

Organizing and Providing Feedback

The **Facilitator's Report** is intended only for you, the trained PREPARE/ENRICH facilitator.

The **Couple's Report** may be given to your couple if you choose to do so. It provides summaries of the SCOPE Personality scales, Personal Stress Profile, Relationship Dynamics, Summary of Strengths and Growth Areas, and Couple and Family Maps. It does not provide scores for the Core Scales.

Facilitator's Feedback Guide- Provides examples of how you may organize 4-8 feedback sessions with your couples

The **Couple's Workbooks** contain 24 exercises your couples can complete either in feedback sessions with you or as homework. The Facilitator's Report lists the names of the exercises that correspond to various content areas. Ideally, each individual will have a copy of the Couple's Workbook to refer to during the feedback process. The Couple's Workbook can be downloaded from the website in PDF format; if you would like bound copies of Couple Workbooks, they can be ordered at printing costs on the P/E website.

Feedback can be customized

Like the assessment component of PREPARE/ENRICH, the feedback component can also be customized. While the assessment is customized to the stage and structure of the relationship, feedback can be customized based on assessment results, number of anticipated feedback sessions, and Facilitator skills and preferences.

PREPARE/ENRICH offers a very structured feedback approach. Some Facilitators take advantage of this structure and use many of the couple exercises. Other Facilitators use some of the couple exercises, while also utilizing their own counselling skills and/or other resources in their feedback. There are other Facilitators who may not use any of the feedback resources available, as they use PREPARE/ENRICH as part of their clinical profile and to determine therapy goals.

Goals of the Feedback Process

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

1. *To help couples explore their Relationship Strength and Growth Areas.* The *Sharing Strength and Growth Areas* exercise helps couples reflect on, and share with their partner, areas they believe to be strengths and areas they believe to be growth areas.
2. *To help couples learn and practice communication skills.* The specific skills emphasized in the communication exercises are assertiveness and active listening.
3. *To help couples resolve conflicts.* Couples learn conflict resolution skills by practicing a Ten-Step Model.
4. *To help couples discuss their 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 Map and can explore 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 identify stress and strategize ways and prioritize, manage, and apply resources to cope.
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.* Goal-setting facilitates closeness as couples' progress together toward shared goals.

Reviewing the Facilitator's Report

Carefully Review the Facilitator's Report before meeting with your couple.

You can expect to **spend one hour reviewing** the Facilitator's Report and organizing your materials before your first session. This time will decrease as you use the Inventories with more couples and establish a process.

- Review the feedback exercises in the Couple's Workbook and determine which exercises you will use with your couple. Exercises can be selected based on your couple's strength and growth areas, and should typically include several of the *Core 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 Table of Contents.

Background Information

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

Couple Typology / Strengths and Growth Areas

Review couple relationship type and Strength and Growth Areas. Note: The Couple Typology is statistical analysis run with 9 of the core scales that exist across all relationship stages (dating, engaged, and married) showing relational patterns. For more info on research on the couple typology, see the "Research" tab on the P/E website.

Overall Satisfaction / Idealistic Distortion

Review each person's overall satisfaction and Idealistic Distortion, noting any differences.

Relationship Dynamics

Review Relationship Dynamics to better understand each partner's relational tendencies (i.e., self confidence and assertiveness) and interaction patterns. (i.e.,

partner dominance and avoidance). For more information on Relationship Dynamics, review the chapter in the CD Manual. The Communication exercises in the Couple's Workbook will help you 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 (satisfaction, health, security, etc). For analysis on Commitment and the Couple Typology, see "Research" section of the P/E website.

Abuse

Review the background questions about alcohol and drug use.

Explore past and current issues with your couple. See "Knowing Your Professional Limitations" at the

End of this chapter if there are current and 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, prayer, meditation, etc).

Relationship Categories (Communication, Conflict Resolution, etc.)

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

Review each partner's 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.

- For ideas on questions to ask couples to help them further process and discuss each item,

See “Follow up Questions” which can be found on the P/E website (when you log in with your Facilitator ID number and password) under “Supplemental Materials” on the “Facilitator” tab.

- The bottom of each relationship category page lists the PREPARE/ENRICH Exercises from the Couple’s Workbook that relate to the category.

Couple & Family Maps

Review the Couple & Family Map for descriptions of the Couple Relationship and Family-of-Origin. Couple Discussion ideas and corresponding Couple’s Workbook exercises are provided at the bottom of each page.

SCOPE Personality

Review all five dimensions of the SCOPE Personality Scales and refer to the shaded and boxed “Couple Results” summaries. Couples can use the Personality exercise in the Couple’s Workbook to discuss personality in their relationship.

Providing Feedback to your Couple

Take some time at the beginning of the feedback session to re-establish rapport with your couple and then spend a few minutes asking them about their experiences completing the inventory/assessment. For instance, “What was the experience of completing the inventory/assessment like for you?”, “Were there any particular items or topics you and your partner discussed after completing the inventory/assessment?”

It is 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, to increase awareness (of self and partner), and to build skills that contribute to a healthy relationship.

Guiding Principles in Providing 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 learning 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 feedback exercises covering 12-14 relationship categories. You can choose the exercises you would like your couples to complete.

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 Facilitator, you will make decisions about which exercises to use and how many sessions you will have to provide feedback to your couple.

Each exercise can be used as single sheet hand-outs or can be used 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, or ordered from the P/E bookstore. In the PDF format, you can also print selected pages as needed.

Each exercise is designed to be self-explanatory for both facilitator and couple use. Some exercises are most effective when completed with the Facilitator (i.e. Sharing Strength and Growth Areas), while others can be done alone by the couple and work well as homework (i.e. 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, you will notice that some of the exercises have an asterisk next to them identifying them as 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 exercise with every couple, it is recommended that you include several of them with each couple. The core exercises and related assessment categories include:

Couple Exercise

Relevant Category

- • Sharing Strength and Growth AreasCore Categories
- • Creating a Wish List.....Communication
- • IdentifyingMostCriticalIssues.....PersonalStressProfile
- • TenStepsforResolvingConflict.....ConflictResolution
- • CoupleandFamilyMap.....FamilyofOrigin
- • SCOPE out your Personality.....Personality

ADDITIONAL COUPLE EXERCISES

There are 18 exercises in the workbook in addition to the “core exercises”. The fact that they are not “core” exercises does not mean these exercises are any less valuable for couples. In some cases, you may want to replace a core exercise with one of the other exercises if it is more relevant to your couple’s needs, your program, or your setting.

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

Additional Couple Exercises

Relevant Category

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
Importance of Financial Goals	Financial Management
Budget Worksheet	Financial Management
The Meaning of Money	Financial Management
The Dating Exercise.....	Leisure Activities
The Foundation for Intimacy.....	Sex and Affection
Sharing Roles.....	Relationship Roles Your
Spiritual Journey	Spiritual Beliefs
Managing your Expectations	Marriage Expectations
Discussion Questions.....	Children and Parenting
Planning a Weekly Family Conference	Children and Parenting
Stepfamilies: Choosing Realistic Expectations ...	Children and Parenting

Dealing with Abuse Issues

The PREPARE/ENRICH assessment contains several questions about 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 behaviour and use of pornography.

The four abuse questions are global questions because it would be too intrusive and too lengthy to ask detailed questions about every possible abuse issue. However, if an individual does indicate a concern, this is an important area to discuss with him/her in more detail. Since an issue may potentially relate to abuse by or from the partner, this discussion should be conducted individually.

If you are a mandated reporter, follow the reporting guidelines for abuse as outlined by your state or professional license.

Facts about Abuse

Abuse is the single most common cause of injury to women in the United States. Nationally, over 30% of women who are homicide victims are killed by their partner. A woman is beaten every 12 seconds. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008)

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

Know Your Professional Limitations

If you are not a licensed professional therapist or counsellor, 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-physical, sexual, emotional
- • Drug Addictions
- • Alcohol Dependence
- • Ongoing Infidelity
- • Danger to self or others (suicidal thoughts or intentions)
- • Serious Mental Health Disorders such as:
 - o Clinical Depression
 - o Bi-Polar Disorder
 - o Anxiety Disorders

FACILITATOR'S REPORT

The Facilitator's Report is not to be given to the couple for the following reasons:

1. Proper interpretation of the Facilitator's Report requires a facilitator who has been trained and certified in the use of the Inventories. Couples who obtain this detailed Report may misinterpret the report. They may also view the results as permanent characteristics of their relationship, rather than as a snapshot of their relationship at a specific point in time.
2. An important purpose of the PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories is to help couples explore their Relationship Strength and Growth Areas in order to facilitate continued relationship growth. Because relationships change, the specific responses to items on the Inventory could be invalid after a few months.
3. The items in PREPARE/ENRICH are *standardized*. If the items are shared with someone who later takes the Inventory, it is likely their results will be affected and will not provide a valid assessment of their relationship.
4. The PREPARE/ENRICH assessment items are copyrighted. Giving them to the couple to keep is a violation of that *copyright*.

Understanding the Stress Profile

"Stress either begins or ends up in the relationship"

In today's fast paced society, it is impossible to avoid stress in our lives. A recent poll of 1,000 U.S. adults found 47% of respondents feel more stress today than they did 6 months ago. The number one source of stress cited in the poll was "personal finance concerns" (Booth Research, 2008).

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), psychological symptoms (anxiety, anger) and relational issues (conflict, disconnection) 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 one's reaction to stress. When a stressor cannot be eliminated, it is important to look at how one reacts or copes in response to the stressor. Learning and using healthy coping mechanisms can help individuals respond to stress in healthier ways.

Stress and Couples

A study of 82 couples demonstrates how high stress levels can negatively impact marriages (Neff & Karney, 2009).

- The greater the stress levels, the more strongly partners react to the normal ups and downs of their lives. In other words, when stress levels are high, slights are experienced more intensely.
- The study also suggests high stress levels make it more difficult to effectively use one's positive relationship skills such as communication and conflict resolution abilities.
- Finally, couples are more likely to evaluate their relationship negatively when they are experiencing prolonged exposure to stress. High stress negatively colours a couple's perceptions of their marriage.

Personal Stress Profile

PREPARE/ENRICH incorporates a 25-item stress checklist adapted from the Coping and Stress Profile, which was originally developed by David Olson and Ken Stewart at the University of Minnesota in 1995. The 25 items were chosen from their original list of 50 personal stressors faced by most individuals in our modern culture.

While completing the P/E inventory, individuals are directed to read through the checklist and indicate how often each of the 25 items has caused them stress over the past year. The five-point response scale ranges from "Never" to "Very Often". Based on the responses, a Personal Stress Profile is generated and displays each partner's individual stress level and the top ten stressors for each individual. An item must be checked as being stressful "Sometimes", "Often", or "Very Often" to be included in a top ten list.

Tailored to Relationship Stage

A defining feature of PREPARE/ENRICH's online version is that content is tailored to fit the stage of the couple, and this approach is used for the Personal Stress Profile as well. There are dating, engaged, and married versions of the stress checklists, which are automatically selected as the couple answers the initial background questions on their inventory.

Top 5 Stressors for Couples

Based on a large sample of couples who have completed PREPARE/ENRICH, the top 5 stressors for each relationship stage are listed below. Overall, married couples report higher stress levels than dating or engaged couples.

Dating Couples	Engaged Couples	Married Couples
Your job	Your job	Your spouse
Feeling emotionally upset	Financial concerns	Your job
Inadequate income	Cost of wedding	Feeling emotionally upset
Your partner	Lack of exercise	Inadequate income
Too much to do around the home	Lack of sleep	Too much to do around the home

Married Couples and Stress

Note the item rated as the number one stressor by married couples is "Your spouse". This was the number one stressor cited by both men and women. Married

couples who complete PREPARE/ENRICH are often being seen in a counselling situation. It is not uncommon for individuals experiencing relational conflict to believe their problems would be solved if their partner would only change. Experienced counsellors are accustomed to finger pointing which often accompanies the initial sessions of marital therapy. Unfortunately, one partner cannot change the other and this attitude leaves individuals totally disempowered in the relationship. In fact, the more one individual focuses on the other person's behaviour, the more resentment, anger, and resistance they typically receive in return.

It is much more productive to help these couples work on things that are in their control including the way they speak to one another, the way they resolve conflict, the way each individual chooses to react to their daily stressors, and interactions with each other.

Wedding Stressors and Engaged Couples

Ten of the 25 checklist items for engaged couples are specifically associated with wedding planning and target the stressors couples typically face as they plan their "big day". Engaged couples are typically embroiled in the countless details of planning their wedding service and reception. They are also faced with financial issues related to the wedding ceremony.

In many ways, planning a wedding provides the first big set of decisions a couple will make together and tests their ability to function as a team. From finances to family, and communication to conflict, the wedding preparations trigger many of the issues a couple will face throughout their married life providing a symbolic practice field for their relationship. In a large sample of engaged couples who completed PREPARE/ENRICH, the "*Cost of the wedding*" is the number 3 overall stressor for they report. Two other stressors related to the wedding also made the top 10; "*Decisions about wedding details*" was number 7, and "*Feeling overwhelmed by wedding details*" was number 10 out of the 25 stressors reported by engaged couples.

Skilled PREPARE/ENRICH facilitators often leverage a couple's wedding stressors and issues to provide them with relevant feedback and education. Rather than asking the couple to imagine how finances will be handled in their future marriage, they engage the couple in a discussion of how they are making financial decisions right now as they plan their wedding, reception, and honeymoon.

PREPARE/ENRICH Couple Exercises

The PREPARE/ENRICH *Couple's Workbook* includes three exercises devoted specifically to the topic of stress.

- The first, *Identifying Most Critical Issues*, is a core exercise designed to help couples take a logical approach to prioritizing the issues they face and to considering what they can actually change as they work together.
- The *Balancing Your Priorities* exercise functions almost like a time budget, allowing couples to explore how balanced they are between their work, personal, marriage, and family demands. It also helps individuals set goals for making adjustments to their daily time demands.
- Finally, the *Wedding Stress* exercise presents important insight in the form of five helpful strategies for dealing with the issues that naturally arise when planning a wedding.

5 Tips for Using the Personal Stress Profile

1. **Build understanding and empathy:** Help couples identify and discuss the source of their stress, making sure they each understand what their partner is feeling and experiencing.
 2. **Prioritize stressors to tackle first:** Use the *Identifying Most Critical Issues* exercise from the workbook to help couples discern which stressors they have control over and can actually change if they work together and support one another. If their partner is a large source of stress in their lives, help them understand they only have control over themselves and their own reactions to one another. They cannot make the other person change.
 3. **Consider the relationship stage:** While engaged couples may be distracted by wedding details, their current stressors can present a good context to build insight and skills into how the rest of their relationship will function, even after their wedding.
 4. **Use the stress discussion to transition to other skill--building:** Keep in mind that the best ways to cope with stress often involve other core relationship skills such as healthy communication, conflict resolution, flexibility, and closeness. An effective approach for dealing with the issues identified in the Personal Stress Profile will often include teaching couples to use these other important skills; and the stress profile functions as a good transition tool for teaching core relationship skills.
5. **Teach couples to take a Time-out when needed:** As research suggests, high stress levels make it more difficult for couples to effectively use their relationship skills. Teaching couples the *How to Take a Time-Out* exercise may also

be important for helping them slow down, gain perspective, and actually use the skills they've been taught.

References:

Neff, L.A., and Karney, B.R., (2009). *Stress and reactivity to daily relationship experiences: How stress hinders adaptive processes in marriage*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97 (3), 435-450.

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Understanding the Idealistic Distortion Score

What is Idealistic Distortion?

Idealistic Distortion assesses the tendency for individuals to respond to statements in a socially desirable manner. It measures the extent to which a person distorts their relationship in a positive direction (“rose-coloured glasses syndrome”).

Where are the Idealistic Distortion items located?

The Idealistic Distortion items can be found on the “Overall Satisfaction/Idealistic Distortion” page of the Facilitator’s Report. Seven items describing idealistic relationship positions make up the Idealistic Distortion scale. One example is, “Every new thing I have learned about my partner has pleased me.” Strong support of this statement and others indicate that an individual may be unwilling to acknowledge their feelings about the relationship and/or their partner in a realistic manner.

Interpretation of Idealism

Very High Idealistic Distortion scores (85% or above) suggest that an individual is invested in presenting their relationship in a highly favourable manner. They may resist acknowledging and discussing problematic areas of their relationship.

Moderate Idealistic Distortion scores (40-60%) suggest that an individual is generally realistic in describing their relationship.

Low Idealistic Distortion scores (0-30%) suggest that an individual has a realistic view of their relationship and will likely be open to discussing problems.

Why is Idealistic Distortion measured?

A potential problem for self-report instruments is the tendencies for some individuals to respond to statements in a socially desirable manner, resulting in less valid results. To account for this potential bias, PREPARE/ENRICH measures Idealistic Distortion for each individual and then uses this score to adjust individual scores on other scales according to their specific level of idealism. After this adjustment is made, the resulting score is called the *Revised Individual Score (REV)*.

The Role of Idealistic Distortion in Individual vs. Couple scores

Idealistic Distortion is *an individual characteristic* that distinguishes when a person is seeing their relationship in an overly positive manner. Idealistic Distortion scores are used to correct individual scores on other categories by lowering the score downward in order to create a more accurate score-*Revised Individual Score (REV)*. Because idealistic distortion is an individual score, no correction is made to the *Positive Couple Agreement (PCA)* score. As a result, idealistic distortion does not impact PCA scores.

Is Adjustment for Idealism the Same for Each Scale?

No. Since idealism affects some relationship constructs more than others, adjustment for idealism is different for each scale. For example, idealism affects the categories of "communication", "conflict resolution", and "closeness" more so than the categories of "leisure activities" and "family and friends". The adjustment formula is complex as it is based on correlations between the Idealistic Distortion score and responses to each category.

How Differences in Idealistic Distortion Scores Present in Couple Relationships

Differences in Idealistic Distortion scores between couples can result in frustration and misunderstandings. An individual who is highly idealistic, for example, may feel puzzled and disengaged by a more realistic partner's attempts to discuss issues in their relationship. The more realistic partner may feel that their idealistic partner minimizes or does not understand their feelings. Helping the individuals understand their different tendencies can reduce blame and tendencies for individuals to come to inaccurate conclusions (e.g. "My partner is so negative/always bringing up problems/doesn't care, etc.)

Idealism across Relationship Stages

Premarital couples tend to be idealistic; married couples in satisfying relationships tend to be moderately realistic, and distressed married couples tend to be very low in idealism-to the point where they are sometimes pessimistic.

Relevant Questions for Couples related to Idealistic Distortion:

1. Do either of you believe you are idealistic about your relationship?
2. Who minimizes problems or overlooks issues most? (Individuals who minimize problems tend to score high on Idealistic Distortion as well as the Avoidance scale)
3. Who raises issues or more often confronts problems in your relationship? (Individuals who raise concerns tend to score low on Idealistic Distortion as well as high on the Assertiveness scale)

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Revised Individual (REV) & Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) Scores

The PREPARE/ENRICH assessment is unique because it utilizes two different types of scores for each content area. As a result, you will have two different perspectives on the couple relationship.

What is the Individual (REV) Score?

The Revised Individual (REV) Score describes *individual* satisfaction within each content area. It was designed to give a more accurate description of how the *individual* perceives that aspect of their couple relationship. REV scores are based on a comparison to the norm base, and corrected according to the individual level of idealistic distortion*.

What is the Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) Score?

The Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) Score is a percentage score ranging from 0-100% based on the number of Positive Agreement Items a *couple* has within each of the content areas.

How does the PCA Score relate to Couple Strengths?

PCA determines whether each content area is a ***Strength Area, Possible Strength Area, Possible Growth Area, or Growth Area.***

Interpretation PCA Score

Strength Area.....	80—100% Possible
Strength.....	50—70%
Possible Growth Area.....	30—40%
Growth Area.....	0---20%

* For more information on *Idealistic Distortion*, see “*Understanding Idealistic Distortion*”

Understanding Individual (REV) and Couple (PCA) Scores

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Relationship Dynamics

The “Relationship Dynamics” scales in PREPARE/ENRICH assess four personal and interpersonal dynamics: **assertiveness**, **self-confidence**, **avoidance**, and **partner dominance**. These scales were designed to increase the Facilitator’s understanding of individuals and how these characteristics are related to underlying couple dynamics.

Assertiveness – is a person’s ability to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions to their partner and to be able to ask for what they want in a manner that is both honest and respectful.

Self-Confidence – focuses on how good a person feels about himself/herself and his or her feeling of control in life.

Avoidance – measures a person’s tendency to minimize issues and their reluctance in dealing with issues directly.

Partner Dominance – focuses on how much a person feels their partner tries to control and/or dominate their relationship.

How Do Happy and Unhappy Couples Score in These Areas?

PREPARE/ENRICH research has found that happy couples tend to score high in assertiveness and self-confidence, and low in avoidance and partner dominance. Conversely, the tendency for unhappy couples is for one or both individuals to be low in assertiveness and self-confidence, and high in avoidance and partner dominance.

How Are the Four Scales Interrelated?

There is a positive cycle linking assertiveness and self-confidence and a negative cycle linking avoidance and partner 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.

Relevance of the Relationship Dynamics Scale with other areas of the Report

The four Relationship Dynamic scales are very relevant to other categories within PREPARE/ENRICH. Individuals, for example, who are more assertive, tend to like the personality of their partner (Partner Styles and Habits), feel good about their communication (Communication) and report satisfaction in their abilities to resolve conflict (Conflict Resolution). Conversely, those who are high on avoidance tend to dislike the personality of their partner, dislike their communication, and report dissatisfaction in their abilities to resolve conflict.

The Relationship Dynamic scale is also strongly linked with background characteristics related to alcohol and drug use, as well as various types of abuse. Individuals and couples with high scores in avoidance and partner dominance tend to be at a greater risk for drug and alcohol use as well as physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

Can Relationship Dynamics change?

Yes. These four traits are learned and can, therefore, be unlearned. The positive and negative cycles demonstrate that patterns of relating are malleable and that increasing behaviours in the positive cycle (e.g. assertiveness) can weaken behaviours in the negative cycle (e.g. avoidance). The feedback process and exercises in the Couple's Workbook help couples explore Relationship Dynamics through awareness of their own and their partner's current styles and then help each person practice and strengthen assertiveness.

***For more information please see Chapter 5 in the Facilitator's Manual**

Relationship Dynamics

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Understanding Relationship Roles

Role Assessment Scales for Engaged & Married Couples

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

What does the Relationship Roles category measure?

For engaged couples, a high individual score on Relationship Roles indicates the person prefers an equalitarian role relationship, while a low individual score indicates the person prefers a more traditional role relationship. Those who score in the mid-range are referred to as transitional and reflect a combination of both traditional and equalitarian attitudes.

What is the difference between equalitarian and traditional roles?

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

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

Why are roles important to discuss?

Roles are an important area to discuss because they directly affect each partner's behaviours and responsibilities in everyday life. This category encompasses a variety of issues from household chores and child-care, to leadership and decision-making. All of these issues have the potential to

create conflict and tension in a relationship if both partners don't agree on how their roles should be defined and implemented.

Unique Scoring of Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) for Relationship Roles Category

A couple can get a high PCA score if both partner's Revised Individual (REV) scores are high or low. A high PCA score does not necessarily indicate that the couple has equalitarian roles, it simply means both partners agree on the type of roles they desire in their future marriage.

Why are there no Special Focus Items for Engaged Couples Taking the Relationship Roles Category?

There are no Special Focus items for the Relationship Roles category because either a high or low individual score can be positive. When considering roles, it is often more important to understand the extent to which a premarital couple agrees on their role expectations. Since there are no Special Focus items in this category the facilitator should instead focus on items where the partners agree or disagree.

Why are there no (+) or (-) symbols in front of the Relationship Roles items?

The (+) and (-) symbols listed before items indicate a positive/healthy item or a negative/unhealthy item, as well as indicating how items are scored. The PREPARE/ENRICH assessment does not have a "desired response" when it comes to roles. Couples can have a successful relationship whether they embrace equalitarian or traditional roles, thus the plus and minus signs would not be relevant to this category. Instead, items have a (E) or (T) in front of them indicating the statement is equalitarian or traditional, and PCA scores are based on agreement across all items in the category.

*For more information on the Role Relationship Category refer to your Facilitators Manual: Chapter 1.

Understanding Role Relationships

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Understanding Couple Typology

What are “Couple Types”?

Through research studies of thousands of premarital and marital couples, specific types of couples have been identified (see Figures 1&2). These types are based on statistical analysis of Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) scores across the nine core content areas of PREPARE/ENRICH. Couple types are one way to understand relationships and relational patterns. This multivariate approach can more adequately capture the complexity of relationships than analysis on one or two dimensions.

Vitalized Couple Type

Vitalized couples tend to have the highest Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) scores across most of the categories. They tend to have high relationship satisfaction and longitudinal studies have demonstrated they are the type least likely to divorce.

Harmonious Couple Type

Harmonious couples tend to have high PCA scores in most areas except Financial Management and Spiritual Beliefs. They have moderate relationship satisfaction and are at low risk for divorce.

Conventional Couple Type

Conventional couples tend to have lower PCA scores in the Interpersonal areas (Communication, Conflict Resolution) but higher scores in more external areas (Roles, Family & Friends, and Spiritual Beliefs). In spite of moderate to low relationship satisfaction, this type has a very low rate of divorce.

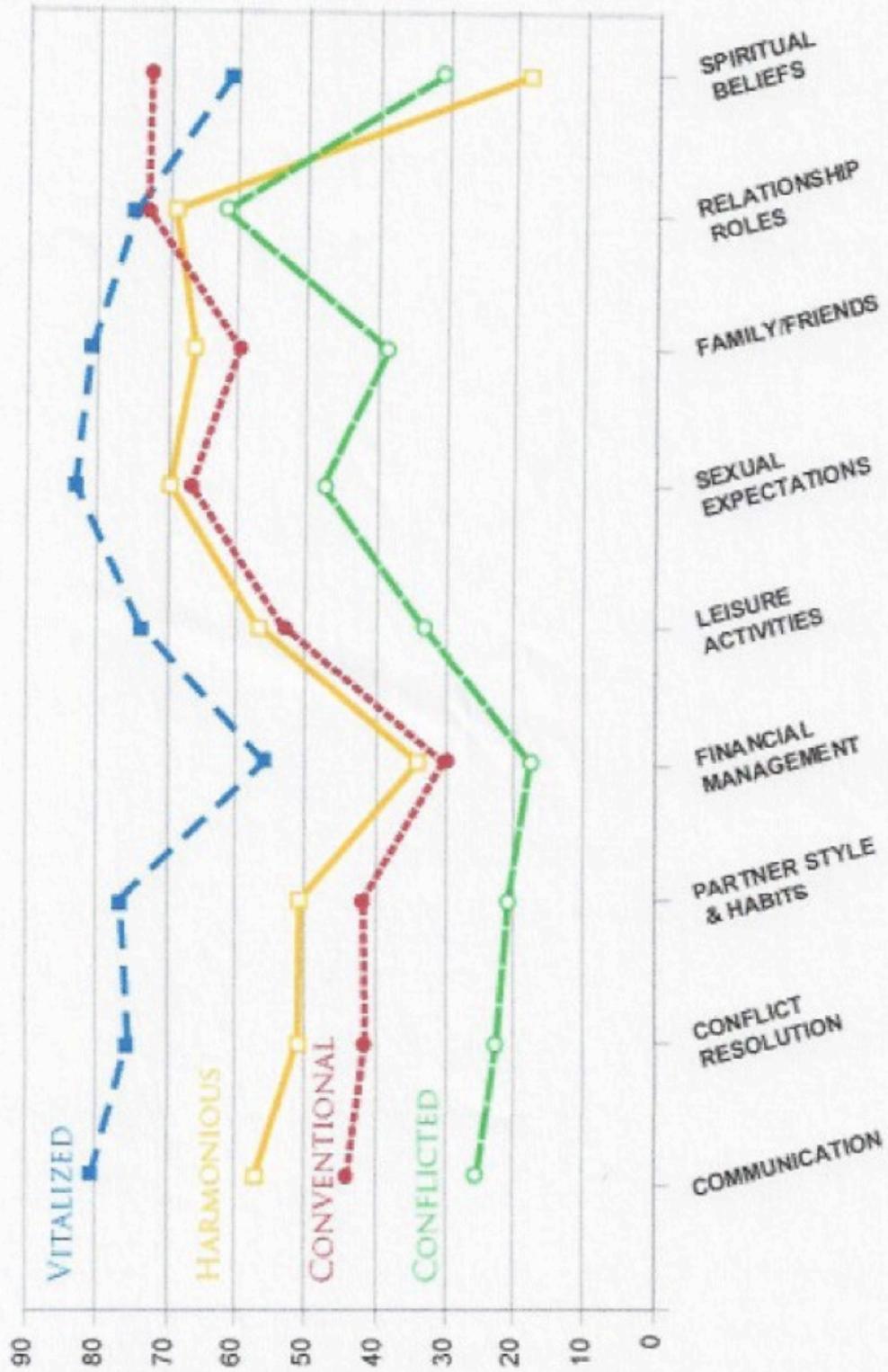
Conflicted Couple Type

Conflicted couples have the lowest PCA scores (for premarital or dating couples) across many of the categories. These couples tend to have low relationship satisfaction and high rates of divorce.

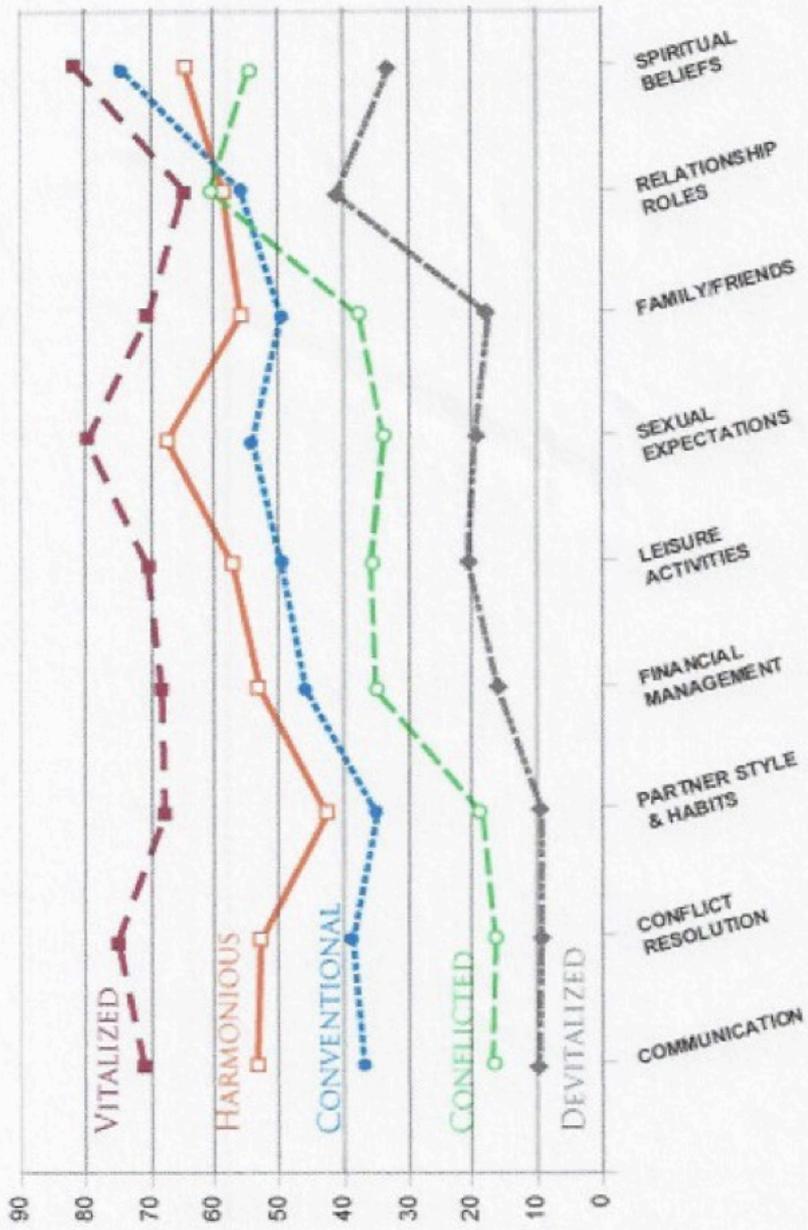
Devitalized Couple Type (*married couples only*)

The Devitalized couple type has been found for married couples only. Devitalized couples have the lowest PCA scores across most of the categories. These couples have the highest risk of divorce and tend to be unhappily married.

FOUR TYPES OF PREMARITAL COUPLES



FIVE TYPES OF MARRIED COUPLES



Are Couple Types Valid Across Different Ethnic Groups?

Allen and Olson (2001) studied a sample of 450 African-American married couples and discovered the same five marital types found in earlier studies with predominantly European- American married couples.

Another study by Shuji Asai (2003) examined 849 engaged Japanese couples. This study revealed four distinct premarital types that were comparable to the four premarital types found in a predominantly European-American sample of couples.

These and other studies suggest that marital types are valid across ethnic groups. For more details on these studies, see the Research section of [the PREPARE/ENRICH website](#).

Should “Couple Type” Be Shared with a Couple?

Facilitators decide whether or not they will share “couple type” information with their couple. One consideration is whether or not this information will benefit the couple. Facilitators who choose to share couple type information with their “conflicted” or “devitalized” couples may provide hope to these couples by sharing anecdotal examples of couples who have overcome challenges or by citing research on the dynamic nature of relationships and the ability of couples to improve the state of their relationships. Outcome research from couples who completed PREPARE/ENRICH found that over half of couples sampled improved their couple type by one “level” (after completing P/E and feedback sessions) and twenty-nine percent of couples (from the same sample) improved their “couple type” by two “levels”.

**For more information on Couple Types refer to your Facilitator’s Manual.*

Understanding Couple Types

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Using the Couple and Family Maps

The Couple and Family Maps are powerful tools that provide couples a simple visual representation of how they each perceive their relationship on the dimensions of “closeness” and “flexibility”.

Key factors in understanding the Couple and Family Map:

The Maps use two major dimensions (“closeness” and “flexibility”) to describe twenty-five (25) types of relationships. These are grouped into three basic categories: *balanced*, *mid-range*, and *unbalanced*.

Balanced exhibit balanced levels on both closeness and flexibility. This tends to be most functional for couples and families as it enables them to cope well when under stress. These couples and families balance their needs for separateness and togetherness while also maintaining a balance between stability and the capacity to adapt to change.

Mid-range are typically balanced on one dimension (closeness or flexibility) but unbalanced on the other. These couples and families generally function well in a variety of circumstances, although stressful events and certain transitions (e.g., births or deaths) can cause problems.

Unbalanced are unbalanced in both closeness and flexibility. These couples and families are at the extremes or outer edges of the map. They typically have difficulty negotiating levels of intimacy that enable all family members to feel included and nurtured. They also struggle in their attempts to stay organized as a unit, and in their abilities to adapt to change.

The Couple and Family Maps are “dynamic,” meaning the placement of a given couple or family on the map varies over time due to influences and events shaping their lives. Factors affecting map movement can be life transitions such as the birth of a child or retirement. Map placement (and movement) can also be due to unexpected stressors or trauma such as a catastrophic illness of a family member. Although there is no absolute “best level” or placement for any relationship, couples and families generally function best if they are in the balanced or mid-range categories. Family-of-origin experiences are important in shaping subsequent relationship expectations. Individuals learn relationship patterns from their past and there are tendencies to bring these into relationships.

Using the Couple and Family Map during feedback sessions:

The PREPARE/ENRICH Couple's Workbook discusses how to use the Couple and Family Maps in the feedback process. Among the topics to cover are a description of terms like "closeness" and "flexibility", and how they apply to couples and families.

A key part of this session is to review where the couple placed on the Map and their respective family-of-origin placements. Here is where a discussion of similarities and differences in the couple's description of their relationship can help each individuals gain insight into their own perceptions and their partners. Couples can also explore how their family-of- origin experiences affect their current interactions and expectations for their relationship

Helpful questions when discussing the Couple and Family Map:

- • How does each partner view the relationship? In what ways do they perceive it similarly, and in what ways do they see it differently?
- • Given where they currently are on the Couple Map, where would they like to see their relationship move? Why?
- • Where on the Family Map did each partner's family-of-origin experience show up? How did they compare to each other? In what ways were they similar or different?
- • Ask the couple to discuss how their respective family-of-origin experiences shape their current relationship. What do they want to keep from those experiences? What do they hope to avoid repeating?

Using the Couple and Family Maps

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Working with Conflicted and Devitalized Couples

Goals in Working with Conflicted and Devitalized Couples:

- • Instill couple with hope that their relationship can improve. (*You may choose to tell them that in a study of unhappy marriages, 2/3 of couples who stayed married reported they were happy five years later five years**). Relationships are ever-evolving and all will experience “ups” and “downs”.
- • Identify and build their strengths as a couple
- • Help couples understand that they share responsibility for the state of their relationship
- • Help each partner learn to appreciate the impact of their behaviour on the other
- • Develop their communication and conflict resolution skills

Using PREPARE/ENRICH with Conflicted and Devitalized Couples:

- • Discuss and praise a couple’s commitment to their relationship and willingness to work to make it better
- • Identify and help them build their strengths. If the couple does not have any “category” strengths, look for specific Agreement items within categories.
- • Begin by assessing, and if necessary, bolstering the couple’s communication by teaching assertiveness and active listening.
- • Develop conflict resolution skills using the *Ten Steps for Resolving Couple Conflict*. Use the Ten Step Model several times with them, beginning with less complex issues, and then moving toward more complex issues.
- • Augment your sessions by assigning “homework” from the *Couple’s Workbook* and/or chapters in *The Couple Check-up* book.

Key Concerns:

- • As these couples are at greater risk for abuse and divorce, share your concerns with them and gain their commitment to work on the relationship. This will often require 6-10 more intensive counselling sessions.
- • Always consider your limitations in terms of time, experience, and professional expertise when working with distressed couples.

- Develop a referral network of collaborative partners to assist you in your work and know when to refer couples to a marital therapist with more expertise.

Counselling Tips with Conflicted and Devitalized Couples:

- Avoid labelling a couple as “conflicted” or “devitalized.” These “couple types” may be helpful for you as Facilitator but may be demoralizing for a couple and limit their vision of change (*use discretion in deciding whether or not the “Couple Report” should be given to a conflicted or devitalized couple*).
- If the experience of expressing emotions becomes too intense, it may be best to wait until these feelings are more manageable (and defensiveness diminishes) before you ask couples to continue with the process of exploring emotions. At this point you may decide to shift to positive reflections, such as, “Tell me about the time you first met”, or “What did you like about each other when you were first dating”?
- Focus on both the content of what this couple says as well as their interactions with each other (e.g. what do you notice about their body language; does one partner “speak for the other”, etc.). Tell the couple what you notice and ask them to think about the meaning of their interaction pattern (is it a pattern they have developed over time; how does it serve- or not serve-the relationship, etc.)

Questions to ask Conflicted and Devitalized couples (to increase empathy and facilitate self and relationship awareness):

- What made it possible for you to share _____ (feelings, thoughts, and experiences) today with one another?
- How did you anticipate _____ (partner) would respond when _____ (e.g. “you said _____”)?
- Are there any questions you have about how _____ (partner) responded?
- In what ways do you imagine your perception of _____ (event) may be different than your partners
- What do you (one partner) suspect was the motivation for _____ (other partner’s) actions?
- What are successes you have had in your relationship?
- What are 3 goals you have for your relationship?

*Waite, L., Browning, D., Doherty, W.J., Gallagher, M., Luo, Y., Stanley, S. (2002). USA Today article: Does Divorce Make People Happy?

Working with Conflicted and Devitalized Couples

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