

Making a marriage (pre-marriage programs)

Marriage has no rule book, and there are no exams you can sit that will give you a PhD in how to make a success of marriage.

It's up to the two people concerned to work out the ground rules, and that can be a little scary; issues such as how you will share the housework, how you will make sure each of you is heard by the other, what will happen now with your careers, whether you will have children.

These are all important things that happen after the wedding, and some nasty surprises could ensue if you haven't done some good pre-marital spade work.

Pre-marriage programs allow you to think about and answer questions about aspects of your relationship, from what you both expect in terms of family planning, to how you will meet each other's needs.

They also help you explore the type of families you each come from, and what each of you might regard as the normal way of doing things.

The Prepare pre-marriage program involves the two partners filling in separate questionnaires and the results are used to show them their similarities and differences.

Differences can enrich a relationship, but they can also cause the couple difficulties through misunderstanding, and criticism.

The questionnaire results are then discussed with a counsellor over two sessions. This enables the couple to learn right from the start where the differences are so they can learn to manage them and incorporate them into a richer relationship, rather than allow them to become problems in the future.

Prepare sets people up for life, so that if a problem crops up later, they can use what they learned in Prepare as a framework for discussing what is going on.

All couples have differences and arguments, and Prepare teaches them a productive and constructive way of dealing with differences.

If they find they are unable to sort things out for themselves, they can return to that counsellor to get help before an issue turns into a problem that may later lead to marriage breakdown.

Most people take out car insurance to keep their vehicle on the road. Pre-marriage programs are a bit like insurance for a couple's long-term happy relationship.

Survival tips

- **Marriage has no rule book – each couple needs to set their own ground rules**
- **Doing a pre-marriage program can avoid nasty surprises later**
- **Pre-marriage programs provide skills for dealing with issues and how to get help if an issue later becomes a problem.**