

Need, Importance and Impact of Pre-Marital Counseling among the Married Couples

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Abstract: This article explored the perception, need and importance of Pre-Marital counselling among the newly married couples in practice. The findings reflected that counselling before marriage helps the young couple to understand better and sort out the marital issues. There were benefits and challenges that were unearthed such as, the ability to develop a new skill, it helped reduce emotional stress and some of the challenges were; the possibility of the technology breaking down, not being able to observe body language and the loss of human interaction. Pre-marital counseling will certainly makes a marriage in to success.

Keywords: Pre-Marital counselling, marital issues, emotional stress.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a state in which a man and woman are formally united for the purpose of living together. A good marriage is the most rewarding experience the life can offer. It is almost like a heaven on earth [1]. Besides providing for safe and secure sexual gratification it also takes care of many other human needs like those of companionship,. Affection, security etc., it helps both spouses to feel adequate, desired approved and complete to a degree which is not available in any other human relationships. However, a good marriage does not simply happen. It has to be worked out.

Marriage

A systematic discussion of variations in family patterns should begin with a definition of marriage. The description of marriage is fairly straight-forward. A marriage is a legally recognized union between a man and woman. In whom they are united, sexually, co-operative economically, and they give birth to adopt or rear children. The union is assumed to be permanent. It is a process in which people interact with each other, great facilities and give each other companionship and love Marriage is not static, it is always changing to met new situations, new commitments and new responsibilities.

Marriage Goals

People now are more apt to marry for companionship, and the satisfaction for psychological needs than for economic and social needs. The main reason is to find companionship

- Marriage furnishes a means for the giving and taking of love, understanding and sexual fulfillment.
- Marriage offers a measure of security comfort and stability so that both partners soon lead to know what they can expect. Bound or arise are set by husband and wife it is their expectation that they will be respected
- Marriages are for the raising and rearing of children and having a family
- It is a means of weathering life's storms and ups and downs.

In a study conducted by Tavris and Jayaratne [2], 75,000 married were asked about the importance of various qualities of married life. Their top three choices were love, respect and friendship.

Companionship provides marriage partners with an emotional home base' to see them through the ups and downs of life. During the days of the Stalinist terror in Russia, many couples felt that it was the openness and supportiveness in their marriage that helped them keep their sanity.

Individuals are also putting higher priority on the fulfillment of psychological needs, rather than on the traditional needs of financial security or having children. Marriage is seen as a means of personal fulfillment and growth. To a large extent, this reflects the affluence and changing values of society in which actualization needs are taking over precedence over maintenance needs. Another important goal is greater flexibility and openness in marriage. This includes such

diverse matters as more flexible family roles and greater honesty and authenticity in marriage. Yet the attainment of these goals often exacts a price neither partner has fully anticipated. Good communication especially remains stumbling block for many couples, mostly because like love, it is something easier than to achieve. The quality of the marriage relationship has now become very important. In the past, this reflects the growing belief among people that personal happiness is a right rather than a luxury. Consequently, couples tend to expect more from their marriages than in the past and are more likely to end as an unhappy marriage than their parents were. Although these values are important to most people, not all couples are able to achieve them in the same way and in the same degree.

Reasons fore selection of mate:

“There is too much of risk involved in getting married”, most of the people think so. There is a risk involved in the marriage process but the essential element is so much finding the right person as it is becoming the right person. Most of the individuals are lose in the game of marriage, but it is just as possible for both to win.

Both couples are not aware of the complexities and dimensions of the marital relationship.

Marriage means sharing in many areas of life such as

Emotional: A Sharing of the emotional and fantasy levels of life.

Economic: A Sharing of the accumulation, use and distribution of money.

Recreational: A Sharing of the recreation and pleasure. Sharing involves not recreation together but sharing spouse for recreation with his or here own set of companions.

Social: A Sharing of social and interpersonal activities. Some enjoyed together and some enjoyed separately.

Geographical: Sharing space, time, and geographical proximity.

Sexual: A unique sharing of the physical, sensual and sexual aspects of two people.

Legal: A couple’s involvement in the civil and legal process of a society.

Religious: Sharing beliefs, values and traditions.

Marriage ability Traits

Since most people eventually get married it is important to be aware of the traits that make a marriage work, leading to a greater likelihood of marital satisfaction and stability. Compatibility can mean how well the intrinsic characteristics of two people fit. Compatibility between individuals can also determine

how easily a relationship can be established. But no two people can ever be entirely compatible.

The following are some of the important traits to make a marriage work:

Adaptability and flexibility

This means that a person must be able to adjust to change with a minimum of rigidity. She / he must be able to accept the differences and adapt to work towards a different life style if necessary.

Empathy

It is a positive characteristic necessary for all interpersonal, relationship and especially in marriage. It is the ability to be sensitive to the needs, hurts and desires of others, feeling with them and experiencing their world from their perspective.

The ability to work through problems

Problems, conflicts and differences are part and parcel of marriage. Some couples run from and ignore problems, or give each other the silent treatment. Couples who accept and properly dispel and control their emotional reactions and clarify and define their problems and work together towards solutions will in all likelihood remain married.

The ability to give and receive love

This is a trait that needs both elements for success. The giving of love involves more than just verbalizing it. It must also be evident in tangible ways that are identifiable and recognizable to both parties. Behavior, actions and attitudes convey this in a meaningful manner. But just as important is the ability to accept love from another. Some people have such a need to be needed that they feel fulfilled by giving. To received and accept love threatens them and lowers their sense of self worth. If this non-acceptance response is continued, usually the other partners will give up or find some one else who will accept his love.

Emotional stability

Accepting one’s emotions and controlling them gives balance to a relationship. We depend upon a person who has a consistent, dependable emotional response. Extreme flare-ups and decisions based upon emotional responses do not lend them selves to stable relationships.

Similarity in the family backgrounds

The more similar the family backgrounds the more each can make to the marriage relationship. The greater the differences – economic, cultural, religious, being an only child compared to having several siblings, permanent living quarters compared to a high mobile rate – the more adjustments must be made. Those adjustments can adenoid even more pressures to

learning to live together; naturally the more mature the couple the more easily the adjustments can be made.

Similarity between the couples

This is another trait, closely tied, to similarity in the family background. Like tends to marry like more than the opposite. If a couple has similar interests, likes and dislikes, friends, educational level and religion, the marriage relationship is greatly enhanced.

Communication

The most important trait necessary for a love relationship to develop is communication there are differences in ability, styles and beliefs about communication [3]. Free interchange of ideas is essential. Communications the ability to share in such a way that the other person can understand and accept what is being said. But listening is also involved. True listening means not thinking about what is to be said when the other person stops talking. It means not making value judgments as to how the other person expressed himself and the words used. It means that while listening it is reflecting back both the content and the feeling with which it was expressed.

Friends

Another interesting factor centers on friends of both sexes: if each person has friends, and these become and remain mutual friends after marriage, the marriage relationship will be enhanced [4].

Commitment

The final trait that must be present for any possibility of success is commitment. Perhaps commitment should be not simply to each other but to the highest potentialities that can be achieved together. To marriage, commitment would mean a dynamic process and not simply a status.

Marital Conflicts

Modern marriage makes heavy demands love, companionship and several gratifications. So, there is some conflict between the ideals of sharing life goals and seeking individual's fulfillment. The stress on fulfillment in work, play and special interests causes some young people to be hesitant about marriage society continues to accept people to marry. Marriage is encouraged by parents by romantic myths by feelings that sex still belongs within marriage and to some degree by discrimination against single people in credit ratings and taxes. On the other hand, marriage means taking on new roles that are not clearly defined by society on need un by the couple. Family patterns differ with social class. Middle – class marriage favors near equality between the sexes, more companionship and sex relations, initiated by either partner.

Middle class complaints by both partners are often of a lack of love and understanding. Lower class women are more up to complaining of non – support or physical abuse. Divorce figures are rising for all classes. Still divorce and separation are more common in the lower class than in either the middle class of the working days. Instability in marriage may be part of reason for cohabitation without marriage. The threat toward early marriage has been reversed. More people are avoiding marriage until they find the right person to marry, and still they are free mature enough.

Some people see the rising divorce rate as marking the end of the family, other point out that marriage remains as popular institution. Although many people do not marry in the usual way, they frequently live together. Some try communal lifestyles, often including group marriage.

MacIver and page point out that, “The modern instability of the family is revealed by the frequency of divorce, separation desertion and other evidences of disharmony or lack of collision which come to light particularly in the courts, in social work, and in marriage clinics”. This is mainly due to less social pressure and replacement of domination by cooperation and stability is more in autocracy of one than in mutual consent. Thus, the number and intensity of lesions affecting the stability of the marriage life has increased.

Some of the problems arise out of personality characteristics may include temperament, philosophy of life, personal behavior patterns and psychopathic personalities, which in the beginning may be hidden in the romantic fallacy. The other tensions may arise out of economic and occupational situations, cultural difference in social status, and interference of laws. Thus these factors are both personal and impersonal. It is, however, tied that one particular situation may set a long list of factors in to operation and play an important role in the development of hindrance in marriage life.

Pre-Marital Counseling

Marital choice is perhaps the most important decision of a lifetime [5]. Its effects are lasting and highly significant, not only for the well-being and happiness of the couples, but also for the welfare of their children, and for society as a whole. Rising rates of divorce and family violence and falling indices of marital satisfaction and time together suggest that couples are inadequately prepared or supported in the challenges of marriage. During the past two decades, researchers have successfully identified “high –risk” partnerships before marriage (allowing for canceling or postponing weddings). Couples, who check compatibility, learn to problem-solve, and connect with

supports and skill resources become more aware and more capable of handling the challenges of marriage [6]. Proactive couples tend to avoid relationship-threatening crisis and enjoy the benefits of life together. Research has found that happily married couples have lower rates of illness, depression, and conflict in and outside their marriage (well-adjusted partners make easier transitions to parenting and tend to be more supportive parents. For most persons, marital satisfaction is the best index of family satisfaction; family satisfaction is the best predictor of well-being. Counselors offer a pre-marriage counseling consultation which focuses on the individual's personalities and family background. It allows both parties to discuss and explore their likes and dislikes, needs and wants, their values and goals in life. By exploring the similarities and differences that each brings to the partnership, couples can work through issues that could impact adversely on their relationship if not discussed prior to making a long to term commitment. The process also assists couples to improve their communication and conflict resolution skills.

Pre-marital counseling debunks unrealistic ideas about romance and demystifies several false notions. It addresses varied issues such as role expectations, sex education, financial and legal aspects. Its not a "mantra" to ward off problems but be better equipped to face the challenges of life maturely and logically together.

Goals of Pre-Marital Counseling

Pre-Marital counseling aims at:

- ❖ Depending understanding of self and one's partner, including the effect of personality, family of origin, personal values and life experience.
- ❖ Clarifying expectation, desires, and goals.
- ❖ Identifying the relationship and understanding implications.
- ❖ Learning skills that can enhance communication and conflict resolution as well as nature intimacy.

The Pre-Marital Counseling will also cover the areas like

- Conflict management.
- Communication skill.
- Finance
- Children and family responsibility.
- Sex and birth control.
- Personal values.

These are all the important goals of premarital counseling. Almost all the basic areas related to a family is covering in pre-marriage counseling

Need of Pre-Marital Counseling

Like western countries, the divorce rate in our country is steadily on the rise. The cause is found to be either physical incompatibility or emotional incongruity between the partners. The trauma of divorce could have been easily avoided, if only the young adults had undergone pre-marital orientation / counseling before getting into matrimony.

The rate of psychological disturbances due to maladjustment in couples leading to suicide, homicide, marital breakdown, alcoholism, drug abuses etc., and these cause to the increasing cases of depression, stress, anxiety and psychosomatic disorders are on the rise particularly in married couples [7].

We need to have a very sincere approach towards marriage, as it is one of the most important decisions of our life. We need to prepare our young generation to tie this sacred that with more awareness. Clarity and understanding and to be humanly loving, caring, respectful and considerate towards their partners. We need to give them correct and complete sex education, a healthy understanding of their new relationships and teach them the art of enjoying their freedom and responsibility. We need to make them understand the difference between male and female sexuality and feel comfortable with their own sexuality. A person can relate sexually with the other in a healthy manner only when he is comfortable with his/her own sexuality. Unlike developed countries, sex education is still not advocated in schools or colleges in our country. Therefore it is extremely important that those entering into matrimony be adequately informed about human sexuality, so that the current scientific knowledge may lead to building healthy attitudes towards sex, high standards of conduct, responsible behaviors and wholesome personalities [8]. In India match making is still done on the basis of horoscopes and religious and financial background of the two families. It is high time that we start ascertaining the compatibility of the couple on more practical and realistic grounds by undergoing counseling and certain medical check-ups.

Structuring of Pre-Marital Counseling

Pre-marital counseling is a very delicate process and it has to be handled with enormous care with different kinds of clients. There cannot be a fixed or a set of approach. The first pre requisite of a counselor is to understand his role as clearly as possible. The counselor's role is to help his clients understand themselves and his/her partner. Most human beings suffer from myopic understanding of themselves [9]. Sometimes they refuse to recognize their own faults and weaknesses. The client has to be helped to discover for herself/his self her/his failings by an indirect and least upsetting process. The counselor uses her/his skills with utmost care and perhaps the

client-centered approach or the non-directive approach is the most appropriate. In structuring the situation the counselor is concerned with the mechanics of the situation. Structuring is usually concerned with the timing of the counseling sessions, their duration, a definition or at least an indication of the client's responsibility etc. One important fact that the client must learn is that the counselor is not there to give solutions, she/he only provides them with a sense of orientation, which enables them to believe that a solution has to be found on the basis of their own involvement [10]. Premarital Counseling like any other counseling is strictly voluntary. Clients seek assistance on their own and the counselor offers assistance only when the clients seek it for.

Sex Counseling Vs Sex Therapy

Behavioral therapists have been in the forefront in working with, sexual disorders. This group has developed treatment for impotence, orgasmic dysfunction, and premature ejaculation [11, 12]. They use primarily cognitive and behavioral techniques. Before Masters and Johnson's work [12], sex problems were primarily dealt with in individual therapy. Since then the focus has been on couple counseling, both by sex therapy specialists and marital counselors. At one time, marital problems such as difficulties over child rearing, gender roles, financial difficulties and power struggles, were considered separate from sexual difficulties currently both sex therapists and marital counselors recognize that at times it is difficult to tell whether marital conflicts are a major factor in sexual dysfunction or whether sexual dysfunction causes marital problems. Thus both types of specialist currently tend to look at the total relationship of a couple when sexual dysfunctions are a part of the presenting problems [13].

Consistent with the view that the sex problems are a part of a total marital relationship. Lo Piccolo and Friedman [13] have written about an integrative approach to sex therapy, that is a blend of behavioral, cognitive – behavioral, and systems approaches. According to these authors, counselors must consider a number of factors that may contribute to sexual dysfunction. Learned restrictions and prohibitions may be a major source of difficulty. Social beliefs about what constitute adequate sexual performance may lead to performance anxiety [14]. Also relationship factors-gender roles, power struggles, and differences in child rearing – may be a cause or result of sexual dysfunction.

In treatment, partners accept that both are contributing to the dysfunction. The counselor provides the couple with sex information and teaches communication skills based in family systems. Counselors also teach cognitive-behavioral skills to

reduce stress and tension about sexual performance [15]. When the couple have strong emotional inhibitions interfering with the total relationship, discussions of experience in their families of origin are appropriate.

CONCLUSION

Social workers should try to develop an understanding in people who is going to get married. They can conduct marital orientation programmes, group therapy and individual counseling etc. A social worker can effectively give guidance in sexual life and child rearing. Pre-marital counseling will certainly makes a marriage in to success.

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