

Effectiveness of Empowering Couples Program

Ted Burleson, Ph.D. (2004)

Abstract:

This pre-post study clearly demonstrated that the Empowering Couples Program can significantly improve the quality of a marriage. There were 43 married couples that participated in the group program. On the 17 ENRICH Couple Scales, males significantly improved on 14 out of 17 scales, females improved on all 17 scales and the couples improved on all 13 areas containing couple scores. Almost all of the couples (95%) maintained or improved their couple type. The couples really enjoyed the Program and all would recommend it to other couples.

Overview of Program:

There were 43 married couples that participated in a twelve-week Empowering Couples Group Program, led by Ted Burleson. These couples attended twelve, forty-five minute sessions over the course of three months.

Each couple was given a copy of the Empowering Couples book which contains ten chapters on a variety of relationship topics. All chapters in the Empowering Couples book were presented and discussed during these sessions. The three chapters the participants enjoyed the most were Communication, Conflict Resolution, and Mapping Your Couple Relationship.

Participants Reactions to Program:

The two main relationship skills taught in this program were communication and conflict resolution. About three quarters (73%) of participants indicated that, as a result of this program, their competency in these two areas was “Generally” to “Much Better.”

A majority (89%) of participants described the book as “Generally Interesting” to “Very Interesting.” Almost all (92%) of the participants also indicated that they found the Empowering Couples Program as a whole to be “Generally” to “Very Interesting.”

Each chapter of the Empowering Couples book contains a couple quiz and nearly three-fourths (74%) of the participants thought the quizzes were “Generally” to “Very Interesting.” Group discussions with other couples are also an important part of the Empowering Couples Group Program and 68% of participants said these discussions were “Generally” to “Very Helpful.”

When asked if they would recommend this program to friends, 100% of the participants answered “Yes.”

Changes on the ENRICH Couple Inventory:

The ENRICH Couple Inventory contains 17 couple scales and key relationship areas covered by the Empowering Couples Program (Table 1). The relationship scales include marital satisfaction, communication, conflict resolution, personality issues, financial management, sexual relationship, couple cohesion, couple flexibility and spiritual beliefs.

Male scores increased significant on 14 of the 17 scales, and the female scores increased significantly in all 17 scales. Using couple agreement scores, these significantly improved on all 13 scales where couple scores could be calculated. In other words, they were significant improvements in most of the relationship areas for the males, females and couples.

Changes in Type of Couple Relationship:

There are five types of married couples based on ENRICH and they range from the most happy to most unhappy: Vitalized, Harmonious, Traditional, Conflicted and Devitalized (see Figure 1).

For 95% of the couples, they either maintained the same type or improved their couple type (see Figure 2). Almost half (48%) of the couples move up one or more couple types. All of the Vitalized stayed the same and all of the Harmonious couples moved to the Vitalized type. The traditional couples showed the least change. All of the highest risk couples, the Devitalized type, moved up one or more levels.

The following is what couples most *liked* about the program:

“It helped me to see that the problems we face are normal and faced by others and can be fixed!! We really benefited from our meetings.”

“It helped open communication lines again about some problem areas we had been ignoring.”

“It made me feel better about my relationship with my spouse and appreciate our strengths.”

“It makes you think of how your partner views your relationship. It helps you see it from the other side.”

The following is what couples most *disliked* about the program:

“I would have loved to have had more time to go through the studies and discussions slower.”

“Not enough, group/small group discussion.”

“It was too short—we needed more time to explore areas. It would really help to have some time for communication.”

The following are other comments the couples wanted to share about the program:

“Thanks so much for allowing our congregation to participate in this program. I truly believe it has saved our marriage.”

“Classes like this make me realize that we are all striving for the same things....a lifetime of happy marriage until we meet each other in heaven.”


“I truly enjoyed the class and would recommend it to ANYONE! It was nice to have something for couples that have problems, but not serious ones. It helps us to strengthen our relationship by taking care of our stumbling blocks while they help us to grow closer to each other!”


“Thanks. It saved our marriage.”

For more information about the Empowering Couples Program, go to the website at: www.lifeinnovations.com

Figure 1: Types of Couples at Pre-test & Post-test

		POST-TEST					Total	%
		Vital.	Harmon.	Trad.	Conf.	Devit.		
P R E T E S T	Vital.	18 (100%)	0	0	0	0	18	42
	Harmon.	2 (100%)	0	0	0	0	2	5
	Trad.	3 (22%)	0	9 (64%)	2 (14%)	0	14	32
	Conf.	1 (14%)	1 (14%)	3 (43%)	2 (29%)	0	7	16
	Devit.	0	0	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0	2	5
Total		24	1	13	5	0	43	
%		56	2	30	12	0		100

 = Couple increases one couple type or more

 = Couple stays the same at pre and post


 = Couple decreases one couple type or more

Table 1: Empowering Couples Program

Changes from Pre-test to Post-test Using Male, Female, & PCA Scores (n=43 couples)

	MALE Scores			FEMALE Scores			Couple Scores (PCA)		
	n = 43 males			n = 43 females			n = 43 couples		
	Pre	Post	t	Pre	Post	t	Pre	Post	t
Marriage Satisfaction	63.0	69.7	2.76**	57.1	66.1	4.02***	54.9	66.7	3.53***
Personality Issues	61.7	67.9	2.31**	57.3	62.7	1.94*	47.4	56.5	3.24***
Communication	61.1	67.9	2.47**	52.7	63.3	3.92***	47.0	61.2	4.59***
Conflict Resolution	58.2	66.5	3.38***	56.7	63.8	2.74**	37.4	48.6	4.32***
Financial Management	63.7	67.7	1.77*	65.5	69.2	1.70*	62.6	69.5	2.65**
Leisure Activities	42.9	49.1	2.99**	40.8	52.7	4.15***	43.7	56.7	4.83***
Sexual Relationship	52.0	59.1	2.58**	50.1	59.4	2.65**	55.8	64.4	2.76**
Children & Parenting	73.5	79.4	2.66**	74.0	80.3	2.66**	67.0	77.0	3.15***
Family & Friends	74.4	77.4	1.25	70.3	78.5	2.55**	70.9	80.0	3.41***
Role Relationship	55.0	60.7	2.02*	46.1	55.2	3.26***	68.6	77.7	3.29***
Spiritual Beliefs	79.1	81.5	1.29	76.2	83.1	2.57**	86.1	93.5	2.93**
Couple Closeness	63.4	67.0	1.91*	64.7	67.6	1.74*	76.1	84.7	3.24***
Couple Flexibility	53.4	64.6	4.66***	51.1	62.9	4.87***	48.4	66.1	6.40***
Self-Confidence	74.7	82.4	2.8**	63.2	69.6	2.24**	n/a	n/a	n/a
Assertiveness	68.8	77.5	3.56**	65.5	74.4	3.46***	n/a	n/a	n/a
Avoidance	33.5	29.6	1.60	42.6	36.7	2.01*	n/a	n/a	n/a
Partner Dominance	38.0	31.1	4.13***	46.4	35.7	4.13***	n/a	n/a	n/a

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001. No star = Not Significant