

Welcoming and Accepting

Couple Exercise 1: Differences and Expectations

1. Which of your fiancé's family's traditions do you like? Why?
2. Which of their traditions make you uncomfortable? Why?
3. Think about your fiancé's preferences for foods, movies, music, activities, and other entertainment choices. How do you feel about these?
4. What is one way in which you and your fiancé's differences complement each other?
5. Name two or three differences you and your fiancé have that clash, such as one is a morning person while the other is a night person or one likes planning activities while the other does things on the spur of the moment.
6. Identify any differences you experience with your fiancé that may be gender related. How do you respond to these differences?

Welcoming and Accepting

Couple Exercise 2: Attitudes and Behaviors

1. List the ways in which you think your parents were different from each other and describe how your parents accommodated each other's differences.
2. What behaviors, (words and actions) did your parents display when they disagreed or were angry with each other?
3. What role do you expect your spouse to play in your marriage and in your home? What day-to-day activities and responsibilities will belong to each of you? Why?
4. How do you and your fiancé handle differences of opinion?
5. Is your fiancé a good listener? What can you do to become a better listener to your fiancé?

Being Fully Present

Couple Exercise 1: Staying Connected

1. How do you stay connected and in touch with each other? What do you enjoy doing together?
2. What subjects or issues do you find most difficult to discuss with your fiancé?
3. When disagreements cause you to feel distant, what do you do to reconnect once things have been resolved?
4. What is your attitude about honesty? Do you feel you should tell your spouse everything, or are there things you think you should keep to yourself?

Being Fully Present

Couple Exercise 2: Attitudes and Behaviors

1. What have you learned from your family about faithfulness to one's spouse?
2. Who in your family is a good example of commitment, loyalty, and faithfulness? Talk about in what way(s).
3. What attitudes and habits did you learn from your family about money management?
4. How do you each manage your money today? Do you follow a budget?
5. How does your attitude about money management compare with your fiancé's view of money? Is one of you more of a saver than the other? Does one of you worry about money more?
6. Do either of you have a family member who wrestles with addiction of any kind? Do either of you? If so, how are you addressing this and what impact to you think this will have on your relationship once you are married?

Giving Oneself Completely

Couple Exercise 1: Marriage Is a Three-Legged Race

1. Give examples of ways in which your fiancé accommodates your needs and wishes.
2. Is self-giving the same as giving-in, going along, or doing what your spouse wants? What does self-giving mean to you?
3. How do you express your appreciation to your fiancé for his/her acts of self-giving?
4. When you and your fiancé work together as a team, what are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
5. At the center of Catholic worship is the celebration of the Eucharist, where we remember Christ's total gift of self. How committed are you to attending Mass each week? If you are not Catholic, how do you practice your faith?
6. What have you decided will be your worship habits when you are married? If you haven't yet made plans, now is a great time to do so.
7. What hopes do you have for the growth of your faith as individuals and as a couple?

Giving Oneself Completely

Couple Exercise 2: Attitudes and Behaviors

1. What attitudes have you learned from your family about making decisions? How were decisions made?
2. When a conflict with your fiancé occurs, how do you resolve it?
3. Are you comfortable with the way you and your fiancé resolve your conflicts? Do you think there is a better way to resolve them? If so, what would that look like?
4. What attitudes have you learned from your family about your body and your sexuality?
5. What is your fiancé's attitude about sex and intimacy? Is it similar to yours? If you do not know, agree on a time when you will talk more about this.

Forgiving

Couple Exercise 1: Marriage Is Your Treasure

1. What are the qualities in your relationship that you most treasure and enjoy?
2. What do you and your fiancé value about getting married in the Catholic Church?
3. When your fiancé or someone close to you does something that hurts you, what do you do to get past the hurt, anger, or resentment?
4. Do you turn to God for strength in helping you let go of hurts, resentment, and anger?
5. The Church teaches that “Sin is a failure to love God and neighbor.” In what ways have you seen yourselves or other couples fail to love each other?

Forgiveness

Couple Exercise 2: Attitudes and Behaviors

1. What attitude did you learn from your family about managing anger or expressing it in violent behaviors?
2. Did you experience incidents of violent behavior in your home? If so, talk to your fiancé about these and what impact they have had on you.
3. Do you find that you have a tendency to express anger or frustration with destructive behaviors, such as breaking something, hitting, driving carelessly, drinking excessively, or withdrawing? Are you a person who tends to keep grudges and bring up past hurts? If so, what steps can you take to change these reactions?
4. What did your family members do to ask for forgiveness and express reconciliation?
5. How do you reconcile with your fiancé after you have hurt each other?
6. What do you think about the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Are there questions you want to ask your mentors about it? Write these down and then ask if you can talk for a bit before the meeting continues.

Healing

Couple Exercise 1: Married Love Comforts and Heals

1. How do you offer help, support, and comfort to your fiancé when he or she is struggling? How do you know that this is what is best for him or her?
2. What do you think your fiancé needs the most from you in tough times? After writing down your thoughts, have your fiancé either confirm your ideas or bring a little correction of needed.
3. How do you like for your fiancé to offer comfort to you? What does he or she do that gives you comfort and helps you heal?
4. Are you a person who appreciates the comfort of touch? What form of touch is most soothing to you when you are in pain?
5. When you say the word “home,” what feelings and images come to mind?
When you think about your relationship, what feelings and images come to mind? Do your feelings about home and your feelings about your relationship correlate in any ways? How?
6. Marriage counselors tell us that all marriage relationships tend to drift, that nearly all couples go through periods of feeling lost or not at home with each other. How do you think you will know that you are drifting apart? What feelings and behaviors do you expect will alert you?
7. Imagine how you might find your way home to one another in your marriage after a time of feeling somehow separated. How do you hope to draw close again?

Healing

Couple Exercise 2: Attitudes and Behaviors

1. What did you learn from your family about comforting each other and having compassion for others? When did you experience compassion in your childhood home? When did you see your parents or other family member extend compassion and comfort to people outside your home?
2. How often did you experience denial about hurt feelings, anger, resentment, substance abuse, or addictions in your family? What do you recall about how this made you feel? How did people react? What lingering effects does this have on you?
3. How did your family members cope with suffering (think about illnesses, death, financial troubles, emotional wounds, stress)? Did you talk about it? Fight about it? Did each person retreat to his or her own space to work it through?
4. How do you know when your fiancé has a need for comfort or healing? What words or behaviors alert you to this? How comfortable are you responding to his or her need?
5. What does seeing suffering through the eyes of faith mean to you?

Serving

Couple Exercise 1: Love Is Life-Giving

1. God created you as two persons with equal dignity who complement each other in your masculinity and femininity. How do you complement one another in your relationship?
2. Do you struggle with gender stereotypes and expectations? If so in what ways and how do you work to resolve these?
3. What are your thoughts about having children? What are your dreams about having a family?
4. How will you provide for your family: financially, care of children, household upkeep, etc.?
5. What are your thoughts about using Natural Family Planning? Have you talked to anyone who has used it? What questions do you want answers to?
6. Why do you think we discuss having children in this chapter and meeting titled "Service"?

Serving

Couple Exercise 2: Attitudes and Behaviors

1. What did you learn growing up about helping others? Were members of your family involved in the community or in your church?
2. What do you do today as individuals or as a couple to help others in need? Do you want to do more? Brainstorm ideas about what you might do.
3. What did you learn when you were growing up about being a family?
4. What attitudes did you learn from your family about sexuality and family planning?
5. What did you learn from your parents about parenting? List three things you would do like your parents did and three things you would do differently.
6. How do you balance your priorities between home and work now? How might that change after you are married or when you start raising children?