

QUESTIONS

PREPARE  ENRICH
• *building strong marriages* •

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS
FOR ENGAGED COUPLES
Customized Version

PREPARE/ENRICH Program
Life Innovations, Inc.



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

Introduction

The Follow-Up Questions for Engaged Couples are intended to be used by PREPARE/ENRICH Facilitators and Mentor Couples giving feedback on the Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH. These questions should be used in combination with the exercises from the *Couple's Workbook*.

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

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

Process for Using Follow-Up Questions

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

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Communication

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

- **I wish my partner were more willing to share his/her feelings with me.**
 - When do you find it difficult to share your feelings with your partner?
 - Why is sharing feelings valuable for relationships?
 - When your partner talks about his/her feelings, how do you respond?
 - What are you feeling right now?
- **Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my partner tells me.**
 - Can you share with your partner when it is that you have difficulty believing all that he/she tells you?
 - What do you need to do that will enable your partner to have confidence in what you say?
 - Do you feel your partner is not telling the truth or is exaggerating the truth?
 - Has your partner done something that has betrayed your faith in him/her and if so can you share it?
- + **I can express my true feelings to my partner.**
 - What makes it difficult for you to express your true feelings to your partner?
 - How do you feel when your partner fails to share his/her feelings with you?
 - What can you do to help your partner share his/her feelings?
 - What can your partner do that will help you to share your feelings?
- **When we are having a problem, my partner often refuses to talk about it.**
 - How do you handle problems that arise in your relationship?
 - Why do you sometimes avoid dealing with a problem when it arises?
 - What does it mean to be silent or refuse to talk about it?
 - How do you feel when your partner refuses to talk about a problem?
- + **My partner is a very good listener.**
 - What is it that your partner does that makes you feel he/she is not listening?
 - What can you do that will let your partner know that you are listening and that you care about what is being said?
- **At times it is hard for me to ask my partner for what I want.**
 - Can you share the reason why you find it hard to ask your partner for what you want?
 - How do you respond when your partner asks you for what he/she wants?
 - What happens when you tell others what you want?
 - How is this related to assertiveness?
- **It is difficult for me to share negative feelings with my partner.**
 - How does your partner respond when you do share negative feelings with him/her?
 - How do you respond when your partner shares his/her negative feelings with you?
 - Why do you find it difficult to share your negative feeling?
 - What could you each do to make it easier for negative feelings to be shared?
- **My partner sometimes makes comments that put me down.**
 - Would you share with your partner what he/she says that makes you feel put down?
 - How do you tell your partner when you feel put down?
 - How could you express your concerns or displeasure without putting your partner down?
 - What triggers you to make such comments?
- **My partner often doesn't understand how I feel.**
 - How do you share your feelings with your partner?
 - How do you respond when your partner is sharing his/her feelings?
 - How often do you take time to share your feelings or listen to your partner?
 - How do you let your partner know that you understand how he/she feels?

Conflict Resolution

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

- **Sometimes we have serious disputes over unimportant issues.**
 - How often do you have serious disputes over unimportant issues?
 - What makes you think that the issue is unimportant?
 - Even if an issue seems unimportant, how important are the feelings that fuel the dispute?
- **At times my partner does not take our disagreements seriously.**
 - When there is a disagreement between you how do you respond to your partner's concerns?
 - How do you know your partner is not taking a disagreement seriously?
 - When your partner is sharing his/her thoughts over a disagreement, what can you do to let your partner know you care and are listening?
 - What are some things about which you seriously disagree?
- + **When we discuss problems, my partner understands my opinions and ideas.**
 - How do you respond to each other when you are discussing a problem?
 - When you are discussing a problem, what helps you know that your partner understands or does not understand you?
 - What do you do to let your partner know you understand your partner's opinions and ideas?
 - How important is to you that your partner understand your opinions and ideas?
- + **Even during disagreements, I can share my feelings and ideas with my partner.**
 - Share with your partner why you find it difficult to share your feelings and ideas when you are having a disagreement?
 - How does anger impact your ability to share feelings and ideas productively?
 - At what point in a disagreement do you recognize your need for a time-out?
 - Why is it important to be able to share your feelings with your partner?
- **I go out of my way to avoid conflict with my partner.**
 - Can you share with your partner how you feel about conflict?
 - How do you feel about yourself and your relationship when you avoid a conflict?
 - What could you both do to resolve a conflict rather than avoid it?
 - Are you handling conflict in a way that is similar to your parents?
- **When we argue, I usually end up feeling responsible for the problem.**
 - Why do you think you end up feeling responsible?
 - Share with your partner a time when you felt this way.
 - What is your response when you disagree with your partner?
 - Are you more interested in winning the argument than resolving the dispute?
 - When you win and your partner loses, what happens to your relationship?
- **To end an argument, I tend to give in too quickly.**
 - What does it mean to you to "give in too quickly"?
 - How often do you choose to "give in" to end an argument – rarely, sometimes, often, always?
 - How do you feel when you give in too quickly to your partner?
- **At times I feel some of our differences never get resolved.**
 - What prevents a good resolution to your differences?
 - What could you do differently the next time there is a difference between you?
 - How does it feel for you to leave things unresolved?
 - Can you accept your partner's difference and still love each other?
- **To avoid hurting my partner's feelings during an argument, I tend to say nothing.**
 - What concerns you most about hurting your partner's feelings?
 - What is the short-term gain for saying nothing?
 - What is the long term price of silence for your relationship?
 - Is there room in your relationship for both of you to be assertive?
- **My partner and I have different ideas about the best way to solve our disagreements.**
 - Share what you believe to be the best way to solve a disagreement?
 - Why do you feel that your way is the best way?
 - Describe your "different ideas" about solving your disagreements?
 - What can you both do in solving a disagreement that would result in a win-win situation?
 - If you find that you are not able to resolve a disagreement would you seek help? If so where would you go?

Partner Style and Habits

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

- **I am sometimes upset or embarrassed by my partner's behavior.**
 - What behaviors are you aware of that upset your partner?
 - What behavior on the part of your partner embarrasses you?
 - When you are embarrassed, how do you share your feelings with your partner?
 - How will you respond if this behavior does not change?
- **I wish my partner were more reliable and followed through on more things.**
 - Can you share with your partner some specific things on which you would like to see more follow through?
 - How have each of you addressed this lack of follow through?
 - Why do you suppose you choose not to follow through on these things?
- **Sometimes my partner is too stubborn.**
 - Can either of you describe a specific time when you felt your partner was too stubborn?
 - How does this affect your relationship?
 - What does being "too stubborn" mean to you?
 - What are you each willing to change about how you deal with one another?
- **I am sometimes concerned that my partner appears to be unhappy and withdrawn.**
 - Describe the times when you feel most unhappy and withdrawn?
 - How can your partner be supportive during these times?
 - Whose responsibility is it to make your partner feel happy and involved?
- **Sometimes I am concerned about my partner's temper.**
 - What is most concerning to you about your partner's temper?
 - What are you aware of that seems to trigger your temper?
 - How do these temperamental outbursts impact your relationship?
 - Do you ever feel out of control? What methods can you use to establish more self-control?
- **I wish my partner were less critical or negative about some topics.**
 - How do you feel about yourself when your partner is being critical or negative?
 - What topics seem to generate the most criticism or negativity?
 - Share your feelings with one another about this issue.
 - How can you be honest and assertive without being overly negative or critical?
- **Sometimes my partner seems to be too controlling.**
 - How do you define "too controlling"?
 - How do you respond to controlling behavior?
 - How can you change the way decisions are made so that each person feels they are sharing equally in the process?
 - What scares you most about not being in control?
- **Sometimes I have difficulty dealing with my partner's moodiness.**
 - How do you respond to your partner's moodiness?
 - Can you talk about what triggers your moodiness?
 - How do the two of you communicate during these times of moodiness?
- **My partner has some personal habits that bother me.**
 - Have you talked openly about which habits bother you?
 - What are you each willing to do to change those habits that bother your partner?
 - How will you respond if your partner does not change?
 - How much are you willing to accept?
 - How realistic is it to find someone with no habits or traits that bother you?
- **I am unhappy with some of my partner's personality characteristics or personal habits.**
 - Are there areas where your personality is out of balance (i.e. extremely disorganized)?
 - What strategies can you use to bring more balance to your personality style?
 - How will you respond if your partner does not change the habits that bother you?
 - How realistic is it to find someone with no habits or traits that bother you?

Financial Management

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

- **Even after marriage, we plan on keeping our finances separate.**
 - Do you believe it is better to combine your finances or keep them separate? Why?
 - What concerns do you have about combining your finances?
 - How are finances related to trust and commitment?
- **I am concerned that my partner is more of a spender than I am.**
 - What are your spending habits now?
 - What were the spending habits of your family?
 - How do both of you believe money should be spent? Do you agree or disagree?
 - What factors influence how you spend money?
 - What will happen 15 or 20 years down the road if there is no change in your spending habits?
- **We haven't decided how to handle our finances yet.**
 - Who will make the decision in regards to how you handle your finances?
 - How will you set up your checking account(s)?
 - How do you plan to spend, save, and/or give away a portion of your income?
 - How can you work toward a financial plan?
- + **We usually agree on how to spend money.**
 - When do disagreements arise?
 - How do you handle it when you disagree?
 - How often do you agree on spending priorities?
 - What do you do or say if you disagree with how your partner is spending their money?
- + **I am satisfied with our decisions about how much money we should save.**
 - What percentage of your income would you each like to save?
 - Have you discussed your savings goals as a couple?
 - Would you be willing to seek professional help in developing a financial plan for the future?
 - To whom would you go for help?
- + **We have a specific plan for how much money we can spend each month.**
 - What kind of plan do you have in regards to spending each month?
 - How will you decide on how to use your money?
 - How will you keep track of your monthly spending?
 - Do you know how much money you will have budgeted for spending each month?
- **I have some concerns about whether our income will be sufficient.**
 - Have each of you shared the details of your expected income and expenditures after you marry?
 - What are your greatest concerns about your future income?
 - Do you plan to make any adjustments to your lifestyle after marriage?
- **Sometimes I wish my partner were more careful about spending money.**
 - What are your spending habits now? How are they different from your partner's?
 - What were the spending habits of your family?
 - How do both of you believe money should be spent? Do you agree or disagree?
- + **We have figured out what our financial status will be after we marry.**
 - Have you looked at what your combined total income will be after the wedding?
 - Are you taking on more debt because of wedding bills?
 - Have you given thought to the expenses you will have that come with marriage such as housing, insurance, taxes, food and clothing, etc.?
 - Do you need help in developing a budget or a plan for handling your finances?
- **One or both of us have unpaid bills or debts that concern me.**
 - Will each of you provide the other with an itemized account of your debts or bills?
 - What specific debts are there that give you concern?
 - How and when will you decide to resolve this issue of unpaid bills or debts?
 - As you enter into a marriage, are you willing to take on the debts of your partner as your own?

Leisure Activities

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

- **I wish my partner had more time and energy for recreation with me.**
 - What recreational activities would like your partner to do with you?
 - What do you enjoy doing together?
 - What do you enjoy doing alone or with others?
 - Why you seem not to have the time and energy for recreation together.
 - Do you feel your partner is demanding too much of your time?
- **My idea of a good time differs somewhat from my partner's.**
 - Share with each other your idea of a good time.
 - How does your partner's idea of a good time affect your relationship with each other?
 - Can you come to an agreement about certain activities you both enjoy?
- + **It is easy for us to make new couple friends.**
 - Can you share why you find it difficult to make new friends?
 - Where could you go to meet others couples who share your interests?
 - Have you considered becoming involved in a community service group or agency?
- + **My partner and I enjoy the same interests and recreational activities.**
 - How is your background different from each other regarding social and recreational activities?
 - Are you willing to develop new social and recreational skills you could do together?
 - Can you agree on a specific activity you could begin together?
- **I wish my partner and I shared more activities that we both found enjoyable.**
 - How do you think it would impact your relationship if you shared more social and recreational activities?
 - As individuals, what recreational activities do you each enjoy?
 - What types of activities did you see your parents enjoy together?
- **I sometimes feel pressured to participate in activities my partner enjoys.**
 - Can you share with your when you feel pressured to participate?
 - Can you share with each other which activities you enjoy doing that do not require your partner to participate?
 - Why is it important to have your partner participate with you in an activity that interests you?
 - Talk about those activities you both enjoy and how you plan to pursue them?
- **I am concerned that my partner has too many activities or hobbies.**
 - What constitutes "too many activities or hobbies"?
 - Are these activities or hobbies shared or are they pursued apart from each other?
 - How are your activities or hobbies interfering with your relationship?
- + **We find it easy to think of things to do together.**
 - What social and recreational activities do you both enjoy?
 - Which of you leads the way in thinking of things to do together?
 - What makes it difficult to think of things you could do together?
 - Can you agree on a specific activity you could do together?
- **As a couple, I wish we did a better job of balancing time together and time apart.**
 - What makes you feel that the two of you do not have a good balance of leisure time?
 - What would be a good balance of time together and time apart?
 - Do you feel that your partner would rather be alone at times? If so, how do you respond to that?
 - How do your distinct personalities relate to your needs for time together and apart?
- **My partner's activities (television, computer, sports, etc.) interfere with our time together.**
 - How do you feel your partner's activities interfere with your time together?
 - Have you discussed your concerns with your partner? How has he/she responded?
 - Do you feel a need to spend more time together than you are presently spending?
 - Are you able to give your partner some free time to do some things alone?

Sexual Expectations

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

- + **I am comfortable talking with my partner about sexual issues.**
 - Can you share with your partner what makes you uncomfortable about these topics?
 - How does the language used when discussing sexual issues make you feel?
 - Do you show patience and respect to each other when talking about sexual issues?
 - Is it *talking with your partner* about sex or is it *talking about sex in general* that feels uncomfortable?
- + **I am completely satisfied with the amount of affection my partner gives me.**
 - Can you share with your partner what kind of affection you prefer?
 - What are the different ways you can demonstrate your affection for your partner?
 - How can you share your needs for affection with your partner?
 - Do you talk about how you can meet each other's need for affection?
- **My partner sometimes uses or refuses affection unfairly.**
 - What does it mean to you for your partner to "use affection unfairly"?
 - What do you see as the relationships between communication, intimacy and affection?
 - How do you feel when affection is refused?
 - Why is it sometimes difficult to be affectionate?
- **I have concerns about my partner's faithfulness to me.**
 - What leads you to think your partner has difficulty remaining faithful?
 - What can you do to strengthen your love for each other?
 - What changes do you need to make to create more trust?
- + **My partner and I talk openly about our sexual expectations.**
 - What makes it difficult to talk openly about your sexual expectations?
 - How can your partner be responsive to your sexual expectations if you do not express yourself?
 - Are you aware that your partner struggles to share his/her sexual expectations?
- **I am concerned that my partner is interested in viewing sexually explicit material.**
 - What is your definition of sexually explicit material?
 - Do you believe pornography is wrong or "no big deal"?
 - Can you describe how you feel when your partner views pornography?
 - How does sexually explicit material impact your relationship?
 - Are you willing to live with this behavior if it does not change?
- **I am reluctant to be affectionate with my partner because he/she often interprets it as a sexual advance.**
 - What does being affectionate mean to you?
 - How willing are you to openly discuss your sex and affection preferences with one another?
 - Do you understand one another's preferences for non-sexual touch and affection?
- **I am concerned that my partner's interest in sex might be different than mine.**
 - How do you think your partner's interest in sex might be different than yours?
 - What do you believe is the basic difference in the way men and women approach sex?
 - Can you share with your partner what your sexual expectations are?
- + **We have discussed and decided on the best approach to family planning or birth control for us.**
 - Do you agree on when you would like to start a family?
 - How many children would you like to have?
 - Have you discussed with your doctor the best method of birth control or family planning for you?
 - What are your feelings about using birth control?
 - When do the two of you plan to discuss family planning and birth control?
- + **I am comfortable with our current level of sexual activity.**
 - What do you believe the boundaries of your sexual activity should be?
 - How can you both take steps to respect these boundaries?
 - What makes you uncomfortable with your current level of sexual activity?
 - Do you believe sex is intended for marriage, or anyone in a loving relationship?

Sexual Expectations (Catholic)

- + **I am comfortable talking with my partner about sexual issues.**
 - Can you share with your partner what makes you uncomfortable about these topics?
 - How does the language used when discussing sexual issues make you feel?
 - Do you show patience and respect to each other when talking about sexual issues?
 - Is it *talking with your partner* about sex or is it *talking about sex in general* that feels uncomfortable?
- + **I am completely satisfied with the amount of affection my partner gives me.**
 - Can you share with your partner what kind of affection you prefer?
 - What are the different ways you can demonstrate your affection for your partner?
 - How can you share your needs for affection with your partner?
 - Do you talk about how you can meet each other's need for affection?
- **My partner sometimes uses or refuses affection unfairly.**
 - What does it mean to you for your partner to "use affection unfairly"?
 - What do you see as the relationships between communication, intimacy and affection?
 - How do you feel when affection is refused?
 - Why is it sometimes difficult to be affectionate?
- **I have concerns about my partner's faithfulness to me.**
 - What leads you to think your partner has difficulty remaining faithful?
 - What can you do to strengthen your love for each other?
 - What changes do you need to make to create more trust?
- + **My partner and I talk openly about our sexual expectations.**
 - What makes it difficult to talk openly about your sexual expectations?
 - How can your partner be responsive to your sexual expectations if you do not express yourself?
 - Are you aware that your partner struggles to share his/her sexual expectations?
- **I am concerned that my partner is interested in viewing sexually explicit material (pornography).**
 - What is your definition of sexually explicit material?
 - Do you believe pornography is wrong or "no big deal"?
 - Can you describe how you feel when your partner views pornography?
 - How does sexually explicit material impact your relationship?
 - Are you willing to live with this behavior if it does not change?
- **I am reluctant to be affectionate with my partner because he/she often interprets it as a sexual advance.**
 - What does being affectionate mean to you?
 - How willing are you to openly discuss your sex and affection preferences with one another?
 - Do you understand one another's preferences for non-sexual touch and affection?
- **I am concerned that my partner's interest in sex might be different than mine.**
 - How do you think your partner's interest in sex might be different than yours?
 - What do you believe is the basic difference in the way men and women approach sex?
 - Can you share with your partner what your sexual expectations are?
- + **We have discussed and decided to use natural family planning.**
 - Do you agree on when you would like to start a family?
 - How many children would you like to have?
 - How well do you understand natural family planning?
 - When do the two of you plan to discuss natural family planning?
- + **We have discussed and agreed on the boundaries of our premarital sexual activity.**
 - What do you believe the boundaries of your sexual activity should be?
 - How can you both take steps to respect these boundaries?
 - Are you both comfortable with your current level of sexual activity?
 - Do you believe sex is intended for marriage, or anyone in a loving relationship?

Sexual Expectations (Protestant)

- + **I am comfortable talking with my partner about sexual issues.**
 - Can you share with your partner what makes you uncomfortable about these topics?
 - How does the language used when discussing sexual issues make you feel?
 - Do you show patience and respect to each other when talking about sexual issues?
 - Is it *talking with your partner* about sex or is it *talking about sex in general* that feels uncomfortable?
- + **I am completely satisfied with the amount of affection my partner gives me.**
 - Can you share with your partner what kind of affection you need?
 - What are the different ways you can demonstrate your affection for your partner?
 - How can you share your needs for affection with your partner?
 - Do you talk about how you can meet each other's need for affection?
- **My partner sometimes uses or refuses affection unfairly.**
 - What does it mean to you for your partner to "use affection unfairly"?
 - What do you see as the relationships between communication, intimacy and affection?
 - How do you feel when affection is refused?
 - Why is it sometimes difficult to be affectionate?
- **I have concerns about my partner's faithfulness to me.**
 - What leads you to think your partner has difficulty remaining faithful?
 - What can you do to strengthen your love for each other?
 - What changes do you need to make to create more trust?
- + **My partner and I talk openly about our sexual expectations.**
 - What makes it difficult to talk openly about your sexual expectations?
 - How can your partner be responsive to your sexual expectations if you do not express yourself?
 - Are you aware that your partner struggles to share his/her sexual expectations?
- **I am concerned that my partner is interested in viewing sexually explicit material (pornography).**
 - What is your definition of sexually explicit material?
 - Do you believe pornography is wrong or "no big deal"?
 - Can you describe how you feel when your partner views pornography?
 - How does sexually explicit material impact your relationship?
 - Are you willing to live with this behavior if it does not change?
- **I am reluctant to be affectionate with my partner because he/she often interprets it as a sexual advance.**
 - What does being affectionate mean to you?
 - How willing are you to openly discuss your sex and affection preferences with one another?
 - Do you understand one another's preferences for non-sexual touch and affection?
- **I am concerned that my partner's interest in sex might be different than mine.**
 - How do you think your partner's interest in sex might be different than yours?
 - What do you believe is the basic difference in the way men and women approach sex?
 - Can you share with your partner what your sexual expectations are?
- + **We have discussed and decided on the best approach to family planning or birth control for us.**
 - Do you agree on when you would like to start a family?
 - How many children would you like to have?
 - Have you discussed with your doctor the best method of birth control or family planning for you?
 - What are your feelings about using birth control?
 - When do the two of you plan to discuss family planning and birth control?
- + **We have discussed and agreed on the boundaries of our premarital sexual activity.**
 - What do you believe the boundaries of your sexual activity should be?
 - How can you both take steps to respect these boundaries?
 - Are you both comfortable with your current level of sexual activity?
 - Do you believe sex is intended for marriage, or anyone in a loving relationship?

Sexual Expectations (Over 55)

- + **I am comfortable talking with my partner about sexual issues.**
 - Can you share with your partner what makes you uncomfortable about these topics?
 - How does the language used when discussing sexual issues make you feel?
 - Do you show patience and respect to each other when talking about sexual issues?
 - Is it the matter of talking with your partner about sex or is it the matter of talking about sex in general that feels uncomfortable?
- + **I am completely satisfied with the amount of affection my partner gives me.**
 - Can you share with your partner what kind of affection you need?
 - What are the different ways you can demonstrate your affection for your partner?
 - How can you share your needs for affection with your partner?
 - Do you talk about how you can meet each other's need for affection?
- **My partner sometimes uses or refuses affection unfairly.**
 - What does it mean to you for your partner to "use affection unfairly"?
 - What do you see as the relationships between communication, intimacy and affection?
 - How do you feel when affection is refused?
 - Why is it sometimes difficult to be affectionate?
- **I have concerns about my partner's faithfulness to me.**
 - What leads you to think your partner has difficulty remaining faithful?
 - What can you do to strengthen your love for each other?
 - What changes do you need to make to create more trust?
- + **My partner and I talk openly about our sexual expectations.**
 - What makes it difficult to talk openly about your sexual expectations?
 - How can your partner be responsive to your sexual expectations if you do not express yourself?
 - Are you aware that your partner struggles to share his/her sexual expectations?
- **I am concerned that my partner is interested in viewing sexually explicit material.**
 - What is your definition of sexually explicit material?
 - Do you believe pornography is wrong or "no big deal"?
 - Can you describe how you feel when your partner views pornography?
 - How does sexually explicit material impact your relationship?
 - Are you willing to live with this behavior if it does not change?
- **I am reluctant to be affectionate with my partner because he/she often interprets it as a sexual advance.**
 - What does being affectionate mean to you?
 - How willing are you to openly discuss your sex and affection preferences with one another?
 - Do you understand one another's preferences for non-sexual touch and affection?
- **I am concerned that my partner's interest in sex might be different than mine.**
 - How do you think your partner's interest in sex might be different than yours?
 - What do you believe is the basic difference in the way men and women approach sex?
 - Can you share with your partner what your sexual expectations are?
- **I am concerned about the ways our sexual relationship may change as we age.**
 - What concerns do you have?
 - Can you share your concerns with your partner?
 - Have you consulted your physician about the changes you may experience due to age?
- + **I am comfortable with our current level of sexual activity.**
 - What do you believe the boundaries of your sexual activity should be?
 - How can you both take steps to respect these boundaries?
 - What makes you uncomfortable with your current level of sexual activity?
 - Do you believe sex is intended for marriage, or anyone in a loving relationship?

Family and Friends

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

- + **I really enjoy spending time with most of my relatives-to-be and future in-laws.**
 - What concerns do you have about your partner's family?
 - What is it that you could do to make the time together more enjoyable?
 - Has this become a problem between you and your partner?
- + **I really enjoy being with most of my partner's friends.**
 - Can you share with your partner what it is that you don't enjoy about his/her friends?
 - Have you discussed developing new friends whom both of you would enjoy?
 - What can you do to develop a better relationship with friends of your partner?
- + **My partner gets along well with most of my friends.**
 - What is it that makes you believe that your partner does not get along well with most of your friends?
 - Ask your partner to share with you what he/she feels is the problem?
 - What do you as a couple have in common with your friends?
 - Have you discussed developing new sets of friends who have more in common with you?
- **I have concerns when my partner spends time with friends or co-workers of the opposite sex.**
 - What concerns do you have about your partner's friends of the opposite sex?
 - What fears do you have regarding your partner spending time with friends or co-workers of the opposite sex?
 - What do you believe should be done about this issue?
 - What are you willing to do about this issue?
- **My partner is too involved with or influenced by his/her family.**
 - Have you shared this concern with your partner?
 - In what ways do you see your partner depending upon his/her family?
 - How does your partner feel about this influence from his/her family?
 - What can the two of you do that will enable you to become more independent from the family?
- + **My family accepts me completely and respects the decisions I make.**
 - Why do you feel that your family does not accept you?
 - How do they communicate this to you?
 - What decisions have you made that you believe your family does not respect?
 - Are there things about yourself that you have difficulty accepting?
 - How much influence does your family have on the decisions you make?
- **Sometimes my partner's friends or family interfere with our relationship.**
 - Can you share with your partner how you believe their friends or family interfere with your relationship?
 - How do you respond to your partner's family or friends when they interfere?
- **I am worried that accepting financial assistance or advice from our families will cause problems for us.**
 - Which family members are more likely to assist you financially?
 - When do you feel it is appropriate to accept either their financial assistance or their advice?
 - What are the positive or negative aspects of accepting their help?
 - Do you agree on how both of you will handle this?
 - How can you say "No thanks" without rejecting them?
- **I am worried that one or both of our families may cause trouble in our marriage.**
 - Which family members do you anticipate will cause problems?
 - Have you discussed these concerns with your partner?
 - Is your relationship strong enough to overcome these potential challenges?
 - What boundaries could you agree to set with your families that will help you avoid trouble?
- **Some relatives or friends have concerns about us getting married.**
 - What are some of the concerns expressed by your relatives or by your friends about your marriage?
 - How important to you are the concerns of others?
 - How do you respond to these concerns?

Relationship Roles

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

- E **A career can be equally important to both partners.**
 - Can you share why having a career is important to you?
 - Do you see your partner's career being more important than yours and if so why?
 - How will you balance your career(s) with your family life?
- E **I am happy with the flexibility we have in our roles and responsibilities.**
 - Do you feel that your roles are too flexible or too rigid? If so, why?
 - What do you feel needs to be done to handle your roles and responsibilities better?
 - What types of roles and responsibilities are you used to fulfilling?
- T **A marriage functions best if one person assumes the role as head of the household.**
 - Can you share your expectations for who will be the "head of the household"?
 - Have you discussed your feelings about leadership and decision making?
 - On what do you base your opinion in this area?
- E **I expect to have an equal relationship, where we will share leadership and decision making.**
 - How did your parents balance leadership and decision making?
 - What does "equal" mean to you?
 - Are there some areas of the relationship where you prefer to take the lead?
 - Are there some areas of the relationship where you prefer to let your partner lead?
- E **I think we will be happier if there is an even balance of power in our relationship.**
 - How would you define "power" in a relationship?
 - How would you prefer to balance the power in the relationship?
 - What factors do you believe lead to happiness in a marriage?
- E **If both partners are working, each person should do the same amount of household chores.**
 - How do you plan to balance your work with household chores and responsibilities?
 - Are there certain chores that neither of you like to do?
 - What would need to happen in this area to make it feel most fair?
- E **In our marriage, I expect my partner to consult me when making important decisions.**
 - Who made the decisions in your home growing up?
 - How do you make important decisions today?
 - Would you be willing to allow your partner to make all the important decisions?
 - How would you feel if you were not included in making important decisions?
- E **When it comes to roles and responsibilities, both partners should be willing to adjust.**
 - What adjustments do you feel a wife must be willing to make?
 - What adjustments do you feel a husband must be willing to make?
 - What type of adjustments you are not willing to make?
 - Have you talked about the adjustments both of you will have to make when you are married?
- T **I am concerned about doing more than my share of the household tasks.**
 - Have you shared this concern with your partner?
 - Why do you feel that you are doing/will do more than your share of the tasks?
 - What do you feel is a fair share of the household tasks?
 - What can both of you do now to resolve this issue?
- E **We expect to divide household chores based on our interests and skills rather than on traditional roles.**
 - What roles did your parents choose in regards to household chores?
 - What do you see your role to be?
 - What do you see your partner's role to be?
 - Have you shared with each other what you would like for your roles to be regarding household chores?

Role Transitions (Over 55)

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

- **After retirement, I'm concerned about how we will adjust to spending more time together.**
 - Share with each other what changes you expect regarding spending time together.
 - Can you begin planning how you will balance time together and time apart?
 - Share how you feel about the possibility of your partner spending more time at home.
- **As our lifestyle changes, I am concerned I will have more role adjustments than my partner.**
 - What do you feel those role adjustments will be?
 - How will your lifestyle change?
 - What are the changes that give you concern?
 - What role changes do you believe your partner will face?
- **As our lifestyle changes, I worry that power struggles may arise.**
 - How have you handled matters of power and control in the past?
 - What would you suggest to arrive at an agreement on sharing power in your relationship?
 - Discuss how power can be shared so you both win?
- **Decisions about our lifestyle are made mostly by my partner.**
 - Share with your partner how you feel when he/she makes most of the decisions.
 - What joint decisions have been made regarding your lifestyle?
 - How can you both begin to share in these decisions?
- **I am concerned about doing more than my share of the household tasks.**
 - Have you shared this concern with your partner?
 - Why do you feel that you are doing more than your share of the tasks?
 - What do you feel is a fair share of the household tasks?
 - What can both of you do now to resolve this issue?
- + **I am happy with how we share leadership in our relationship.**
 - Do you feel that leadership in your relationship is too flexible or too rigid? If so, why?
 - What do you feel needs to be done to improve the ways in which you share leadership?
 - How did your parents share leadership?
- + **I am happy with the flexibility we have in our roles and responsibilities.**
 - Do you feel that your roles are too flexible or too rigid? If so, why?
 - What do you feel needs to be done to have a better role relationship?
 - What types of roles and responsibilities are you most open to fulfilling?
- + **My partner would not make an important decision without consulting me.**
 - Who made the decisions in your home growing up?
 - How do you make important decisions today?
 - Would you be willing to allow your partner to make all the important decisions?
 - How would you feel if you were not included in making important decisions?
- + **We are flexible and adjust well to changes in our relationship.**
 - What are the changes in your relationship which you have difficulty adjusting to?
 - Which of you has more difficulty adjusting to change?
 - Share with your partner the changes that give you trouble and the changes you find easy to accept?
- + **We participate equally in setting new goals.**
 - How do the two of you discuss and set new goals?
 - What can each of you do to share more equally in setting new goals?
 - If your partner makes most of the decisions, how do you feel about this?

Spiritual Beliefs (Standard)

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

- + **We are satisfied with how we express our spiritual values and beliefs.**
 - What makes you feel dissatisfied with how you currently express your spiritual values and beliefs?
 - Have you clearly expressed your values and beliefs to each other?
 - What spiritual rituals or practices help you express your beliefs?
- **My partner and I disagree about our spiritual beliefs.**
 - What spiritual beliefs do you agree on? What do you disagree on?
 - What were the spiritual beliefs of your parents?
 - Can you allow each other to have their beliefs without trying to change them?
- **Spiritual differences cause some tension in our relationship.**
 - What are the differences in your spiritual beliefs that seem to cause tension?
 - When you discuss your spiritual beliefs do you feel your partner listens and understands you?
 - Can you accept your partner's spiritual differences?
 - How do you plan to handle your differences?
- + **We share very similar spiritual beliefs.**
 - Have you shared your spiritual beliefs with each other?
 - Are you able to listen to each other without criticizing or arguing about your differences?
 - Are you both part of the same religious community?
 - What is your religious background?
- + **My spiritual beliefs are an important part of the commitment I have to my partner.**
 - What is the relationship between your spiritual beliefs and the commitment you feel to your partner?
 - How do your spiritual beliefs inform your view of marriage?
 - Describe your commitment to one another? Is your commitment a permanent one?
- + **I believe our marriage must include active participation in a place of worship.**
 - Are you active in a church/synagogue now?
 - How would you respond to your partner if they disagreed with you on this issue?
 - How important is it to you to be active in the same church/synagogue?
 - What does it mean to you to be an active participant?
- + **We rely on our spiritual beliefs during difficult times.**
 - How do you rely on your spiritual beliefs during difficult times?
 - How do you arrive at the best decision when faced with a mutual problem?
 - Where do you turn for help when you have exhausted all of your resources?
 - What gives you hope?
- + **Sharing spiritual values helps our relationship grow.**
 - What spiritual values do you hold in common?
 - How do shared spiritual values impact your relationship?
 - What factors help your relationship grow?
- **My partner and I feel closer because of our spiritual beliefs.**
 - Have you taken the time to listen to each other in regards to your spiritual beliefs?
 - How comfortable are you allowing your partner to hold spiritual beliefs that are different from yours?
 - What makes you and your partner feel closer in your relationship?
 - How would you respond if your partner expressed a desire to share spiritual beliefs in an effort to strengthen your relationship?
- + **We have discussed the importance of our spiritual beliefs.**
 - How important are your spiritual beliefs – individually and as a couple?
 - How willing would you be to discuss your spiritual beliefs if your partner wanted to discuss them?
 - What impact do your spiritual beliefs have on your relationship?

Spiritual Beliefs (Catholic)

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

Spiritual Beliefs (Protestant)

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

Spiritual Beliefs (Jewish)

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

Interfaith/Interchurch

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

- **My partner and I disagree about important aspects of our spiritual/religious beliefs.**
 - What spiritual beliefs do you agree on? What do you disagree on?
 - What were the spiritual beliefs of your parents?
 - Can you allow each other to have their beliefs without trying to change them?
- + **Even though we observe different religious traditions, we share similar beliefs and values.**
 - Where do you find common ground?
 - Are there specific values that are non-negotiable for you?
 - What concerns do you have about your partner's religious traditions?
- **There are some religious/faith issues my partner and I may never agree on.**
 - How do you handle disagreements?
 - How does it feel knowing you may never agree on some things?
 - Can you accept and live with these issues present in your relationship?
- **Differences in our spiritual beliefs cause tension in our relationship.**
 - What are the differences in your spiritual beliefs that seem to cause tension?
 - When you discuss your spiritual beliefs do you feel your partner listens and understands you?
 - Can you accept your partner's spiritual differences?
 - How do you plan to handle your differences?
- + **Despite our religious differences, we have found (or plan to find) a place of worship we can attend together.**
 - Are you active in a place of worship now?
 - How would you respond to your partner if they disagreed with you on this issue?
 - How important is it to you to be active in the same place of worship?
 - What does it mean to you to be an active participant?
- **My family is concerned about our religious differences.**
 - How do your families feel about your religious differences?
 - How have you responded to your families?
 - How do you feel about the concerns they are expressing?
- + **We are respectful and honoring of one another's faith/spiritual beliefs.**
 - How can you each be respectful of one another's faith?
 - When do you feel least respected?
 - What would respect and honor look like in terms of your faith differences?
- **I wish we could attend more faith-based activities together (weekly services, retreats, classes, or family events).**
 - What does it mean to you to attend faith-based activities together?
 - How will the two of you negotiate your differences when it comes to attending activities?
 - How do/will children factor in to this aspect of your faith traditions?
- **Because of our religious differences, we seem to be less involved in a place of worship.**
 - How important is it to you be involved in a place of worship together?
 - What differences make it difficult to attend worship together?
 - Share some ideas for handling this situation in a productive way?
- + **We have discussed the challenges associated with raising children in an interfaith family.**
 - What do you believe the challenges will be?
 - Have you discussed a plan for how to handle parenting in an interfaith family?
 - Share some your concerns about exposing your children to more than one faith tradition?

Marriage Expectations

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

- **I believe I've already learned everything there is to know about my partner.**
 - What makes you feel like you know everything there is to know about your partner?
 - Do you believe your partner knows everything there is to know about you?
 - Are there things you could share about yourself that you believe he/she doesn't know yet?
- **Time will resolve most of the problems we have as a couple.**
 - How do you presently handle problems that arise between you and your partner?
 - Why do you believe that time will resolve most of your problems.
 - How could you begin resolving problems now rather than waiting?
- + **After marriage, some of my needs for friendship will be met by people other than my partner.**
 - What happens to your relationship when you spend time apart with other friends?
 - How would it make you feel if your partner expected you to meet all of his/her needs for friendship?
 - How can having friendships with others enrich your marriage?
- **Increasing the amount of time we spend together will automatically improve our relationship.**
 - How will spending more time together automatically improve your relationship?
 - How will you need to balance time together and time apart after you are married?
 - What are some other things you could do that would improve your relationship with your partner?
- + **I expect the romantic love in our relationship to fade somewhat over time.**
 - What do you believe is the difference between romantic love and mature love?
 - How important are expressions of romantic love in your relationship?
 - What are some of the ways you will express romantic love in your relationship?
 - How will you communicate your needs for romance to your partner?
- **I do not expect that we will ever have serious problems in our marriage.**
 - Have you had any problems arise so far and if so how did you resolve them?
 - How would you define a "serious problem" in a marriage?
 - Should a serious problem occur in your marriage, how would you handle it?
- **I believe most of the difficulties we've experienced before marriage will fade after we're married.**
 - Why do you feel that getting married will solve any difficulty you are experiencing now?
 - What are some of the difficulties you are facing now prior to marriage?
 - What will you do if you discover those difficulties you were aware of before marriage, still exist?
- **Love is all we will need for a happy marriage.**
 - Is love really all you need for a happy marriage?
 - Describe your recipe for a happy relationship?
 - Have you ever seen two people who love one another, yet struggle to have a healthy relationship?
- **Nothing could cause me to question my love for my partner.**
 - Could you love someone you don't trust?
 - What would your response be if your partner betrayed your trust in a significant way?
 - How would you respond to your partner should your partner be unresponsive to your love?
- + **At times, I expect our marriage will be disappointing and frustrating.**
 - Do you ever feel disappointed or frustrated with others?
 - How do you feel when your partner is in a bad mood or makes a poor decision?
 - How realistic is it to expect no frustration or disappointment in marriage?

Parenting Expectations

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

- + **I have shared my feelings about having children with my partner.**
 - Share with each other your thoughts or feeling about having children.
 - Have you discussed family planning and/or birth control?
 - If you are unable to give birth, have you considered adopting children?
 - If you do not want to have children, can you share with your partner why?
- + **We have discussed the responsibilities of both parents in raising children.**
 - What do you see as the responsibilities of the father?
 - What do you see as the responsibilities of the mother?
 - Do you disagree on what your responsibilities will be?
- + **My partner is very good with children and would be a great parent.**
 - How does your partner relate to children?
 - Can you discuss with your partner ways of improving his/her interactions with children?
 - Can you share with your partner why you struggle to relate to children?
 - What do you believe are the qualities needed as a parent to be effective with children?
- + **We have discussed if and when we would like to have children.**
 - Would you like to have children? When?
 - Can you share your thoughts and feelings about starting a family with your partner?
 - What are the biggest factors in shaping your ideas about having children?
- + **I think having children will change our lifestyle.**
 - Why do you feel that your lifestyle will not change because of children?
 - If you disagree, can you share with your partner what you think?
 - How will your lifestyle change when children arrive?
 - How will you handle the additional demands of children and their emotional, physical, and spiritual needs?
- + **My partner and I agree on the type of religious upbringing for our future children.**
 - What type of religious education did you have as a child?
 - Share with each other what type of religious education you want your children to have?
 - If you do not agree how will you decide? How important is religious education for your children?
 - Whose responsibility will it be to teach your children religious values?
- **I am concerned that my partner was raised in a family very different from my own.**
 - Share with each other how you were raised?
 - Do you believe that the way you were raised is the way you want to raise your children?
 - How will your future family be like or unlike the family of your childhood?
- **If we were to have problems as a couple, having children could help improve our relationship.**
 - Why do you believe that having children could help you improve your relationship?
 - How do you go about resolving problems that exist between you now?
 - What would you do if having children didn't help improve things?
- + **We agree on the number of children we would like to have.**
 - Share with each other if, when, and how many children you'd like to have.
 - How many children were there in your families?
 - How will you handle your different preferences on this issue?
- + **We have discussed how children should be disciplined.**
 - How did your parents or the adult that raised you handle discipline?
 - How similar to your own upbringing are your thoughts about how to handle discipline?
 - Where do the two of you agree and disagree on the subject of discipline?

Parenting Expectations (Catholic)

- + **I have shared my feelings about having children with my partner.**
 - Share with each other your thoughts or feeling about having children.
 - Have you discussed family planning and/or birth control?
 - If you are unable to give birth, have you considered adopting children?
 - If you do not want to have children, can you share with your partner why?
- + **We agree to teach Catholic values to our children.**
 - What type of Catholic values do you feel are important to hand on to your children?
 - Are there certain Catholic teachings you struggle with?
 - How did you learn your values?
 - Whose responsibility will it be to teach your children Catholic values?
- + **My partner is very good with children and would be a great parent.**
 - How does your partner relate to children?
 - Can you discuss with your partner ways of improving his/her interactions with children?
 - Can you share with your partner why you struggle to relate to children?
 - What do you believe are the qualities needed as a parent to be effective with children?
- + **It is important to me to send our children to Catholic school.**
 - What is your opinion of Catholic education?
 - What is the value of a private Catholic education?
 - What was your education like?
 - How will you handle it if your partner disagrees with you on this issue?
- + **I think having children will change our lifestyle.**
 - Why do you feel that your lifestyle will not change because of children?
 - If you disagree, can you share with your partner what you think?
 - How will your lifestyle change when children arrive?
 - How will you handle the additional demands of children and their emotional, physical, and spiritual needs?
- + **My partner and I agree on the type of religious education our future children should have.**
 - What type of religious education did you have as a child?
 - Share with each other what type of religious education you want your children to have?
 - If you do not agree how will you decide? How important is religious education for your children?
 - Whose responsibility will it be to teach your children religious values?
- + **We have discussed a father's responsibilities in raising children.**
 - What do you see as the responsibilities of the father?
 - What do you see as the responsibilities of the mother?
 - Do you agree on what your responsibilities will be?
- + **We have discussed a mother's responsibilities in raising children.**
 - What do you see as the responsibilities of the father?
 - What do you see as the responsibilities of the mother?
 - Do you agree on what your responsibilities will be?
- + **We agree on the number of children we would like to have.**
 - Share with each other if, when, and how many children you'd like to have.
 - How many children were there in your families?
 - How will you handle your different preferences on this issue?
- + **We have discussed how children should be disciplined.**
 - How did your parents or the adult that raised you handle discipline?
 - How similar to your own upbringing are your thoughts about how to handle discipline?
 - Where do the two of you agree and disagree on the subject of discipline?

Becoming Parents

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

- + **Becoming new parents will add a great deal of stress to our lives.**
 - How familiar are you with the demands of parenting?
 - How well do you function on a reduced amount of sleep?
 - What types of things add stress to your life now?
- + **Having a child will cause our lifestyle to change a great deal.**
 - What aspects of your life do you anticipate will change once your child arrives?
 - Describe your current lifestyle? Are you planning on keeping things pretty much the same?
 - How well do you handle change?
- **I am concerned about our finances as we prepare for the arrival of our new baby.**
 - What financial challenges are you facing as you prepare for the new baby?
 - Do you have a budget? How will you need to update your budget once your child arrives?
 - What are you doing to plan for the increased expenses associated with raising a child?
- + **I am confident that we are both well prepared for the arrival of the baby.**
 - In terms of becoming parents, have you shared your thoughts and feelings with one another?
 - What steps are you taking to prepare for the arrival of your child?
- + **We have a good support network of family and/or friends available to help when the baby arrives.**
 - Who do you consider to be part of your support network?
 - What type of support do you anticipate needing from family and friends?
 - How comfortable are you asking for and accepting help?
- + **We have a plan for how to manage the fatigue and stress associated with caring for a new baby.**
 - How well do you function on a limited amount of sleep?
 - What roles and responsibilities can you share in order to balance the load?
 - How well do you typically take care of yourself in times of stress?
- + **We have discussed and agreed on our childcare options (stay-at-home parent, daycare, etc.).**
 - What childcare options are you planning to use?
 - Are you in agreement with one another on your childcare options?
 - What concerns do you have about your childcare options?
- + **We have discussed the need to make our couple relationship a priority, even after the baby arrives.**
 - How can you continue to invest in your relationship once the baby arrives?
 - How will you balance your relationship with the time needed to care for your child?
 - What can you do to develop and strengthen your love for each other now?
- + **We have discussed what each of our roles will be as new parents.**
 - What do you see as the roles and responsibilities of the father?
 - What do you see as the roles and responsibilities of the mother?
 - Do you agree on your roles and responsibilities as new parents?
- + **We have plenty of flexibility in our work/school schedules to prepare for the baby's arrival.**
 - What current demands compete with your time to prepare for the baby's arrival?
 - How are you working together as a team and getting the help you need to prepare for the baby?

Children & Parenting

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

- **Children seem to create problems in our relationship.**
 - What are some of the problems children create in your relationship?
 - What can you do as a couple to solve some of those problems?
 - Are your children able to play one parent against the other to get what they want?
- + **Having children has brought us closer together as a couple.**
 - How has having children affected your relationship?
 - Who comes first in your family, your children or your partner?
 - How can parenting bring you closer together as a couple?
- + **I am satisfied with how we share the responsibilities of raising our children.**
 - What does each of you see as your responsibility in raising your children?
 - Why do you feel your partner is not sharing the responsibilities for raising your children?
 - How can you balance your share of the responsibilities?
- + **In our family, both parents spend enough time with our children.**
 - As a parent, how much time do you spend with your children? What gets in the way?
 - What are some things you could do in order to spend more time with the children?
 - Do you feel your parents spent enough time with you during childhood?
- **It bothers me that my partner and I have different styles of parenting.**
 - How do your parenting styles differ from one another?
 - Have you shared these feelings with your partner? How have your concerns been received?
 - What could you each do to increase your teamwork?
- + **My partner and I have similar views on our children's religious upbringing.**
 - What type of religious education did you have as a child?
 - Share with each other what type of religious education you want your children to have?
 - If you do not agree how will you decide? How important is religious education for your children?
 - Whose responsibility will it be to teach your children religious values?
- **Since our children were born, I feel less satisfied with how we relate as a couple.**
 - Share with your partner how having children has affected the way you feel about your relationship.
 - If you do feel unsatisfied in your marriage, whose responsibility is this?
 - Is your satisfaction with your marriage dependent upon your children?
- + **We agree on how much we should provide financially for our children.**
 - Share your thoughts about providing financially for your children?
 - When should they begin providing for themselves financially?
 - Are there times after your children are grown that you would consider providing financial assistance?
 - How much responsibility do you feel for providing your children with an education beyond high school?
- + **We agree on how to discipline our children.**
 - How did your parents handle discipline?
 - How similar to your own upbringing are your thoughts about how to handle discipline?
 - Where do the two of you agree and disagree on the subject of discipline?
 - What do believe is the difference between discipline and punishment?
- **We give more time and energy to our children than to our relationship.**
 - What aspects of your marriage are being neglected?
 - How do you balance your relationship with the time needed to care for your children?
 - What do you need to do to develop and strengthen your love for each other?

Intergenerational Issues

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

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

Step Parenting Expectations

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

- **Child custody and visitation arrangements will cause problems for us.**
 - What problems will they cause?
 - Have you discussed these problems?
 - What is the relationship like between you and your former spouse regarding the children?
- **I have some concerns about the kind of parent or stepparent my partner will be.**
 - What kind of parent was your partner to his/her children previously?
 - How do your children relate to your future spouse?
 - Does your future partner accept your children and do they accept your partner?
 - What gives you concern regarding the relationship between your children and your future spouse?
- **It bothers me that my partner and I have different styles of parenting.**
 - How do your parenting styles differ?
 - Have you shared these feelings with your partner? How have your concerns been received?
 - What could you each do to increase your teamwork?
- + **My partner and I have similar views on our children's religious upbringing.**
 - What type of religious education did you have as a child?
 - Share with each other what type of religious education you want your children to have?
 - If you do not agree how will you decide? How important is religious education for your children?
 - Whose responsibility will it be to teach your children religious values?
- + **My partner is very good with children and is/will be a great parent.**
 - How does your partner relate to children?
 - What can you each do to improve your parenting skills?
 - What qualities do step parents need to be effective with children?
- + **The child(ren) have a positive attitude toward our marriage.**
 - How does your marriage represent another type of loss for your children?
 - How might the children respond differently to your marriage than to your courtship?
 - How do you respond when your children express a negative attitude?
- **The child(ren) will put additional strain on our marriage relationship.**
 - How do the children impact your relationship now?
 - How do you balance your relationship with the time needed to care for your children?
 - What do you need to do to develop and strengthen your love for each other as a couple?
- + **We have discussed and agreed on how to discipline our children and step children.**
 - Can you discuss what your role will be in regards to disciplining your children and stepchildren?
 - How will you handle disciplining your stepchildren?
 - How did you discipline your children in your former marriage?
 - How will you handle disagreements in the future regarding disciplining the children?
- + **We have discussed the responsibilities of both parents in raising children and step children.**
 - What do you see as the responsibilities of the husband?
 - What do you see as the responsibilities of the wife?
 - Do you disagree on what the responsibilities will be?
 - How will your parenting responsibilities change once you're married?
- + **We have talked about the potential challenges of raising children in a stepfamily.**
 - What type of conversations have you had about step parenting?
 - What can you do now to develop and strengthen your love for each other?
 - How are you educating yourselves about the challenges of stepfamilies?

Cohabitation Issues

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

- **Living together has created some new issues for us.**
 - What are some of the new issues that have been created since you began living together?
 - How have you dealt with these new issues?
 - How are these issues impacting your relationship?
- **Living together has been more challenging than I had anticipated.**
 - What were you expecting from this relationship when you began living together?
 - What has been the greatest challenge you have faced since you began living together?
 - What are your ideas for dealing with these challenges?
- + **I believe living together has increased our commitment to each other.**
 - What level of commitment are you expecting in your relationship?
 - How has living together weakened your commitment?
 - How would you compare the commitment you expect in this relationship to the commitment level in a marriage?
- + **I am more sure about our relationship since we began living together.**
 - What is it about living together that has made you be more sure about your relationship?
 - What are your expectations for the future of your relationship?
 - What would need to change in order to have more confidence in the future of your relationship?
- + **I feel that living together has brought us closer together as a couple.**
 - If living together has not brought you closer together, can you identify the reasons why?
 - What changes would you need to make to strengthen your relationship?
 - What helps you feel closer to your partner?
- **Living together is a good test before committing to marriage.**
 - Did you feel you needed to “test” this relationship before committing to marriage?
 - How do you think an actual marriage commitment would be different?
 - How do your parents feel about your living together?
 - How is the “test” going? What grade (A, B, C) would you give your relationship?
- **Some of my partner’s habits bother me more since we are living together.**
 - Can you share with your partner the habits that bother you?
 - What do you plan to do about those habits that are annoying?
 - Can you accept your partner’s bothersome habits and not try to change them.
 - What are you willing to do about your own habits?
- **Since we began living together, my partner has become more critical of me.**
 - How do you handle this criticism?
 - Can you share with your partner what your feelings are when he/she criticizes you?
 - Are you aware that you are being critical of your partner? What triggers the criticism?
- **We have had more issues related to finances since we began living together.**
 - What are the issues you are facing financially?
 - Why do you have more financial issues now? What do you wish you would have done differently?
 - Will these financial issues affect your future plans?
- **We have had more power struggles as a couple since we began living together.**
 - How do you handle matters of power and control in your relationship?
 - How has living together exacerbated power struggles?
 - How can you maximize teamwork and minimize competition?

Previous Marriage

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

- **My partner is sometimes fearful of another relationship breakup.**
 - Can you share with your partner why you are fearful of another breakup?
 - Are there things about this relationship that give you concern?
 - What can you do to overcome these fears? How can your partner help?
- **Sometimes a former partner interferes with our relationship.**
 - Have you discussed what brought about the divorce from your former spouse?
 - How do you see the former partner interfering in your relationship?
 - What is the relationship like between you and your former spouse?
 - What boundaries need to be set with your former partner?
- + **I feel very confident our relationship will succeed.**
 - Can you share why you lack confidence in your present relationship?
 - What do you believe you need to do to strengthen your relationship?
 - How could your partner be helpful?
 - How long have you been experiencing this lack of confidence?
- **It bothers me that my partner sometimes talks about a previous marriage/relationship.**
 - Can you share with your partner how you feel when he/she talks about their previous relationship?
 - How long has it been since the previous relationship or marriage was terminated?
 - Talk about how you can limit these conversations about past relationships?
- **I expect that financial settlements from a previous marriage will be a problem for us.**
 - Have you talked openly with one another about your concerns?
 - Are you both willing to deal with the complexity these financial settlements will introduce into your life?
 - What strategies can the two of you use to deal with this financial challenge?
- **My partner is too involved with or influenced by his/her previous partner.**
 - Is your partner too involved with or influenced by his/her previous partner?
 - Can you share with your partner what you mean by being "too involved with or influenced by...?"
 - How do each of you relate to this previous partner? What needs to change?
- **I am worried that past relationships will present problems for us.**
 - Which relationships concern you most? Why?
 - Can you share your concerns with your partner?
 - After marriage, how will the two of you handle problems that arise out of your past relationships?
- **My partner and I have learned valuable lessons from past relationships/marriages.**
 - What have you learned about yourself from past relationships or marriages?
 - How have you grown since your past relationship ended?
 - What do you want to be sure not to repeat in your future relationship?
- + **We have both had sufficient time to work out the issues and hurts from our past relationships.**
 - Have you been willing to listen to your partner?
 - Do you feel that your partner understands your feelings?
 - Can you share some of those issues and hurts from past relationships?
 - What can you do to resolve those issues or let go of those hurts?
- + **I now have a clear understanding of the reasons why previous relationships/marriages didn't work out.**
 - What is your understanding of the reasons why past relationships or marriages failed?
 - What part did you play in why past relationships didn't work out?
 - What will you do differently in this relationship?

Health Issues (Over 55)

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

- **As we age, I worry about maintaining the same quality of life.**
 - Share with each other your concerns about your quality of life as you age.
 - What can both of you begin doing now to prepare for changes ahead?
- + **As we age, my partner and I will be supportive and caring to each other.**
 - In what ways do you expect to support and care for one another as you age?
 - How do you support and care for one another now?
 - Share with your partner any concerns you have about this issue.
- **I am concerned about becoming dependent on my partner or he/she on me.**
 - Share with your partner what concerns you about becoming dependent on them.
 - What are your thoughts about becoming the primary care giver?
 - Where can you look now for help in the future?
- **I am concerned that my partner's health will be a problem over the years.**
 - What specific concerns do you have about your partner's health?
 - Are there things you wish your partner were doing differently now to help prevent later health complications?
 - Share with your partner any concerns you have about this issue.
- + **I am looking forward to growing old with my partner.**
 - What concerns do you have about aging?
 - What concerns do you have about your partner's aging?
 - What can you begin doing now in preparation for growing old?
- + **I feel confident that we will have a long and healthy life together.**
 - Share with your partner your concerns about your health.
 - What can both of you do to insure a long and healthy life together?
 - Is there something specific you are fearful about?
- **I wish my partner would take better care of himself/herself.**
 - How do you each take care of yourself physically?
 - Does your partner encourage you to take better care of yourself? How do you respond?
 - Discuss with your partner how you feel about his/her lifestyle.
- **My partner has some unhealthy habits that concern me.**
 - Which of your partner's habits concern you?
 - What unhealthy habits do you have that you are willing to change?
 - Share with your partner how you feel about his/her unhealthy habits.
- + **We both feel it is important to have an active and healthy lifestyle.**
 - How do you feel about an active and healthy lifestyle?
 - Describe your perception is of an active lifestyle?
 - How closely does yours match this description?
- + **We generally have good health habits.**
 - What are your unhealthy habits?
 - How long have you struggled with these unhealthy habits?
 - What can each of you do to change your unhealthy habits?

Cultural/Ethnic Issues

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

- **Differences in our ethnic/cultural background can sometimes strain our relationship.**
 - What differences seem to cause the most relational strain?
 - How do you handle these differences?
 - Have you shared your thoughts and feelings about this with one another?
- + **Even though we come from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds, we share similar beliefs and values.**
 - Where do you find common ground?
 - How do you plan to handle differences in your beliefs and values?
- **I am concerned about what others think of our ethnic/cultural differences.**
 - How do others react to the two of you as a couple?
 - How do you handle negativity directed your way?
 - How do you support one another regarding this issue?
- + **It is very important to me that we find traditions, rituals, and holidays we can both feel good about observing.**
 - What does it mean to you to share traditions, rituals, and holidays?
 - How will you negotiate your differences when it comes to traditions, rituals, and holidays?
 - How do/will children factor into these decisions?
- **My family is concerned about our ethnic/cultural differences.**
 - How do your families feel about your ethnic/cultural differences?
 - How have you responded to your families?
 - How important is your family's approval to you?
- + **My partner is very respectful toward my ethnic/cultural background.**
 - What does cultural sensitivity mean to you?
 - Are there some specific ways your partner could be more respectful of your background?
 - Have you shared your concerns before? How were they received?
- + **We both agree that our different ethnic/cultural heritages are positive for our relationship and add richness to our lives.**
 - How can differences add richness to your lives?
 - What has been most challenging about your different ethnic/cultural heritages?
 - What is your plan for handling these challenges?
- + **We both have a good understanding of the roles, traditions, and rituals associated with one another's ethnic/cultural background.**
 - What specific things about your background would you like your partner to understand better?
 - Have you tried teaching one another about various roles, traditions, and rituals?
 - How has that been received?
- + **We have discussed the challenges associated with raising children in a family with diverse ethnic/cultural backgrounds.**
 - What do you believe the challenges will be?
 - Have you discussed a plan for how to handle parenting in an ethnic or culturally diverse family?
 - Share some your ideas for exposing your children to more than one ethnic or cultural identity?
- + **We support each other in maintaining our own ethnic/cultural identity.**
 - How do you balance growing closer while maintaining your own individual identities?
 - What would help you feel most support in maintaining your own ethnic or cultural identity?
 - Share your feelings about this issue with your partner.