



## Couple Programs

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. What are Couple Relationship Programs?

Couple programs provide a structured opportunity to strengthen and enrich relationships. They are designed to establish a strong and stable foundation from which to build a healthy partnership, for the long term. They offer couples a chance to spend dedicated time together to reflect and focus on what matters most to them both, their life ahead and to learn the essential skills that help relationships survive and thrive over time.

Within either a group setting, or individually with a facilitator, couples have the opportunity to:

- reflect and consider their relationship
- clarify their expectations and goals (e.g. children, careers, travel, retirement, intimacy, routines, beliefs and finances)
- identify and understand their individual needs and those of their partner
- embrace intimacy and romance, explore their strength and growth areas and work together as a team
- enhance their relationship skills (e.g. communication styles, conflict regulation).

#### 2. Why do we need a program, we are about to get married!

Pre-marriage and couple programs are not about changing your mind about your relationship or getting married. They are not about suggesting that anything is wrong. They are about having the chance to explore, voice and understand each other's needs and expectations in a relaxed, comfortable environment with an experienced facilitator.

#### 3. We have been living together, why do we need to do a pre-marriage program?

Whilst you may have lived together for some time you have now chosen to marry. Many couples say they don't expect anything to change after the wedding but research shows there are often subtle shifts in the way we view ourselves, our partner and our relationship after marriage. Irrespective of how long you have been together or whether you already have children (or perhaps even joint assets), pre-marriage education provides a unique opportunity to reflect upon your relationship journey and to learn enrichment relationship skills to support you as you proceed to a more formal, deeper level of commitment

#### 4. Are couple programs religious?

Whilst some programs may have a religious component if offered by a religious or affiliated organisation, Relationship Matters' pre-marriage and couple relationship programs are not religious in nature. They do not aim to impose views on how a relationship should be but, rather, provide tools and insights that can be utilised to build and sustain a healthy relationship.

#### 5. Does pre-marriage education really matter?

Research evidence demonstrates that participating in a marriage and relationship education program can benefit couples through improved communication and conflict management, and better overall relationship quality. It is also associated with increased relationship stability and a decreased risk of divorce (Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

## 6. Should we do a group or an individual couple program?

This is a personal choice and up to the individual couple. Group programs provide an opportunity to meet and interact with other couples at a similar life stage and are designed to be a fun and dynamic experience. A group program typically includes 5-10 couples. The group session provides plenty of opportunity to meet other couples and share experiences, but it still allows time for individual couple activities.

Individual couple programs in a private consultation setting provide couples with their own allocated time and a dedicated facilitator to focus on their relationship. This is usually recommended for couples with more complex relationship circumstances such as those who already have children (together, or from a previous relationship) or with different cultural backgrounds.

## 7. This is my second marriage, can I do a pre-marriage program?

Pre-marriage programs provide an opportunity for couples who are remarrying to reflect on what they have learnt from their previous marriage and to decide on what to bring forward and what to leave behind.

In the case of a second marriage, if there are no children involved either group or individual programs are suitable. However, if children from previous relationships are involved it is usually recommended that a private consultation be undertaken as more complex needs related to re-partnering and blended family challenges may not be covered in a group scenario.

## 8. We are a gay couple, are couple programs suitable for us?

Pre-marriage and couple programs assist couples of all ages, genders and cultural backgrounds to clarify their expectations and work on their relationship skills to build a healthy partnership, for the long term. They are open to *all* couples, at *all* life stages.

## 9. What have previous participants said about pre-marriage programs?

Comments from participants have included:

“After living together for ten years we were surprised to discover new things about each other.”

“This was a special time for us to discuss our future together, as a couple.”

‘I didn’t want to come but my partner thought it would be a good idea. I have learnt so much and will tell all my friends about the program...I think everyone should do this.’

“Nice to know we are not the first to go through life’s little challenges....”

“A refresher every five years would be good.”

“I had the privilege of attending your Relationship Education Course back in 2001. My husband and I have been happily married for 10 years and on Thursday, celebrate 15 years since we met. It is incredible to pull out the notes & review our answers to the questions asked during the course. We hope to be part of the statistic that remains happily married after attending your pre-marital counselling.”

---

For more information on pre-marriage and couple programs and other relationship services visit us online at

[www.relationshipmatters.com.au](http://www.relationshipmatters.com.au) or telephone Relationship Matters on 1300 543 396.

### **Relationship Matters**

Level 4, 255 Bourke Street, Melbourne 3000

**T** 03 1300 543 396 **F** 03 9923 6861

**E** [info@relationshipmatters.com.au](mailto:info@relationshipmatters.com.au) **W** [www.relationshipmatters.com.au](http://www.relationshipmatters.com.au)