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict .....</b>	<b>Conflict Resolution</b>
<b>5. Mapping Your Relationship .....</b>	<b>Couple and Family Maps</b>
<b>6. SCOPE out your Personality .....</b>	<b>Personality</b>

## **ADDITIONAL COUPLE EXERCISES**

Additional exercises have been included to supplement the core exercises. They can be used to replace a core exercise if it is more relevant to your couple, your program, or your setting.

If time permits, consider adding 2-3 more exercises to the core exercises as you provide feedback to couples. Exercises could also be completed as homework between feedback sessions. The remaining exercises and the related assessment categories are listed on the next page.

<i>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 Expression of 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

## **DEALING WITH ABUSE ISSUES**

The PREPARE/ENRICH assessment contains several questions dealing with abuse. The first three items deal with alcohol and drug use by parents, partner and the individual. The next four questions focus on a variety of abuse (verbal, emotional, physical and sexual) between parents, by parent, by partner and by others. The last two questions ask about unhealthy sexual behavior and use of pornography.

The four abuse questions were designed to be global questions since it would be too intrusive and too lengthy to ask detailed questions about each of these issues. However, if a person does indicate a concern, it would signal that this is an important area to discuss with him/her in more detail. Because some of the issues might relate to abuse by or from the partner, this more detailed discussion should initially be done individually with each person if concerns are initially raised.

Abuse is related to the personality characteristics of the two persons in the couple relationship. The Relationship Dynamics section of the report focuses on the four dimensions: *assertiveness, self*

*confidence, avoidance and partner dominance.* People who are at the highest risk for abuse are those who rate their partner high in dominance and rate themselves high in avoidance, low in assertiveness and low in self confidence.

Follow the reporting guidelines for abuse as outlined by your state or professional license if you are mandated to report abuse.

### ***Know Your Professional Limitations***

If you are not a licensed professional therapist or counselor, you should establish a relationship with one or more licensed professionals with whom you can consult on a regular basis. This will enable you to refer couples who have more serious individual and relationship problems.

Types of problems that typically require a referral to a licensed professional include:

- Abuse
- Drug Addictions
- Alcohol Dependence
- Ongoing Infidelity
- Serious Mental Health Disorders such as:
  - Clinical Depression
  - Bi-Polar Disorder
  - Anxiety Disorders
- Danger to self or others (suicidal thoughts or intentions)

Make sure the professional therapists (psychologists, counselors, social workers) you refer to have been trained to work with couples as well as individuals. Marriage and Family Therapists (MFT) are specifically trained to work with couples. Licensed mental health professionals can be located in your area by searching online, using printed local directories, or by contacting the offices in your state which handle licensing for the various types of mental health professionals.



## *Chapter Five:* **RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS**

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**Relationship Dynamics and Couple Types**

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## RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

There are four Relationship Dynamics assessed in the PREPARE/ENRICH Customized Version and they are defined below.

***Assertiveness***—is a person’s ability to express their feelings to their partner and ability 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***—is a person’s tendency to minimize issues and reluctance to deal with issues directly.

***Partner Dominance***—focuses on how much a person feels their partner tries to control them and dominate their life.

The assessment of these dynamics is designed to increase the facilitator’s understanding of each partner and how these tendencies are related to the underlying couple dynamics. These four areas are interrelated with each other and together provide important insight into each person and how the relationship tends to function.

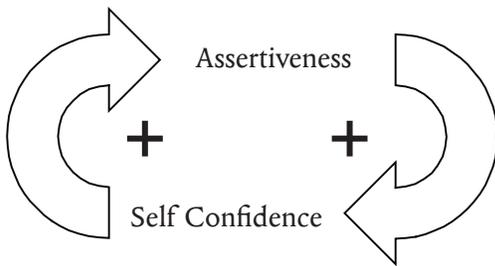
## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CYCLES

Based on the research, we have discovered there is a positive cycle linking assertiveness and self confidence and a negative cycle linking avoidance and perceived dominance.

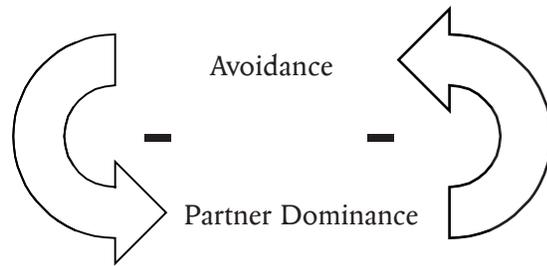
In the positive cycle, as a person uses more assertiveness, their level of self confidence tends to increase. As a person’s self confidence increases, their willingness and ability to be more assertive increases.

In the negative cycle, when one person perceives their partner as dominating, a common reaction is for that person to avoid dealing with issues. As a person uses more avoidance, they will often perceive more dominance in their partner (see illustrated cycles).

### Goal is to Strengthen the Positive Cycle



### Goal is to Reduce the Negative Cycle



## COUPLE EXERCISE FOR INCREASING ASSERTIVENESS

One of the major goals emerging from this section of the assessment is to increase the assertiveness of each partner. This is the central part of the exercise, where the goal is to help the couple improve their assertiveness and active listening skills. For more details on this exercise, refer to the Couple's Workbook.

As partners in a relationship improve their assertiveness and active listening skills, their self confidence will increase. This is the positive cycle of more assertiveness increasing self confidence. Increasing assertiveness also tends to decrease avoidance and partner dominance, which is a common negative cycle in couples.

## EXPANDED DEFINITIONS OF RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS SCALES

### *Assertiveness:*

*Assertiveness is the ability to express one's feelings to their partner and the ability to ask for what they would like.*

Assertive communication involves the honest expression of one's thoughts, feelings, and desires. Assertiveness is self focused and, therefore, is marked by use of "I" and "me" statements rather than "you" statements. Assertive people are able to ask for what they want without demanding it or infringing on the rights of others. Assertive people tend to feel better about themselves because they are able to express themselves.

One important goal in working with a couple is to try to help both people become more assertive with each other. Increasing assertiveness will positively affect the other three relationship dynamics assessed in this section of the inventory. If each person becomes more assertive, this will increase a person's self confidence, reduce the partner's dominance and reduce the tendency to use avoidance.

When both partners are assertive with each other, this tends to increase the level of intimacy because they are able to share their honest feelings and ask for what they want and, thereby, increase the probability they will connect and understand one another's needs.

### ***Avoidance:***

*Avoidance is a person's tendency to minimize issues and his/her reluctance to deal with issues directly.*

Avoidance tends to be highest in people who are passive or nonassertive. Conversely, people who are very assertive tend to be low on avoidance. There is increasing evidence that an avoidant style creates problems in close relationships.

People who score high in avoidance tend to report they feel dominated by their partner, dislike the personalities of their partner, and dislike the way they communicate and resolve conflicts with their partner.

John Gottman (1994), a prominent researcher on marriage, described three common styles of relating in couples. One of his three types of couples was the avoidant couple. Avoidant couples tend to minimize conflict and often don't resolve their differences, agreeing to disagree. Gottman has found an avoidant marriage is one style that can endure, but states, "...there is a low level of companionship and sharing in the marriage." He goes on to report, "Another hazard of this type of marriage is that it can become lonely" (Gottman, 1994, p. 46). Individuals in such marriages may often feel disconnected, misunderstood, and ill-equipped to deal with conflict should it arise.

### ***Self Confidence:***

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

Self Confidence was developed by combining aspects of "Self Esteem" and "Mastery". Self esteem is defined as how positive people feel about themselves. Mastery is the belief people have about how much control they have over what happens in their life. Self Confidence is seen as a valuable integrative concept because it is easier to change than self esteem and focuses heavily on the positive attitude of being able to control your own life.

When two people have higher levels of self confidence, the couple has a higher probability of having a successful marriage. It is, therefore, one of the goals of the program to increase self confidence. This can be achieved by helping both persons become more assertive with each other, as outlined in the exercise.

### ***Partner Dominance:***

*Partner dominance assesses how much a person feels his/her partner tries to control them and dominate his/her life.*

Partner dominance is problematic when a person does not want their partner to be in such a controlling position. A high score on Partner Dominance should trigger a discussion with the person scoring high.

There is considerable evidence in U.S. samples demonstrating couples who have an equalitarian relationship tend to have a more successful marriage (Olson and DeFrain, 1997). There are, however, exceptions. These include couples in which both partners genuinely want more traditional relationship roles, often based on their religious beliefs or their cultural heritage. The traditional relationship is one in which the male is the leader of the family.

The Partner Dominance area should be reviewed in combination with the Role Relationship area. Engaged couples who want and expect to have a more equalitarian relationship in terms of Relationship Roles will struggle if one partner is overly dominant. Married couples may also struggle with their Roles and Responsibilities when one partner is dominant and the other feels the imbalance.

### **RELIABILITY OF RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS SCALES**

Reliability (alpha) assesses the degree to which the items in each of the relationship dynamics areas are interrelated and provide a reliable assessment of that area. The reliabilities of the four scales are based on a sample of 11,996 individuals (an equal number of males and females) who took ENRICH collected between 2006-2008.

The reliability of the four relationship dynamics scales are high, ranging from .74 -.84. This is an ideal level for clinical, educational or research purposes.

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Reliability (Alpha)</b>
Assertiveness	.83
Self Confidence	.80
Avoidance	.74
Partner Dominance	.84

## RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS AND COUPLE SATISFACTION

Using a sample of 1,800 individuals (900 couples) who took the ENRICH Inventory, an analysis was done using the four relationship dynamics scales and marital satisfaction. The correlations between these five scales are summarized below.

**Table 1: Relationship Dynamics & Couple Satisfaction (2008)**

	<b>Couple Satisfaction</b>	<b>Self Confidence</b>	<b>Assertiveness</b>	<b>Avoidance</b>	<b>Partner Dominance</b>
<b>Couple Satisfaction</b>	1.0				
<b>Self Confidence</b>	.49	1.0			
<b>Assertiveness</b>	.73	.47	1.0		
<b>Avoidance</b>	-.60	-.45	-.81	1.0	
<b>Partner Dominance</b>	-.71	-.45	-.68	.71	1.0

Individuals who are high in marital satisfaction tend to be high in assertiveness and self confidence and low in avoidance and partner dominance. This is based on the high positive correlations of marital satisfaction with assertiveness ( $r = .73$ ) and self confidence ( $r = .49$ ) and negative correlations with avoidance ( $r = -.60$ ) and partner dominance ( $r = -.71$ ).

Individuals who are assertive also tend to be self confident and individuals who are avoidant tend to perceive higher partner dominance. This is based on the positive correlation between assertiveness and self confidence ( $r = .47$ ) and positive correlation between avoidance and partner dominance ( $r = .71$ ).

Individuals who are high on assertiveness and self confidence tend to be low on avoidance and partner dominance. This is reflected by the high negative correlations of assertiveness with avoidance ( $r = -.81$ ) and partner dominance ( $r = -.68$ ). There is also a high negative correlation between self confidence with avoidance ( $r = -.45$ ) and partner dominance ( $r = -.45$ ).

## RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS AND COUPLE TYPES

This study compares the five couple types from ENRICH with the four scales in the Relationship Dynamics area (Kouneski and Olson, 2004). The five couple types range from the happiest (Vitalized) to the least happiest (Devalitized).

**Table 2: Relationship Dynamics and ENRICH Couple Types (%)**

	<b>Vitalized</b>	<b>Harmonious</b>	<b>Conventional</b>	<b>Conflicted</b>	<b>Devalitized</b>
<b>Assertiveness</b>					
Both high	95%	74%	52%	14%	4%
Both low	1	1	2	15	33
<b>Self Confidence</b>					
Both high	79	58	41	23	11
Both low	1	2	5	17	30
<b>Avoidance</b>					
Both high	1	1	4	17	36
Both low	86	58	29	9	2
<b>Partner Dominance</b>					
Both high	1	3	7	35	64
Both low	77	32	13	2	1

*Note: Results indicate whether both partners had high or low individual percentile rank scores on a given scale and other combinations are omitted.*

The Vitalized couples had the highest percentage (95%) of couples where both partners were high in assertiveness, both high in self confidence (79%), both low (86%) in avoidance and both low (77%) in partner dominance.

At the opposite extreme with Devalitized couples, we see the opposite pattern related to these four variables. On assertiveness, about one-third (33%) of the Devalitized couples were both low and about 30% were both low in self confidence. Devalitized couples were both high on avoidance (36%) and almost two-thirds (64%) had both partners high in partner dominance.

In summary, the more healthy and happy the couple, the higher both partners are on assertiveness and self confidence and the lower their scores on avoidance and partner dominance.

In another study, Craddock (2006) found the women who experienced parental abuse had lower relationship satisfaction, and this effect was mediated by lower scores on the Self Confidence scale.

## RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS AND PREPARE SCALES

A correlation analysis was done based on a sample of 2,766 people who took PREPARE. Correlations were computed between the three areas of Assertiveness, Avoidance, and Partner Dominance (Self confidence was not available) and with other PREPARE areas (Personality, Communication and Conflict Resolution). The results are summarized below.

### **People high in Assertiveness tend to be:**

- Lower in Avoidance ( $r = -.72$ )
- Lower in Partner Dominance ( $r = -.50$ )
- Like the personality of their partner ( $r = .49$ )
- Feel good about communication with their partner ( $r = .77$ )
- Feel good about conflict resolution with their partner ( $r = .68$ )

There were specific relationships within three of the scales in this area. Assertiveness was found to be negatively correlated with Avoidance ( $-.72$ ) and Partner Dominance ( $-.50$ ). This means the more assertive a person is, the less they use avoidance and the less they perceive their partner as dominating them.

Assertiveness is highly correlated with other areas in PREPARE. The higher a person scores on Assertiveness, the more the person likes the personality of their partner ( $.49$ ), feels good about their communication ( $.77$ ) and feels good about their conflict resolution ( $.68$ ).

### **People high in Avoidance tend to be:**

- Lower in Assertiveness ( $r = -.72$ )
- Higher in Partner Dominance ( $r = .62$ )
- Dislike the personality of their partner ( $r = -.59$ )
- Dislike the communication with their partner ( $r = -.66$ )
- Dislike the conflict resolution with their partner ( $r = -.71$ )

As indicated previously, people high in avoidance tend to be low in assertiveness. As expected, there is a positive correlation between avoidance and partner dominance ( $.62$ ). This indicates the more a person uses avoidance, the more they perceived their partner as dominant.

In contrast to assertiveness, people with high scores on avoidance tend to perceive their relationship with their partner in more negative terms. People high in avoidance tend to dislike the personality of their partner ( $-.59$ ) and not feel good about their communication ( $-.66$ ) and conflict resolution ( $-.71$ ) with their partner.

In addition, people who view their partner as dominant (high score on Partner Dominance) tend not to like the personality of their partner ( $-.83$ ) and dislike their communication ( $-.67$ ) and conflict resolution ( $-.66$ ) with their partner.

In summary, this analysis clearly demonstrates people who are assertive tend to view their relationship as positive while people who are avoidant tend to view their relationship as more negative. Thus, an important goal of the program is to increase the level of assertiveness in each person so they can develop a better understanding of each other's feelings, needs and preferences.



## *Chapter Six:* **COUPLE AND FAMILY MAPS**

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## COUPLE AND FAMILY MAPS

### *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](http://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](http://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 different 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.

*(See Figure of Couple and Family Map)*

# COUPLE AND FAMILY MAP



## C L O S E N E S S

		DISCONNECTED	SOMEWHAT CONNECTED	CONNECTED	VERY CONNECTED	OVERLY CONNECTED		
F L E X I B I L I T Y	OVERLY FLEXIBLE						<b>FLEXIBILITY INDICATORS</b>	<b>UNBALANCED</b> OVERLY FLEXIBLE
							CHANGE	Too Much Change
							LEADERSHIP	Lack of Leadership
							ROLE SHARING	Dramatic role shifts
							DISCIPLINE	Erratic discipline
	VERY FLEXIBLE						<b>FLEXIBILITY INDICATOR</b>	<b>BALANCED</b> SOMEWHAT FLEXIBLE TO VERY FLEXIBLE
	FLEXIBLE						CHANGE	Can change when necessary
							LEADERSHIP	Shared leadership
	SOMEWHAT FLEXIBLE						ROLE SHARING	Role Sharing
							DISCIPLINE	Democratic discipline
	INFLEXIBLE						<b>FLEXIBILITY INDICATORS</b>	<b>UNBALANCED</b> INFLEXIBLE
							CHANGE	Too little Change
							LEADERSHIP	Authoritarian leadership
							ROLE SHARING	Roles seldom change
							DISCIPLINE	Strict discipline
<b>CLOSENESS INDICATORS</b>	<b>UNBALANCED</b> Disconnected	<b>BALANCED</b> Somewhat Connected to Very Connected				<b>UNBALANCED</b> Overly Connected		
"I" vs. "We"	Too Much (I) Separateness	Good I-We Balance				Too Much (We) Togetherness		
CLOSENESS	Little Closeness	Moderate to High Closeness				Too Much Closeness		
LOYALTY	Lack of Loyalty	Moderate to High Loyalty				Loyalty Demanded		
INDEPENDENCE	High Independence	Interdependent				High Dependency		

BALANCED  
 MID-RANGE  
 UNBALANCED

## *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.

*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 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 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).

### ***Dynamic Balance on the Map and Skiing: An Analogy***

An analogy can be made between *balanced* versus *unbalanced* family systems and expert versus novice skiers, a comparison first made in an article by Walsh and Olson (1989). Expert skiers function more like a balanced system, while novice skiers function more like an *unbalanced* system.

In terms of closeness, couples and families need to balance *separateness versus togetherness*. These two areas can be compared to the legs of a skier. As an analogy, expert skiers keep their legs together and smoothly shift between their legs and the edges of the skis creating a balance on separateness and togetherness. Similarly, balanced couples and families are also able to shift between being apart and being connected in a fluid manner. Conversely, novice skiers tend to keep their legs too far apart (too much separateness) or too close together (overly connected), thereby creating an unbalanced system. Unbalanced couples and families also tend to be stuck at either extreme of separateness or togetherness and are unable to find a balance.

In terms of flexibility, couples and families need to balance stability and change. These two areas can be equated to the movement of the body of a skier. In watching expert skiers come down a ski slope, you see fluidity in their movement left and right and their legs move up and down to absorb the moguls while keeping the upper part of their body upright. In other words, there is both stability in the body and the ability to change. Likewise, in balanced couples and families, there is the ability to maintain stability but also to change when necessary. Conversely, novice skiers tend to keep their body rather rigid and then when they hit a mogul, they become even more rigid (unbalanced), which often results in a chaotic fall. Unbalanced couples and families also seem to be either too focused on stability (leading to rigidity) or too open to change (leading to chaos).

In regard to communication, there is also a useful analogy between skiing and couple/family systems. In skiing, expert skiers are very much “in touch” with all aspects of the hill including the moguls, *light*, and type of snow conditions and they use this feedback to make good decisions. Likewise,

*balanced* couples and families are open to communication and feedback from other sources so they can better adjust their levels of closeness and flexibility. Conversely, novice skiers are often unaware of the conditions of the hill or how to use that information. Lacking the feedback and information they need, they fail to improve their skiing. *Unbalanced* couples and families also ignore or are unable to accept feedback from others that could help them improve their ability to change their level of cohesion and flexibility.

Stress clearly highlights the differences between expert and novice skiers and balanced versus unbalanced couples/families. Expert skiers, like *balanced* systems, are able to become more cohesive and flexible under stress. On the other hand, like *unbalanced* systems, novice skiers become stuck at the extremes of cohesion and flexibility, which only adds to their lack of success in managing the stress or crises. As with skiing, couples and families need to become more cohesive and flexible in order to cope successfully with life's ever changing terrain.

### ***Family Dynamics in Television and Movies***

Movies and television shows often do an excellent job of portraying couple and family dynamics. Because they tend to be more dramatically interesting, the unbalanced family types are depicted more often than the balanced types. Some movies also illustrate how families change in response to a stressor or over time as people age. Many classic and current movie families could serve as examples of the various family types.

### **HYPOTHESES: BALANCED RELATIONSHIPS ARE MORE HEALTHY**

Several hypotheses have been derived from the Map (Circumplex Model) and have been tested in hundreds of studies using a self report inventory called FACES. In general, there has been strong support for these hypotheses.

One of the most important hypotheses from the Couple and Family Map is between balanced and unbalanced types of couple and family relationships. Balanced relationships tend to be close and flexible. The nine types of balanced relationships are located graphically at the center of the Couple and Family Maps.

Unbalanced couples or families are inflexible or overly flexible and/or disconnected or overly connected. The four types of unbalanced relationships are, in fact, graphically represented at the four extreme corners of the Couple and Family Map.

#### ***Hypothesis 1:***

*Couples or families with balanced closeness and flexibility will generally function more adequately across the family life cycle than those at the extremes of these dimensions.*

An important issue in the Couple and Family Map relates to the concept of balance. Even though a balanced family system is located at the central levels of the Couple and Family Map, they can experience the extremes on the dimension at times. However, balanced couples/families do not typically function at these extremes for long periods of time.

Couples and families in the balanced area of the closeness dimension allow family members to experience being both independent from and connected to their family. Both extremes are tolerated and expected, but the family does not continually function at the extreme. Conversely, unbalanced family types tend to function only at one extreme and are not encouraged to change the way they function as a family. This leads to the second Hypothesis.

***Hypothesis 2:***

*Balanced couple and family types have a larger behavioral repertoire and are more able to change than unbalanced family types.*

Because balanced couple and family types have to balance separateness and togetherness (on closeness) and balance stability and change (on flexibility), they develop and use a range of behaviors. Conversely, unbalanced relationship typically have a more extreme type of behavior they typically use.

***Hypothesis 3:***

*If the normative expectations of a couple or family support behaviors extreme on one or both dimensions of the Couple and Family Maps, they will function well as long as the couple or all family members accept these expectations.*

The normative expectations in our culture provide two conflicting themes that can create problems for couples and families. One theme is family members are expected to do things together as a family. Yet, the second theme encourages individuals to “do your own thing” and “develop yourself.” The theme of independence becomes more prominent as children approach adolescence and has taken on greater importance for an increasing number of women in our culture. As a result, many American families find balancing the two themes has become a difficult issue.

Families in our culture still vary greatly in the extent to which they encourage family closeness and individual development. Although most parents would prefer their children to develop values and ideas similar to theirs, most parents also want their children to become somewhat autonomous and differentiated from the family system.

A growing number of families, however, have normative expectations that strongly emphasize high family togetherness rather than independence in family members. Their family norms emphasize emotional and physical togetherness, and they strive for high levels of consensus and loyalty.

Some ethnic groups in our country also have high expectations regarding family togetherness versus independence of family members. Many of these families could be described as extreme on the closeness dimension (e.g., overly connected) but they function well as long as the couple or all family members are willing to go along with those expectations.

***Hypothesis 4:***

*Balanced couples/families will tend to have more positive communication skills than extreme couples/families.*

Communication is a critical dimension to the Couple and Family Maps because it facilitates

movement on the two dimensions. This leads to two specific hypotheses linking communication to balanced couple/family types and to change on closeness and flexibility.

In general, positive communication skills are seen as helping marital and family systems facilitate and maintain a balance on the two dimensions of closeness and flexibility. Conversely, negative communication skills keep couple/families from moving into the two central areas and thereby increase the probability extreme systems will remain extreme.

Positive communication skills include the following:

- Assertiveness
- Active listening
- Sending clear and congruent messages
- Supportive statements
- Effective problem-solving skills

Negative communication skills include the following:

- Avoidance
- Poor listening skills
- Sending incongruent messages
- Non-supportive statements
- Poor problem-solving skills

### ***Hypothesis 5:***

*Positive communication skills will enable balanced couples/families to change their levels of closeness and flexibility more easily than unbalanced couple/families can.*

Because balanced relationships typically have better communication skills, they are more open to feedback from various family members about what they each would like and need in terms of closeness and flexibility. Conversely, unbalanced often have poor communication skills and are often not responsive to feedback from family members.

### ***Hypothesis 6:***

*To deal with situational stress and developmental changes across the family life cycle, balanced families will change their closeness and flexibility, whereas unbalanced families will resist change over time.*

The Couple and Family Maps allow integration of systems theory with family development, a proposal made more than three decades ago by Reuben Hill. Building on the family development approach, it is hypothesized families must change as they deal with normal transitions in the family. It is expected the stage of the family life cycle and composition of the family will have considerable impact on the type of family system.

The Couple and Family Maps are dynamic in that they assume change can occur in family relationships over time. Families are free to move in any direction the situation, stage of the family life cycle or socialization of family members may require.

## STUDIES VALIDATING HYPOTHESES ABOUT MAP

### *Balanced versus Unbalanced Families*

*A central hypothesis derived from the model is balanced couples and families will function more adequately than unbalanced couples and families.* More than 250 studies (Kouneski, 2001; Olson and Gorall, 2003) have supported this major hypothesis. These studies have generally compared families with a variety of emotional problems and symptoms to non-clinical families. Most of these studies have used the self report scale called **FACES (Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales)**, where higher scores on cohesion and flexibility represent balanced couples and families. This means there is a linear relationship between healthy functioning and scores on FACES (Olson, 2000). This is because the earlier versions of FACES do not tap the extremely high levels of cohesion (enmeshment) or flexibility (chaos), but FACES IV does achieve this goal (learn more about FACES IV at the website—[www.facesiv.com](http://www.facesiv.com)).

Strong support for the major hypothesis that balanced families function more adequately also comes from about 10 studies using the Clinical Rating Scale (CRS), the observational assessment designed to assess the Circumplex dimensions (Kouneski, 2001). In contrast to FACES, the CRS does tap the full continuum of the cohesion and flexibility dimensions and reveals a curvilinear relationship with family functioning (Thomas & Olson, 1993, Thomas & Ozechowski, 2000).

### *Balanced Couples/Families and Communication*

Another hypothesis is balanced couples and families will have more positive communication skills than unbalanced families. Communication can be measured at both the marital and family levels.

In a national survey of 21,501 married couples who took the ENRICH couple inventory, it was found the most happy marriages were balanced on cohesion and flexibility and had very good communication compared to those who were unbalanced (Olson and Olson, 2000). In a review of over 20 studies of families, Kouneski (2001) found most of the studies provided strong support for the hypothesis that balanced families had more positive communication than unbalanced families.

## CHANGES IN FAMILY TYPE ACROSS THE LIFE CYCLE

The Couple and Family Maps are dynamic in that they assume changes can and do occur in family types over time. Families can move in any direction the situation, stage of the family life cycle or socialization of family members may require. The model can be used to illustrate developmental change of a couple as they progress from dating to marriage, to pregnancy, childbirth and child rearing, raising and launching adolescents, and moving into life as a couple again.

The following illustrates the changes one young couple experienced in a period of only 5 years from dating to having their first child and up to when the child was 4 years old. During the dating period (1), the couple had a *very connected/very flexible* relationship. They felt close (very connected) and had

a very flexible style in terms of leadership and decision making.

During the first year of marriage (2), the newlywed couple could best be described as *overly connected /flexible*. Being in love and enjoying spending maximum time together, they are still in the “honeymoon” phase and are emotionally very connected. They were generally flexible because they were still getting more organized in terms of their roles and leadership.

By the end of their second year of marriage (3), the so-called “honeymoon” effect had worn off, and the couple became *somewhat flexible/connected*. The excitement with each other was not as great as it had been, and their togetherness has become more balanced with each of them getting more into their individual life. They also developed more routines in their roles and lifestyle and were now *somewhat flexible*.

During the third year of the marriage the couple had a baby (4). The infant dramatically changed the couple relationship as they became a *somewhat connected/very flexible* family. The baby’s presence initially increased the sense of bonding between the husband and wife who feel united in their goal of rearing their child. But the infant took a great deal of the mother’s time and energy and the couple found it difficult to spend time to stay connected as a couple. While the mother and infant were very close, the couple became *somewhat connected*. Change was high at this time, and the couple was forced to adapt to the new challenges of parenting. Their life was in relative turmoil because they were up each night to feed and attend to the baby. The infant’s unpredictable behavior often created chaos and it was very difficult for the couple to keep on a fixed routine; hence they became a *very flexible* family.

By the time the child was 4 years old, life has stabilized for this family (5) and they are now functioning as a *connected/flexible* family. Formerly a dual career couple, they have shifted toward more traditional gender roles with the mother staying at home, but she was now returning to work part-time. While he spends a little time with the child, the husband is more focused on his job and seeking a promotion. Both their closeness and flexibility have dropped one level and life is now more manageable for both of them.

In summary, this example illustrates how a couple’s relationship can change from dating and across the early stages of marriage. The changes can occur gradually over months or more rapidly after the birth of a child. These changes often occur without specific planning. However, couples can negotiate the type of relationship they want and can be more proactive in creating the type of relationship they both prefer. These changes in a couple/family system are a snapshot version of the changes that occur in couple/family levels of cohesion and flexibility over their family life cycle.

## CHANGES IN FAMILY TYPE RELATED TO STRESS

One hypothesis of the Map relates to how couple and family systems adapt to major stressors. *Balanced types of families will more effectively manage stress than unbalanced types because they are able to change their system (second order change) in order to cope with the stressor.*

The following general principles of stress-related change were developed after studying the impact

of stress on several hundred couples and families using the Couple and Family Map (Olson, 2000). *First*, under stress couples and families often become more extreme on both flexibility (a move toward a more overly flexible system) and on cohesion (a move toward a overly connected system). *Second*, communication almost always increases during a stressful event. *Third*, once the stress has abated, couples and families usually return to a similar—but rarely to the same—type of system they had in place before the stress. *Fourth*, couples and families often require a minimum of six months to a year to adjust to a major stress. *Fifth*, *balanced* couple and family systems tend to become *unbalanced* during the stress and then return to another *balanced* system type.

An important aspect of the Map is the ability to understand and graph changes in a family system before and after a major stress. Consider the following example in which the husband, John, had a major heart attack at the age of 58. He was a successful businessman and his wife, Martha, worked part-time. They had a son, Dan, in college and a daughter, Ava, who was a junior in high school. Before the heart attack, the family was *somewhat connected/flexible*, which is appropriate for their stage of the life cycle. Hours after the heart attack, the family system became *overly connected/overly flexible* because the family did not know if the father would survive. The family, along with close relatives and friends, gathered at their home and huddled together in a mutually supportive way. A very high level of closeness and bonding was created, and uncertainty regarding his survival created a great deal of chaos in their family. This is an example of how levels of cohesion or flexibility would otherwise be hypothesized to be problematic for family functioning can indeed be highly functional.

During the next few days and weeks after the heart attack, they got very organized as a group in an attempt to help out and be supportive in an ongoing manner. The family stayed together and were highly emotionally connected, but they developed a structured style of operating, creating a *overly connected/somewhat flexible* system. This added structure was an attempt to bring some order to the chaos. The family home became a gathering spot and everyone was in touch by phone.

Two months later John was home and the family then shifted again becoming a *connected/somewhat flexible* system. They were still rather organized in order to care for him and were starting to get back to their normal routines. Some of the closeness decreased from extreme levels. Yet the family was closer and more organized than before the attack, which was a useful style while the family was recovering from the stress they all experienced.

This example illustrates one family's ability to adapt to a crisis. The family changed system levels several times over the few weeks following the attack, and these changes were beneficial in helping the family to more effectively deal with this major trauma. The ability of the family to change in a fluid manner rather than stay stuck in a particular type, is very functional since it enables them to more adequately adapt to events.

In summary, it is expected family systems will change in response to a crisis. As hypothesized in the Couple and Family Maps, *balanced* families have the resources and skills to shift their system in an appropriate way to cope more effectively with a crisis. In contrast, *unbalanced* families lack the resources that are needed to change their family and, therefore, have more difficulty adapting to a crisis. *Balanced* families possess greater ability to achieve second order change because they are able to alter their family system to adapt to family crises.

## GIVING FEEDBACK USING THE COUPLE AND FAMILY MAPS

Each person described his/her Couple Relationship and his/her Family-of-Origin on closeness and flexibility and the results are summarized on the Couple and Family Maps.

- Define couple and family closeness and balancing separateness versus togetherness.
- Define couple and family flexibility and balancing stability versus change.
- Describe both balanced and unbalanced types of couple and family relationships.
- Give a brief overview of the Couple and Family Maps and your personal experience using the maps with other couples. Show the couple where they are plotted on the Couple and Family Maps.
- Consider the following examples with the couple as you discuss the closeness and flexibility in their families of origin:

*Family gatherings during a holiday*  
*Dinner time/Meal time*  
*Closeness in your parent's marriage*  
*Caring for a sick family member*

*Celebrating a birthday or anniversary*  
*Discipline and parenting responsibilities*  
*Flexibility in your parent's marriage*  
*Adjusting to a stressful change*

- 1) How similar or different were your families in terms of closeness & flexibility?
- 2) How might the similarities or differences impact your current relationship?
- 3) What from your family of origin would you like to repeat in your couple relationship?
- 4) What from your family would you not like to repeat in your couple relationship?
- 5) How satisfied are you with the current level of closeness and flexibility in your couple relationship?
- 6) Consider ways you might increase or decrease these levels.



## *Chapter Seven:* **SCOPE PERSONALITY PROFILE**

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## 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 & 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 & McCrae, 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 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 1 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.

**Table 1: High Scores Interpretations of SCOPE Scales**

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

## INTERPRETATION OF SCOPE PERSONALITY PROFILE

### *Consider all five Scales Together*

- Unlike some personality models that find one or two defining traits used to label a personality type, the SCOPE model is designed to measure and report on all five factors for each individual.
- It is possible for one person to score in the “high” range on each of the five scales. This does not necessarily indicate over-reporting or a distorted self-assessment.
- It is possible for one person to score in the “low” range on each of the five scales.
- Don't just look at one or two high scores for each individual. Consider all five factors, both high and low as you learn about their personality and compare a couple's similarities and differences.

## ***SCOPE Evaluates the Normal Range of Personality***

- The SCOPE Personality Profile is not designed to assess abnormal or pathological levels of personality functioning. It measures the normal range of each of the five traits.
- Listen for Balance: The concept of balance can be applied to personality functioning. An individual may score in the low range on the Social dimension, and while there is nothing wrong with being an introvert, losing all contact with others or slipping into an aloof or alienated existence is out of balance. There is nothing wrong with scoring in the high range on the Organized dimension, but chronically neglecting one's relationships with spouse or children so you can focus on nothing but work or school is out of balance.
- On a basic level, a personality trait is out of balance when it interferes with work, school, or relationships. As facilitators review the facilitator's report and meet with a couple, they may sometimes recognize traits that are extreme or out of balance. In these cases, a referral to a professional counselor may be advised.

## ***SCOPE is Descriptive rather than Judging***

- The SCOPE feedback is not intended to judge a "high" or "low" score on any of the five dimensions as inherently good or bad. The traits are simply descriptive and a high, low, or average score on each of the five dimensions may have pros and cons associated with them.

### **SCOPE RELIABILITY**

- An analysis of 832 couples who completed the SCOPE personality assessment showed the scales have high levels of alpha reliability (See Table 2 below).

**Table 2: SCOPE Reliability**

<b>SCOPE Scale</b>	<b>Number of Items in Scale</b>	<b>Alpha Reliability</b>
Social	7	.84
Change	7	.80
Organized	7	.83
Pleasing	7	.77
Emotionally Steady	7	.84

## HIGH AND LOW INTERPRETATIONS OF SCOPE

### **SOCIAL**

*The social trait evaluates how introverted or extroverted a person is in social situations.*

**High Social Scores:** Those who score high on this scale are more extroverted. They enjoy being with people, and are often full of energy. Such individuals tend to be enthusiastic and action-oriented. In groups, they like to talk, assert themselves, and may often be the center of attention. When out of balance, they can appear to be attention seeking or shallow. Others may even see high extroversion as an inability to take life seriously.

If both partners score high on the Social scale, they are likely a very outgoing and energetic couple, poised for lots of fun. People are likely drawn to them because of their fun-loving mindset and ability to make friends easily. Potential drawbacks include becoming overly busy and too involved in outside activities. They may neglect placing enough priority on their couple relationship due to a busy social calendar. When out of balance, this leaves less time for their couple relationship. They may benefit from scheduling time alone to reconnect with each other.

**Average Social Scores:** Those who score in the average range may find social settings enjoyable, but will value privacy as well. Their preference for being in groups or alone may change based on their mood or external circumstances. Couples who both score in this range generally enjoy having a balance between alone time and social activity.

**Low Social Scores:** Those who score low on the social scale tend to be reserved or introverted. Social introverts often lack the exuberance and activity levels of extroverts. They tend to be low-key, deliberate, and less connected socially. They often prefer to be alone or with just a few close friends. They will feel more energized after spending time alone or in small, intimate settings, as opposed to large groups or parties. When out of balance, they appear reclusive or cut off from others. Some people may even misinterpret the need for personal time as aloofness.

Couples who both score low on the Social trait will be more reserved and private, enjoying quiet and relaxing time alone. Often, they do not enjoy going to large social gatherings. These events may cause more stress than enjoyment. A potential drawback is becoming isolated and cut off from others. When out of balance, two social introverts can even feel isolated from one another. They may need to find ways of connecting with one another while still allowing each other the chance to recharge alone or apart.

**Dealing with Couple Differences:** When one partner is highly social and the other is not, the couple will need to communicate openly with one another about attending social events and getting together with others. One of them gets energy from socializing with others, while the other prefers more privacy and alone time. Unnecessary conflict can be avoided in these relationships by checking it out with the other partner before saying “yes” or “no” to participating in a social function.

## **CHANGE**

*This trait reflects an individual's openness to change, flexibility, and interest in new experiences.*

**High Change Scores:** Those who score in the high range will tend to be more flexible, unconventional, and very open to new experiences. They are open to change, and often have a broad range of interests. Such individuals thrive on coming up with new and creative solutions to problems, even when a tried and true method might work just as well. When out of balance, they may appear to be overly interested in new ideas and adventures, forgetting more practical realities.

Couples who both score high on this dimension are likely to enjoy change in their lives. They sometimes need to be careful not to create too much change leading to unnecessary stress in their lives. Remember the practical or conventional approach is sometimes valuable.

**Average Change Scores:** Those in the average range often strike a good balance between new, abstract, or creative ideas and more traditional or down to earth approaches to life. Based on the situations they encounter, they may fluctuate between being flexible or taking a business as usual approach.

**Low Change Scores:** Individuals with low change scores are more down to earth, practical in nature, and less interested in new ideas and experiences. Change may be difficult for them and increase their stress level. They prefer the familiar and approaches they already understand and are accustomed to. Attitudes are likely to be more conventional or traditional. When out of balance, these individuals can appear rigid or closed off to new experiences.

Couples who both score low in Change will present themselves as practical and more conventional in their attitudes. Neither person will rock the boat or create unnecessary stress by embracing anything new or different. These couples may need to guard against letting their lives and relationship become too routine or boring.

**Dealing with Couple Differences:** One partner scoring higher than the other in the Change trait may represent a case of being attracted to one's opposite. The more practical person is often attracted to their partner's free thinking and open attitudes. Conversely, the more open partner may recognize the value of their partner's steady approach to life. There will be times when the partner's attitudes, preferences, or behavior will be challenging and may lead to frustration. They will need to remember to work with their differences rather than attempting to change or criticize the other person. It is helpful to look for the positives, even in very diverse approaches to the same issue.

## **ORGANIZED**

*This trait reflects how organized and determined a person is in their daily life and work. It also reflects persistence in pursuing goals.*

**High Organized Scores:** Those who score high on the Organized trait are typically methodical and well-organized. They tend to be persistent and reliable, placing a great deal of emphasis on this type

of behavior in most areas of their life. Often quite goal-oriented, they may have well thought-out plans as they strive to achieve their goals. When out of balance, these individuals can be perceived as perfectionists, controlling or overly driven.

Couples who both score high in organization may be very detailed and goal-oriented. They will likely have the discipline to accomplish a lot of long-term goals as a couple. They value consistency and orderliness in many aspects of their life together. Potential drawbacks for couples who both score high on this dimension include becoming overly driven to achieve their goals and putting tasks before relationships. At times, their desire for consistency and planning will be challenged by unplanned stressful situations or life changes which are beyond their control.

***Average Organized Scores:*** Those in the average range are generally organized. They are likely dependable and goal-oriented, but can also be flexible, setting aside work and agendas when necessary. They know how to get organized, but it is not always a high priority. While their home and workspace may be somewhat cluttered, they will still know where things are located.

Having this in common can be a positive for couples as they balance tasks, goals, and relationships. They will need to communicate with one another about areas in their life where they need to get more organized, and what roles they will each fulfill to maximize their effectiveness as a couple.

***Low Organized Scores:*** Those who score low on organization tend to resist a great deal of structure and are more spontaneous. They may also be less careful, less focused, and more likely to be distracted from tasks. Often easy-going and preferring not to make strict plans, they enjoy settings in which they are not required to conform to strict benchmarks. When out of balance, they can appear careless or disorganized.

Couples who both score low in organization will be very relaxed about plans, and neither person will place much emphasis on details. They are comfortable with a certain level of disorganization, and may wonder why some people expend so much energy focusing on minor details. Potential drawbacks for couples who both score low include getting behind on routine tasks such as balancing the checking account, or losing track of things such as the car keys. They need to remember that setting some goals as a couple is important, and they can find ways to compensate for less organization by strategizing in key areas of their life.

***Dealing with Couple Difference:*** Couples with different levels of organization will need to communicate openly with one another about their goals, roles, and expectations. The differences that were once endearing can become annoying, distracting, or even maddening when stressful events come their way. They need to find ways to balance one another out and avoid the extremes of perfectionism versus sloppiness. Potential challenges include different expectations for housekeeping, relationship roles, and long-term goals. Focusing on strengths and allowing the more organized individual to handle necessary details can be helpful, but these couples will need to guard against allowing the highly organized individual to function more like a “parent” and less like a “partner.”

## ***PLEASING***

*This trait reflect how considerate and cooperative a person is in their daily interactions with others.*

***High Pleasing Scores:*** High scores suggest a person is trusting, friendly, and cooperative. They value getting along with others, are considerate, and helpful. Optimistic about people, they view others as basically honest, decent, and trustworthy. When out of balance, these individuals may sacrifice their own needs and opinions to please others. In their relationships, these people may find it difficult to ask for what they need.

Couples who both score high on this dimension will likely treat one another with a great deal of respect and consideration. They value cooperation over competition, and heated conflicts may be few and far between. They are at risk, however, of not sharing their true feelings, especially negative emotions. Stuffing opinions and feelings can rob these relationships of deep emotional intimacy. These couples will need to learn to cultivate their assertiveness, realizing their relationship often moves forward after sharing honestly and resolving conflict.

***Average Pleasing Scores:*** Those with average Pleasing scores can be warm and cooperative, but occasionally somewhat competitive or assertive. When they feel their rights are violated, these individuals are able to respond and stand up for themselves. They generally know how to get along well with others and are well liked. Couples who both score in this range typically know how to balance consideration for one another with assertiveness and straightforward talk.

***Low Pleasing Scores:*** These individuals tend to be very confident, assertive, and less cooperative. They can often express their anger directly, and are sometimes seen as competitive and unfriendly. They are less likely to be taken advantage of and can assert themselves. When out of balance, they can appear skeptical, proud, or aggressive. Others can be intimidated by these individuals and find it difficult to develop a close relationship with them. These individuals may experience higher levels of conflict in their partner relationship unless they have learned how to balance their assertiveness.

Couples who both score low on the Pleasing trait will tend to be more competitive than cooperative. They have the capacity to be assertive and straight forward with one another. Potential drawbacks include conflict, debates, and the tendency to voice opinions rather than actively listen to and support one another. Their communication may be interpreted by their partner as harsh and unforgiving, rather than simply assertive. These individuals often need to work on their active listening and conflict resolution skills, as listening is often the more difficult part of communicating for them.

***Dealing with Couple Differences:*** Couples with one partner scoring higher than the other on this dimension may need to practice their communication and conflict resolution skills. The partner scoring higher on this dimension may need to develop their ability to honestly express both positive and negative opinions and feelings. In so doing, they can allow the more assertive partner the opportunity to truly understand their feelings. The partner scoring lower on this dimension will benefit from working to be a good active listener.

## ***EMOTIONALLY STEADY***

*This trait reflects the tendency to stay calm and positive, even when faced with stress.*

***High Emotionally Steady Scores:*** Those with a high score on the Emotionally Steady trait tend to be more relaxed, calm, and less prone to distress. They are likely to be calm and emotionally stable even when confronted with stressful situations. In the extreme, they may appear unfeeling or unflappable.

Couples where both partners are Emotionally Steady remain calm and collected as they cope with the challenges life presents. They are not prone to much distress as individuals, and often handle conflict well as a couple since they are slow to become angry, anxious, or depressed.

***Average Emotionally Steady Scores:*** Average scorers are generally calm and able to cope with stress. Others likely see them as capable of handling the everyday stressors. When under high levels of stress, they can experience negative feelings of anxiety, depression, or anger, but are generally emotionally steady and in control of their lives. Couples who both score in this range are able to use their communication skills, good problem solving and flexibility to help them navigate stressful times. Focusing on what is within one's ability to influence is much more helpful than being overwhelmed by what one cannot control.

***Low Emotionally Steady Scores:*** Those in this range are typically more emotionally sensitive and prone to becoming upset. They often have difficulty handling stress in their lives. When faced with challenges, they are prone to experience upsetting feelings such as anxiety, anger, or depression. When out of balance, they become emotionally fragile or overly sensitive. Some acquaintances may see their emotional reactions as difficult to handle and pull away from the relationship. This often leaves these individuals feeling even more isolated.

Couples who both score in this range know what it feels like to be stressed and in a bad mood. They should be able to understand and empathize when their partner is feeling anxious, down, or angry. Their individual moods, however, can sometimes take priority over the couple relationship as well. They need to be mindful of how much anxiety, change, and stress they can each handle. Being good listeners and supportive partners during times of stress will maximize their ability to weather life's challenges together. They should each work to develop positive coping skills for managing stress in their lives.

***Dealing with Couple Differences:*** Couples with one partner scoring higher than the other may experience occasional challenges. In times of stress, the more emotionally calm partner may need to take control and help the other person feel less frustrated. The one experiencing anxiety, anger, or sadness might wonder why their partner doesn't feel the same way. It is helpful for these couples to remember to work with one another's differences rather than attempting to change or criticize their partner.



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## APPENDIX A: CUSTOMIZED SCALES FOR FAITH-BASED GROUPS

### *Facilitator Pre-Selects Faith-based versions for the Couple*

If a PREPARE/ENRICH facilitator wants the couple to take a faith-based version of the assessment, they pre-select which version they want as they register their couple for the inventory. The assessment then automatically includes the relevant items for that faith tradition.

The standard research-based Spiritual Beliefs scale, made up of 10 statements, is one of the options a facilitator can select. There are, however, several spiritual beliefs scale items which have been adapted for specific faith traditions including **Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox Christian and Jewish** adaptations. If a couple has different faith backgrounds, the facilitator can also pre-select a **Interfaith/Interchurch** version.

There are also a variety of PREPARE/ENRICH scales selected by the system/program based on a couple's background. Many of these scales are of interest to faith-based groups including: **Cohabitation Issues, Forgiveness, Commitment, and Previously Married**. All of these scale items are listed on the following pages.

### *Standard Spiritual Beliefs*

- (-) My partner and I disagree about our spiritual beliefs.
- (+) We share very similar spiritual beliefs.
- (+) Sharing spiritual values helps our relationship grow.
- (+) My spiritual beliefs are an important part of the commitment I have to my partner.
- (-) Spiritual differences cause some tension in our relationship.
- (+) We have discussed the importance of our spiritual beliefs.
- (+) I believe our marriage must include active participation in a place of worship.
- (+) We are satisfied with how we express our spiritual values and beliefs.
- (+) We rely on our spiritual beliefs during difficult times.
- (+) My partner and I feel closer because of our spiritual beliefs.

### *Protestant Spiritual Beliefs*

- (-) My partner and I disagree about our Christian beliefs.
- (+) We share very similar spiritual beliefs.
- (+) Prayer is an important part of my daily life.
- (+) My faith is the foundation for the commitment I have to my partner.
- (-) Spiritual differences cause some tension in our relationship.
- (+) We have discussed the importance of our Christian faith.
- (+) My partner and I feel closer because of our Christian faith.
- (-) We rely on our faith in God during difficult times.
- (+) We both support the practice of giving a portion of our income to the church.
- (+) I believe our marriage must include active participation in a church.

### *Other Protestant Item Adaptations*

- (+) We have discussed and agreed on the boundaries of our premarital sexual activity.  
(from Sexual Expectations)
- (-) I am concerned that my partner is interested in viewing sexually explicit material (pornography).  
(from Sexual Expectations)

### *Catholic Spiritual Beliefs*

- (+) We share very similar spiritual beliefs.
- (-) Spiritual differences cause some tension in our relationship.
- (+) We have discussed the importance of our Catholic beliefs.
- (+) I believe our marriage must include active participation in a church.
- (+) We rely on our faith in God during difficult times.
- (+) I understand what the Church teaches about marriage as a sacrament.
- (+) I embrace the teaching that marriage is a permanent commitment.
- (+) It is important to me to go to Mass every Sunday.
- (+) Prayer is an important part of my daily life.
- (+) We both support the practice of giving a portion of our income to the Church.

### *Other Catholic Adaptations*

- (+) We agree to teach Catholic values to our children. (from Parenting Expectations)
- (+) It is important to me to send our children to Catholic school. (from Parenting Expectations)
- (+) We have discussed and decided to use natural family planning. (from Sexual Expectations)
- (+) We have discussed and agreed on the boundaries of our premarital sexual activity.  
(from Sexual Expectations)
- (-) I am concerned that my partner is interested in viewing sexually explicit material (pornography).  
(from Sexual Expectations)

### *Orthodox Christian Spiritual Beliefs Scale*

- (-) Spiritual differences cause some tension in our relationship.
- (+) We both support the practice of giving a portion of our income to the church.
- (+) I understand what the Orthodox Church teaches about marriage as a sacrament.
- (+) We have discussed the importance of receiving communion regularly as a couple and family.
- (+) I believe our marriage must include active participation in a church community.
- (+) We have discussed what it means to love each other as husband and wife.
- (+) I believe that God calls me to exercise humility and self-denial in marriage.
- (+) The Orthodox faith is very important to both of us.
- (-) My partner and I have different ideas about how we will practice our Orthodox faith at home.
- (+) I understand how God uses marriage and family life to help us work out our salvation.

### *Jewish Spiritual Beliefs*

- (-) It is hard for me to accept some of the major teachings of my religion.
- (+) Religion has the same meaning for both of us.
- (+) Sharing Jewish values and traditions helps our relationship grow.
- (+) My Jewish religious beliefs are an important part of the commitment I make to my partner.
- (-) My partner and I disagree on how to practice our religious traditions.
- (+) It is important to me to participate in a synagogue with my partner.
- (+) I believe our home should include active religious observance and celebrations.
- (+) Loving my partner affirms meaning and something sacred in my life.
- (-) My partner and I disagree about some of the teachings of my religion.
- (+) My partner and I feel closer because of our cultural/religious heritage.

### *Interfaith/ Interchurch*

- (-) My partner and I disagree about important aspects of our spiritual/religious beliefs.
- (+) Even though we observe different religious traditions, we share similar beliefs and values.
- (-) There are some religious/faith issues my partner and I may never agree on.
- (-) Differences in our spiritual beliefs cause tension in our relationship.
- (+) Despite our religious differences, we have found (or plan to find) a place of worship we can attend together.
- (-) My family is concerned about our religious differences.
- (+) We are respectful and honoring of one another's faith/spiritual beliefs.
- (-) I wish we could attend more faith-based activities together (weekly services, retreats, classes, or family events).
- (+) We have discussed the challenges associated with raising children in an interfaith family.
- (-) Because of our religious differences, we seem to be less involved in a place of worship.

### *Scales based on Background Questions answered by Couple*

There are a variety of other PREPARE/ENRICH scales selected by the system/program based on a couple's background. Many of these scales are also of interest to faith-based groups including: Cohabitation Issues, Forgiveness, Commitment, and Previously Married.

#### *Cohabitation Issues (premarital couples)*

- (-) Living together has created some new issues for us.
- (-) Living together has been more challenging than I had anticipated.
- (+) I believe living together has increased our commitment to each other.
- (+) I am more sure about our relationship since we began living together.
- (+) I feel that living together has brought us closer together as a couple.
- (-) Living together is a good test before committing to marriage.
- (-) Some of my partner's habits bother me more since we are living together.
- (-) Since we began living together, my partner has become more critical of me.
- (-) We have had more issues related to finances since we began living together.
- (-) We have had more power struggles as a couple since we began living together.

### *Commitment Questions*

- (+) I am committed to making our marriage last for a lifetime.
- (+) I believe my partner is committed to making our marriage last for a lifetime.
- (+) I am open to doing whatever it takes to improve our marriage.
- (+) I believe my partner is open to doing whatever it takes to improve our marriage.

### *Forgiveness (married couples)*

- (-) My partner has a hard time letting go of past hurts and disappointments.
- (-) My partner has done or said some things I may never be able to forgive.
- (+) We do a good job of resolving issues and moving forward.
- (-) My partner tends to hold a grudge for a long time.
- (-) In our relationship we forgive, but we don't forget.
- (+) My partner does a good job of apologizing and asking for forgiveness.
- (-) My partner has a hard time admitting that he/she is at fault.
- (-) Tension remains in our relationship, even after we work through hurts and disappointments.
- (+) I feel closer to my partner after we work through a disappointment.
- (-) I find it difficult to trust my partner because of his/her past actions.

### *Previously Married*

- (-) My partner is sometimes fearful of another relationship breakup.
- (-) Sometimes a former partner interferes with our relationship.
- (+) I feel very confident our relationship will succeed.
- (-) It bothers me that my partner sometimes talks about a previous marriage/relationship.
- (-) I expect that financial settlements from a previous marriage will be a problem for us.
- (-) My partner is too involved with or influenced by his/her previous partner.
- (-) I am worried that past relationships will present problems for us.
- (+) My partner and I have learned valuable lessons from past relationships/marriages.
- (+) We have both had sufficient time to work out the issues and hurts from our past relationships.
- (+) I now have a clear understanding of the reasons why previous relationships/marriages didn't work out.