

Introduction

Planning a wedding can take so much attention that there is little time left for the important pre-marriage talks that prepare the way for a successful marriage. That's why this communication resource was created. It offers an easy-to-use guide for busy couples planning to be married. The talksheets in this book will guide you on a conversation journey that will help to set the stage for a life-time of positive communication in your marriage. Each talksheet is duplicated, one is "His Copy" and one is "Her Copy." They are perforated for easy removal from the book. The book in itself provides a place to "file" the talksheets after you have completed each conversation. Please read this introduction thoroughly before beginning the conversations.

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Introducing the TalkPoint Communication Process

The talksheets in this resource provide a conversational road map to follow and an easy way to create an environment for positive and satisfying couple communication. Here is the process:

- Step 1. Read and discuss the introduction.
- Step 2. Use a pen or pencil (in silence) to write a response for each sentence completion on Side One of the page. Complete the page before talking.
- Step 3. Take turns talking about each of your responses
- Step 4. Continue the process on Side Two.
- Step 5. Try the suggested activity/activities.

The Importance of Silent Communication

A part of good communication is the ability to be together without talking. When you read, think and write in silence, you are communicating.

This tool invites you to take time to think in silence about what you want to say before you say it! Some may be tempted to skip this step and dive into the conversation without writing. Good communication, however, is helped when you are together in thoughtful silence. Silence is "golden" in communication.

The Importance of Verbal Communication and Active Listening

Good communication also involves clear, verbal conversation. The second step in the process is to take turns talking and listening.

Good communication is mutual, which means that both in the conversation have the same chance to express thoughts and feelings. This communication process helps to "level the playing field" by putting both "on the same page." You'll soon discover an atmosphere in which you are more free to Choose, Help, Esteem and Know - free to love.

It's Time to Experiment with the Process

Turn to the first talk entitled "Before We Say 'I Do'" and remove both perforated copies from the book. You'll find the step-by-step instructions on page 8. You will discover the maximum benefit of this conversation format by finding a time to experience the writing and talking together. However, there may be times when a busy schedule means that you will need to fill out the front and back of the talksheet on your own, then come together for the talk.

*Thanks for taking this time to prepare for your marriage
with meaningful conversations.*

May your love deepen and grow as you CHEK each other out in LOVE.

Read and Write

1. When we first met, one thing that impressed me about you was...

And I remember thinking that you were...

2. Some of your best qualities include...

- * *
- * *
- * *

3. To say that I appreciate you means that...
I appreciate the way you...

And I appreciate that you express your love by...

I appreciate that you have been willing to...

And I appreciate that when I'm with you, I feel...

4. One of the first times I remember telling you (or wanting to tell you)
I love you was...

5. To say, "I love you," means that I...

6. Love is a choice. From all those I might have chosen I have chosen
you because...

7. When we are married, I'm especially looking forward to...

Sample
Page of
one of the
ten
conversations

Introduction to Counselors/Pastors

Suggestions for using TalkPoints with engaged couples.

(Please remove this section before giving the book to the couple.)

Introducing TalkPoints

Good communication is the key to healthy marriages!

TalkPoints help couples to communicate by guiding them through a process of reading, writing, talking and listening (the four ways we communicate). With TalkPoints people are on the same page with each other and there is an atmosphere of equality and mutuality. The single most important skill we can teach to those preparing for marriage is the skill of effective communication.

The TalkPoint Process

Step One: Read & Write

Silence is golden when it comes to good communication. As those in the conversation are guided to read and write in silence, they are engaged in reflective communication. TalkPoints invite talkative people to be silent for a period of time.

Step Two: Talk & Listen

Listening is as essential to good communication as talking. TalkPoints invite those with quiet personalities to talk more easily. Those involved in the conversation are asked to think and speak in the first person "I".

Suggestions for Using this Resource with Engaged Couples

If you use a pre-marriage inventory:

Introduce and administer the pre-marriage inventory you have chosen. After you have reviewed the results of the inventory, be aware of issues that this couple needs to deal with the most and choose the TalkPoint conversations that address those issues first.

Counseling with one couple (1^{1/2} - 2 hours):

During the first session take time to...

- 1) Get acquainted.
 - 2) Give a description of your wedding procedures.
 - 3) Invite the couple to fill out the background sheets included in the Appendix section of this resource (remove ahead of the session).
 - 4) Administer the inventory.
 - 5) Introduce the TalkPoint resource by going over the introductory material with the couple.
 - 6) Invite the couple to enjoy the first conversation, "Before We Say 'I Do.'"
- Provide a writing surface (a card table works well) and invite one to read the introduction on page 8. Have them remove the two pages of the conversation from

the book and then give plenty of time for them to fill out the entire front side of the page (provide pens or pencils). Encourage them to take their time. When both have finished writing, instruct them to take turns, one response at a time, talking about each item on the page. (During this time the counselor listens without comment or interruption.) After their dialog, affirm, make observation, identify strengths, etc. Continue the process on side two.

Make an appointment for your next session. Let the couple know that during that session they will be having the "Faith" conversation. Assign (as a requirement to be completed before the next appointment) the next three talks entitled "Our Parents," "Our Love Life" and "Leisure and Work." Encourage the couple to set a weekly talk-date, and ask them to bring the completed conversations when they return for your next appointment.

During the second meeting, begin to discuss the wedding ceremony. Then, use "Faith" to discuss the faith dimension of marriage. (While they are writing, you may want to review their responses from the three talks that were assigned.) Enter into the discussion only after the couple has shared their responses. Offer your encouragement, insights and observations. Continue with Part Two. Assign "Children," "Money," "Doing My Part," and "Issues" as conversations to be completed before the next appointment.

During the next (and final) appointment, use "Our Wedding Day" during the session. (If appropriate, consider including the prayers during the wedding ceremony that the couple write at the end of this talk.) Talk in detail about the ceremony itself. (If an important and difficult issue or conflict arises during any of your sessions, add a fourth session, and use "Issues" to talk through the issue during the session.)

Using TalkPoints in a group setting for Pre-marriage or Pre-Cana:

This resource works well as a part of a group process. In addition to the time of group interaction, offer couples time for one-on-one private conversation using the TalkPoint conversations.

Using Prepared Couples

Another effective use for this material is to enable healthy, married couples to mentor and prepare engaged couples for marriage. Follow the process described above with some of the conversations being done as assignments, or use one conversation for each meeting. The prepare couple remains silent, during the engaged couples conversation, then the prepare couple offers insights, stories and observations from their own experience.

Please complete this form and return it to your counselor.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ zip _____

Day phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

We are planning to be married: month _____ day _____ year _____

Your birth date: month _____ day _____ year _____

My Family

Briefly describe the relationship your parents/guardians have had with each other:

Describe what it was like for you to be a part of your family as you were growing up:

Describe the relationship you have with your parents/guardians now:

Do you have brothers and/or sisters? Describe your relationship with each of them:

Describe your family's religious involvement and background:

If there has been any history of abuse in your family (alcohol, drugs, sexual, emotional, physical), describe:

Provide any additional information that might help your counselor understand your family better.

Education/Work/Finances

Educational degrees achieved:

Current employment:

My current annual income: \$ _____

My current total debt: \$ _____

Our Relationship

When and where did you first meet? How long have you been engaged?

List some of your couple strengths:

List ways your relationship could improve:

Describe your expectations about children? Do you plan to have children together? How many? When? Do either of you have children from a previous marriage(s)?

Describe the importance faith and religious participation has for you and your relationship:

Describe the relationship you have with your future in-laws:

If there has been any abuse in your relationship (alcohol, drugs, sexual, emotional, or physical), describe:

Provide any additional information that might help your counselor understand your relationship better.

Previous Marriages (if it applies)

Describe the history: How long were you married? When and how did the marriage end? Issues you continue to face:

Provide any additional information that might help your counselor understand your previous marriage(s) better.