

# Ready to stay wed

Every marriage is unique, but all have one thing in common. When the two partners say those time-honoured words “I do”, they want it to last for the rest of their lives, even though divorce statistics tell us it’s a hope rather than a reality.

The good news is that there are many programs that can help you maximise your chance of keeping that relationship strong and healthy.

One pre-marriage education program has been running successfully for more than 25 years. It’s called Prepare, and that’s a good description of what it does: it prepares you for what may lie ahead.

It’s designed for couples without children who are marrying or making a formal commitment. This personal program involves the couple meeting privately with the same counsellor over a few weeks.

Prepare involves each individual filling in the same questionnaire, which is then assessed by the counsellor and discussed at length with the couple. Plenty of time is allowed for sharing.

Prepare helps you to identify and build on the strengths of your relationship. It also helps to explore ways of resolving conflict.

Though wedding days are often the stuff of dreams, real life will inevitably have its share of conflict and differences. Learning how to recognise this and resolve difficulties is a huge help to a relationship staying on track.

Prepare also helps you to look at how you can strengthen your communication skills, because so many relationship breakdowns can be traced back to a lack of good communication between two people. Prepare also helps you to set your individual and shared goals for the future and develop a financial plan together.

For people who are about to embark on a second marriage or long-term commitment, there is Prepare-MC, which looks at the added issues for people with children from a previous relationship, and how to plan successfully for the new family.

A third program, Enrich, is designed to help people stay married.

Relationships sometimes need a little help as people mature and change, and Enrich helps people enhance their communication skills and cope with any challenges.

Programs such as these help us insure our relationships against disintegration.

## Survival tips

- **A pre-marriage program can help you identify your relationship strengths and explore ways to resolve conflict.**
- **The Enrich program can help people adapt to changes in a maturing relationship**
- **Think of these programs as relationship insurance – they can’t stop disasters but they can give you some skills to cope with them.**