

PREPARE/ENRICH Program Has Significant Impact Using Marriage Mentors with Couples

Summary

The PREPARE-ENRICH program was offered by marriage mentors to 1,070 low income couples over a four year period, 62% were married and 38% were premarital couples. The mentors worked one hour per week for 8 weeks with the couples. At pre-test, 20% of the couples were Vitalized (most happy), 19% were Conventional, 31% were Conflicted and 25% were Devitalized (most unhappy). At post-test, the number of Devitalized dropped from 25% to 5%, Conflicted dropped from 31% to 15%, and Vitalized increased from 20% to 47%. In summary, the Program had a very significant impact in improving the couples' relationship.

Program & Participants

Longview branded an approach known locally as the VOW Program, utilizing the PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories and feedback exercises from the PREPARE/ENRICH Couple's Workbook. The current sample consisted of 1070 couples reached over a four year period between 2006 and 2010 (62% were married and 38% were premarital couples). They targeted lower income couples and offered the VOW Program in both English and Spanish.

All couples completed the online PREPARE/ENRICH inventory and then worked with certified facilitators on a series of core feedback exercises emphasizing relationship skills building:

1. Sharing Strength and Growth Areas
2. Communication: Assertiveness and Active Listening
3. Ten Steps for Conflict Resolution
4. Financial Budgeting
5. Couple and Family Closeness & Flexibility
6. Personality SCOPE
7. Personal, Couple, and Family Goals

Based on the inventory results for each couple, facilitators also chose additional exercises based on the needs of each couple. These consisted of topics from the PREPARE/ENRICH Couple's Workbook such as:

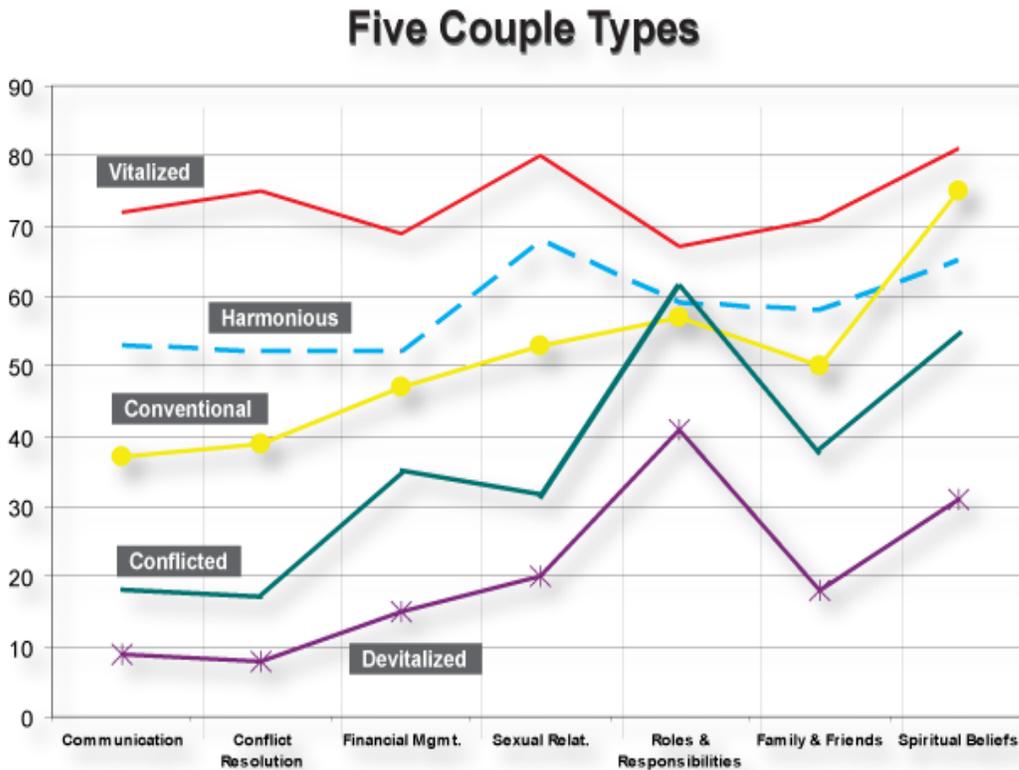
- Parenting
- Sexual Expectations
- Relationship Roles
- Stepfamily Expectations
- Leisure Activities

Couples met with facilitators one hour per week for 8 weeks to complete an 8-hour requirement. Facilitators consisted of trained mentor couples and VOW program staff hired under the grant. No professional counselors were used in the delivery of this marriage education program. Once finished with the 8 sessions, couples took the PREPARE/ENRICH inventory a second time as a post-test. The average time between pre and post testing was 84 days.

Couple Types & Results

An empirically derived typology of couples based on the Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) scores from the PREPARE/ENRICH inventory was done by Olson and Fowers (1993). Five clusters emerged through their analysis of several thousand couples, and marital satisfaction increases with each of the following 5 types: *Devitalized*, *Conflicted*, *Conventional*, *Harmonious* and *Vitalized*. *Vitalized* couples represent the healthiest couples, while *Devitalized* and *Conflicted* couples are the most likely to seek counseling and have a higher risk for separation and divorce. These types have consistently demonstrated their usefulness as powerful descriptors and research markers for couples at various stages of relational health. See Figure 1.

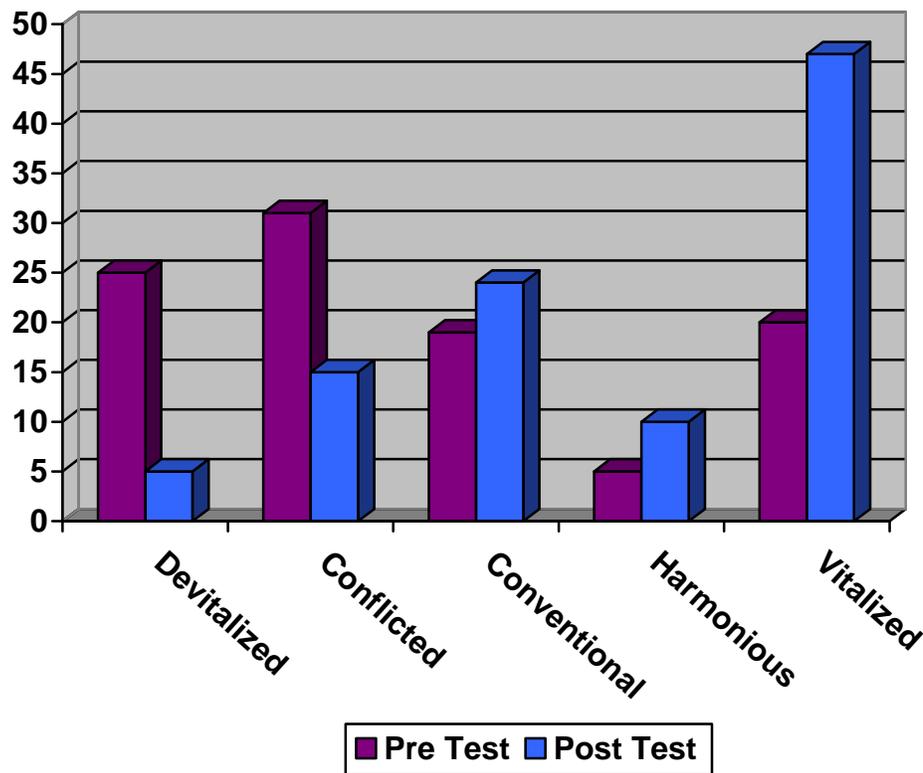
Figure 1: PREPARE/ENRICH Couple Typology



Pre-test scores revealed the majority of couples enrolled were struggling in their relationship. Just over 25% of couples were *Devitalized* and another 31% were *Conflicted*. When combining these two couple types, it is notable that 56% of the couples reached through the VOW program had very low marital satisfaction and were at higher risk for divorce. About 19% of the couples were *Conventional*, demonstrating only moderate satisfaction and a need for improved communication and conflict resolution skills. The remaining 25% of couples fell into the *Harmonious* and *Vitalized* types, demonstrating higher marital satisfaction and healthy relationships.

Post-test changes in Couple Types demonstrate significant gains in relationship health and satisfaction. Only 5% of couples remained *Devitalized*, down from 25% at the pre-test. *Conflicted* couples also decreased dramatically from 31% to 15% after completing the 8 week program. Combined, these two most at risk couple types (*Devitalized* and *Conflicted*) dropped from 56% to just 20%. Overall couple types improved to *Conventional* 24%, *Harmonious* 10%, and *Vitalized* 47%. It is notable that the most dramatic increase happened for *Vitalized* couples, representing the most healthy and vibrant relationship type. It increased from 20% to 47% for the post-test results (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Pre and Post-test Comparisons of Couple Types



The program was independently delivered, and data independently collected by VOW staff in Longview, TX. It demonstrates the impressive impact of high quality marriage education delivered through the PREPARE/ENRICH Program. The data suggests that even at risk couples can make significant relationship improvements by taking an inventory, working with mentors/facilitators, and learning relationship skills.

For more information on PREPARE/ENRICH, visit www.prepare-enrich.com

© Copyright, 2011
Life Innovations, Inc