

## Communication

The **Communication** category measures how couples feel about the quality and quantity of communication in their relationship. It explores how they share feelings, understand, and listen to one another.

- When do you find it difficult to share your feelings with your partner?
- Why is sharing feelings valuable for relationships and for you?
- When your partner talks about his/her feelings, how do you respond?
- Can you share with your partner when it is that you have difficulty believing all that he/she tells you?
- What do you need to do that will enable your partner to have confidence in what you say?
- Do you feel your partner is not telling the truth or is exaggerating the truth?
- Has your partner done something that has betrayed your faith in him/her and if so can you share it?
- What makes it difficult for you to express your true feelings to your partner?
- How do you feel when your partner fails to share his/her feelings with you?
- What can you do to help your partner share his/her feelings?
- What can your partner do that will help you to share your feelings?
- How do you handle problems that arise in your relationship?
- Why do you sometimes avoid dealing with a problem when it arises?
- What does it mean to be silent or refuse to talk about problems?
- How do you feel when your partner refuses to talk about a problem?
- What is it that your partner does that makes you feel he/she is not listening?
- What can you do to let your partner know you care and are listening?
- Can you share the reason why you find it hard to ask your partner for what you want?
- How do you respond when your partner asks you for what he/she wants?
- What happens when you tell others what you want?
- In what ways do you believe that assertiveness is related to relationship satisfaction?
- How does your partner respond when you do share negative feelings with him/her?
- How do you respond when your partner shares his/her negative feelings with you?
- What could you each do to make it easier for negative feelings to be shared?
- Would you share with your partner what he/she says that makes you feel put down?
- What happens to your dreams for your relationship when you feel put down by your partner?
- How could you express your concerns or displeasure without putting your partner down?
- What triggers you to make such comments?
- How do you (or will you) know when your partner understands your feelings?
- How often do you take time to share your feelings or listen to your partner?
- How do you let your partner know that you understand how he/she feels?

## Conflict Resolution

The **Conflict Resolution** category looks at a couple's ability to discuss and resolve differences. It measures how effectively couples share opinions, ideas, and feelings, even during times of conflict.

- When is conflict most likely to happen?
- Even if an issue seems unimportant, how important are the feelings that fuel the dispute?
- When there is a disagreement between you how do you respond to your partner's concerns?
- How do you know your partner is not taking a disagreement seriously?
- When sharing thoughts over a disagreement, what can you do to let your partner know you care?
- What are some things about which you seriously disagree?
- How do you respond to each other when you are discussing a problem?
- When discussing a problem, what helps you know that your partner understands you?
- What do you do to let your partner know you understand your partner's opinions and ideas?
- Why is it important to you that your partner understands your opinions and ideas?
- How does anger impact your ability to share feelings and ideas productively?
- At what point in a disagreement do you recognize your need for a time-out?
- Why is it important to be able to share your feelings with your partner?
- Can you share with your partner how you feel about conflict?
- How do you feel about yourself and your relationship when you avoid a conflict?
- What could you both do to resolve a conflict rather than avoid it?
- Are you handling conflict in a way that is similar to your parents?
- Why do you think you end up feeling responsible for conflicts?
  - Share with your partner a time when you felt this way.
- What is your response when you disagree with your partner?
- Are you more interested in winning the argument than resolving the dispute?
  - When you win and your partner loses, what happens to your relationship?
- What does it mean to you to "give in too quickly"?
- How often do you choose to "give in" to end an argument – rarely, sometimes, often, always?
- How do you feel when you give in too quickly to your partner?
- What prevents a good resolution to your differences?
- What could you do differently the next time there is a difference between you?
- How does it feel for you to leave things unresolved?
- Can you accept your partner's difference and still love each other?
- What concerns you most about hurting your partner's feelings?
- What is the short-term gain for saying nothing?
- What is the long-term price of silence for your relationship?
- Is there room in your relationship for both of you to be assertive?
- Share what you believe to be the best way to solve a disagreement.
  - Why do you feel that this way is the best?
- Describe your "different ideas" about solving your disagreements?
- What can you both do in solving a disagreement that would result in a win-win situation?
- If you find that you are not able to resolve a disagreement would you seek help? If so where would you go?

## Partner Style and Habits

The **Partner Style and Habits** category measures each person's satisfaction with the personal characteristics and habits of their partner. It looks at each person's relationship style and habits as expressed in their behavior.

- What behaviors are you aware of that upset your partner?
- What behavior on the part of your partner embarrasses you?
- When you are embarrassed, how do you share your feelings with your partner?
- How will you respond if this behavior does not change?
- Can you share with your partner some specific things on which you would like to see more follow through?
- How have each of you addressed this lack of follow through?
- Why do you suppose you choose not to follow through on these things?
- Can either of you describe a specific time when you felt your partner was too stubborn?
  - How does this affect your relationship?
- What does being "too stubborn" mean to you?
- What are you each willing to change about how you deal with one another?
- Describe the times when you feel most unhappy and withdrawn.
  - How can your partner be supportive during these times?
- Whose responsibility is it to make your partner feel happy and involved?
- What is most concerning to you about your partner's temper?
- What are you aware of that seems to trigger your temper?
  - How do these temperamental outbursts impact your relationship?
- Do you ever feel out of control? What methods can you use to establish more self-control?
- How do you feel about yourself and your relationship when your partner is critical or negative?
- What topics seem to generate the most criticism or negativity?
- How can you be honest and assertive without being overly negative or critical?
- How do you define "too controlling"?
- How do you respond to controlling behavior?
- How can you change the way decisions are made so each person feels they are sharing equally in the process?
- What scares you most about not being in control?
- How do you respond to your partner's moodiness?
- Can you talk about what triggers your moodiness?
- How do the two of you communicate during these times of moodiness?
- Have you talked openly about which habits bother you?
- What are you each willing to do to change those habits that bother your partner?
- How will you respond if your partner does not change?
- How realistic is it to find someone with no habits or traits that bother you?

## Financial Management (Married)

- How long have you had these financial concerns?
  - Have you shared these concerns with your partner?
- What could you do to reduce these concerns you have?
- What could your partner do to reduce these concerns you have?
- What are your spending habits now?
- What factors influence how you spend money?
- What does money mean to each of you? (See "Meaning of Money" exercise in Workbook)
- What do you believe may happen in 10 years if there is no change in your spending habits?
- Is this a good or bad thing for you? Why?
- What do you believe may motivate your partner's behavior?
- How may the way you each orient yourselves around money influence this issue of control?
- When do disagreements around finances arise?
- What do you do or say when you disagree with how your partner is spending?
- How do these words or actions serve your relationship?
- How might they harm your relationship?
- What percentage of your income would you each like to save?
- What do you believe would be some positive results of a savings plan that satisfies you?
- Has it always been this way?
- What is your explanation for this?
- What needs to happen in order for you to be able to save money?
  - Has this always been true?
- What wisdom have you learned about credit cards that you could give a younger couple?
- What do these concerns about finances stop your partner from knowing about you?
  - What is one thing you each could do to reduce these concerns?
- What specific debts give you concern?
- How can this debt(s) be worked into your budget in a way that will satisfy you?

## Leisure Activities

The **Leisure Activities** category measures a couple's satisfaction with the amount and quality of leisure time spent together. It looks at similarities in interests, and satisfaction with the balance of time spent together and apart.

- What recreational activities would like your partner to do with you?
- What do you enjoy doing together?
- What do you enjoy doing alone or with others?
- What do you feel needs to change in order for you to have more time and energy for recreation together?
- Share with each other your idea of a good time.
- How does your partner's idea of a good time affect your relationship with each other?
- Can you come to an agreement about certain activities you both enjoy?
- Can you share why you find it difficult to make new friends?
- Where could you go to meet others couples who share your interests?
- Have you considered becoming involved in a community service group or agency?
- How is your background different from each other regarding social and recreational activities?
- Are you willing to develop new social and recreational skills you could do together?
- Can you agree on a specific activity you could begin together?
- How do you think it would impact your relationship if you shared more social and recreational activities?
- As individuals, what recreational activities do you each enjoy?
- What types of activities did you see your parents enjoy together?
- Can you share with your when you feel pressured to participate in an activity?
- Can you share with each other which activities you enjoy doing that do not require your partner to participate?
- Why is it important to have your partner participate with you in an activity that interests you?
- Talk about those activities you both enjoy and how you plan to pursue them?
- What constitutes "too many activities or hobbies"?
- Are these activities or hobbies shared or are they pursued apart from each other?
- How are your activities or hobbies interfering with your relationship?
- What social and recreational activities do you both enjoy?
- Which of you leads the way in thinking of things to do together?
- What makes it difficult to think of things you could do together?
- Can you agree on a specific activity you could do together?
- What makes you feel that the two of you do not have a good balance of leisure time?
- What would be a good balance of time together and time apart?
- Do you feel that your partner would rather be alone at times? If so, how do you respond to that?
- How do your distinct personalities relate to your needs for time together and apart?
- How do you feel your partner's activities interfere with your time together?
- Have you discussed your concerns with your partner? How has he/she responded?
- Do you feel a need to spend more time together than you are presently spending?
- Are you able to give your partner some free time to do some things alone?

## Sexual Expectations (Catholic)

- How does the language used when discussing sexual issues make you feel?
- Do you show patience and respect to each other when talking about sexual issues?
- Is it *talking with your partner* about sex or is it *talking about sex in general* that feels uncomfortable?
- Describe a time when your partner gave you affection that was satisfying to you.
- What are the different ways you can demonstrate your affection for your partner?
- How can you share your needs for affection with your partner?
- Do you talk about how you can meet each other's need for affection?
- What does it mean to you for your partner to "use affection unfairly"?
- What do you see as the relationships between communication, intimacy and affection?
- How do you feel when affection is refused?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to be affectionate?
- What leads you to think your partner has difficulty remaining faithful?
- What can you do to strengthen your love for each other?
- What changes do you need to make to create more trust?
- What makes it difficult to talk openly about your sexual expectations?
- How can your partner be responsive to your sexual expectations if you do not express yourself?
- Are you aware that your partner struggles to share his/her sexual expectations?
- What is your definition of sexually explicit material?
- Do you believe pornography is wrong or "no big deal"?
- Can you describe how you feel when your partner views pornography?
- How does sexually explicit material impact your relationship?
  - Are you willing to live with this behavior if it does not change?
- How willing are you to openly discuss your sex and affection preferences with one another?
- Do you understand one another's preferences for non-sexual touch and affection?
- How do you think your partner's interest in sex might be different than yours?
- What do you believe is the basic difference in the way you each approach sex?
- Can you share with your partner what your sexual expectations are?
- Do you agree on when you would like to start a family?
- How many children would you like to have?
- How well do you understand natural family planning?
- When do the two of you plan to discuss natural family planning?
- What do you believe the boundaries of your sexual activity should be?
- How can you both take steps to respect these boundaries?
- Are you both comfortable with your current level of sexual activity?
- Do you believe sex is intended for marriage, or anyone in a loving relationship?