

Premarital Counseling Decreases Disillusionment

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In *The Tale of Two Cities*, the first line in the book begins: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” What an apt description of the first year of marriage! It is an idyllic foray into “happily ever after” interrupted by disenchanting descents into despair. Why is it that before marriage, couples pledge to do whatever it takes to make the marriage work, but after the “I do’s” neither is willing budge from their respective points of view? It has been our experience with literally hundreds of couples that beginning the first year of marriage on solid ground clearly differentiates between those who will enjoy marital bliss vs. disillusionment. Premarital counseling is a proactive opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each individual and the couple *before* having to discover them later in the marriage. Some premarital counseling efforts are frankly ineffective, superficial, minimally educational and mere well wishes for the lucky lovebirds.

Premarital counseling that is truly effective and of practical value should include the following: 1) a list of each individual’s strengths, 2) an honest assessment of each individual’s shortcomings, 3) the current problematic issues the couple has faced while dating and engaged, 4) an in-depth history of both of their families of origin, 5) an understanding of the past and present problems in their own parent’s marriages, 6) a clear description of how the couple currently solves conflicts, and 7) what the mandatory expectations and “deal breakers” are in the marriage. If these areas are thoroughly covered before the marriage, the probability of disillusionment decreases and the prospects for a healthy, happy marriage significantly improve.

D. Charles Williams, Ph.D. is a Licensed Psychologist, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, AAMFT Approved Supervisor and Executive Coach based in Athens, Georgia. Dr. D. Charles Williams specializes in men’s issues, premarital & marital counseling, depression, adolescents (16+), addiction & recovery, spiritual issues, management coaching for success and workplace issues. He completed his undergraduate training in psychology at Clemson University and graduated with a Ph.D. in counseling from the University of Florida. Dr Williams began his career as an Assistant Director of the North Florida Evaluation and Treatment Center, and later the Director of the Adult and Older Adult Clinics at the Central Florida Community Mental Health Center in Gainesville, Florida. He received three years of post-graduate supervision and training from the Director of Training at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic in marriage and family therapy. After moving his private practice with Family Counseling Associates from Gainesville, Florida to Atlanta, Georgia, he joined the Atlanta Network for Individual and Family Therapy. He also provided business consulting for RHR International as a Consulting Psychologist in Atlanta providing coaching to executives and managers in Fortune 1000 companies. Dr. Williams is the author of *The Eight Toughest Problems Parents Face and How to Handle Them*; *Forever A Father, Always A Son: Discovering the Difference a Dad Can Make*, as well as many articles on marriage counseling. Dr. Williams’ Athens Psychologist office is located at 1751 South Lumpkin Street Athens, Georgia 30606. Phone: (706) 543-5552. Fax: (706) 354-8904. Email: DrWilliamsCoach@aol.com. Or visit www.DrWilliamsCoach.com