



FACILITATOR TRAINING MANUAL

DRS. LES & LESLIE PARROTT

*This SYMBIS Assessment Training
Manual is designed expressly and
exclusively for certified SYMBIS Facilitators
who are completing (or have completed)
the video training at:*

SYMBIS.com

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A NOTE FROM DRS. LES AND LESLIE

"We never had pre-marriage counseling – but we spent the first year of our marriage in therapy." So reads the first sentence of our book, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*.

We didn't have preparation but we certainly wanted our marriage to go the distance. And we're not alone.

Here's what we know for sure: 87% of young adults plan on being married eventually and 82% expect to be married for life. Did you catch that? Almost all young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 not only aspire to eventually be married, they plan on it.

And, perhaps more striking – in the face of a staggering divorce rate that most young adults have witnessed up close and personal– most still believe that when they marry, it will be for life.

He who chooses the
beginning of a road
chooses the place it
leads to.

Perhaps that's why the pre-marriage population is so motivated. More couples want pre-marriage education than ever – and with good reason. It is "associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction, lower levels of destructive conflicts and higher levels of commitment."¹

-DIAM NOBIS

Here are a few more facts:

- 76% of married couples say they wish they had pre-marriage education.²
- 86% of Americans over 18 say all couples considering marriage should get pre-marriage education.³
- Couples who do not receive pre-marriage education are more likely to see their problems as atypical and unsolvable.⁴
- 41% of divorced couples say lack of pre-marriage preparation contributed to their divorce.⁵

So does pre-marriage counseling work?

Absolutely. Research conclusively shows that couples who succeed, gain the knowledge they need before they settle into destructive patterns that often lead to divorce. In fact, couples are 31% less likely to get divorced if they get some sort of pre-marriage training before they marry.⁶

Not only that, couples who participate in pre-marriage programs experience a 30% increase in marital success and fulfillment over those who do not participate.⁷

We are passionate about giving couples a smart start. And because you are reading this manual, we know you are, too.

What about couples that are already married? We have been hearing this question from our SYMBIS Facilitators ever since we launched this tool. In fact, they began telling us that they were actually using SYMBIS with married couples - even though it was not specifically designed for them. Well, now it is! We call it **SYMBIS+**. And here's some good news: you don't need to pay anything additional for training and you don't need to use two different "versions" of the assessment. As couples complete the questionnaire the question bank will dynamically adjust to automatically give them the most appropriate questions. And, of course, it will give you the optimal report for each couple - whether already married or pre-married.

So welcome to the team! You are becoming part of a growing band of certified SYMBIS Facilitators and we are thrilled to be partnering with you in this way.

Thank you. Sincerely.

We are truly grateful for you and your work on the front lines with engaged couples. You are giving couples a fighting chance at lifelong love and we want to help you do that as effectively as possible.

With every good wish and prayer,



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Les & Leslie". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott
LesandLeslie.com

PART ONE: GETTING STARTED

We all know that preparing for a wedding does not equal being prepared for marriage.

A couple may have sent out calligraphy invitations to 100 of their closest friends. They may have beautiful wedding rings and wonderful music selected for their ceremony. They may even be holding two airline tickets to a romantic honeymoon destination. They may have their wedding planned down to the finest detail, but the truth remains: *Being prepared for a wedding does not equal being prepared for a marriage.*⁸

It's understandable that some couples spend more time preparing for their wedding than they do for their marriage. Wedding plans seem far more tangible. Once the caterer is scheduled it can be checked off the to-do list.

Relational readiness is not so tidy.

Every year, however, experts are making great strides in identifying how to significantly improve the odds a couple has for a fulfilling lifelong marriage.⁹ A number of studies show that certain pre-marriage variables can differentiate couples who will do well and those who will not do well with up to a 94% accuracy rate.¹⁰

The SYMBIS Assessment is built on a growing mountain of research that reveals what is most effective when it comes to pre-marriage education (as well as marriage enrichment for SYMBIS+). It explores a full range of issues - from relatively simple and static dimensions such as longevity of the relationship, critical skill-sets such as communication, and all of the complexities of joining two sets of personality dynamics.

All in all, the SYMBIS Assessment covers more than two-dozen particular dimensions based upon research studies with relevance to your coaching and counseling. These include:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Marriage Mindset | • Cohabitation | • Love |
| • Self-concept | • Unrealistic Expectations | • Sex |
| • Maturity | • Baggage | • Attitudes and Happiness |
| • Independence | • Social Support | • Communication |
| • Longevity | • In-law Relationships | • Bridging the Gender Gap |
| • Stability | • Cultural Context | • Conflict Management |
| • Similarity | • Spiritual Beliefs | • Spiritual Intimacy |
| • Stress | • Finances | • Re-marriage (if relevant) |
| • Psychological Caution
Flags | • Role Expectations | • Blending a Family (if
relevant) |
| | • Personality | |

Of course, some of these issues deserve more time and attention than others and the structure of the SYMBIS Report will help you naturally sequence through them in an organized manner and at a natural pace, allowing you to drill down on issues of particular relevance to any given couple.

HOW YOUR TRAINING WORKS

As you are already aware, your training is done online – at a time and place of your choosing. It takes approximately three hours and the pace is whatever you choose. You can do it all at once or spread it out.

An investment in
knowledge pays the
best interest.

-BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

The numerous training sessions are relatively brief so you can easily watch and pause at intervals that work best for you.

Upon completing your online training you will have the opportunity to answer a few questions to establish proof of knowledge. These questions are not tricky. They are simply to ensure you have the information to use the SYMBIS Assessment effectively.

Once complete, you'll receive a certificate as a SYMBIS Facilitator suitable for framing. You can then begin using the SYMBIS Assessment with couples immediately. We are well aware that a variety of practitioners do pre-marriage education: professional counselors and therapists, social workers, family physicians, ministers, chaplains, and lay marriage mentors.¹¹ For simplicity's sake, we refer to all who complete this training as SYMBIS Facilitators.

Your training also includes a code for you to take the assessment yourself before you administer it to another couple. This will make your learning tangible and give you immediate hands-on experience with the instrument.

WHY WE REQUIRE CERTIFICATION

We take marriage preparation and marriage education very seriously. That means we are dedicated to doing what has been proven to work – and doing it with competency. We lean into practices that have been deeply researched. These practices, however, are only effective when the people using them use them well.

That's why we don't let just anyone begin using this instrument – not without training. This robust and comprehensive instrument is grounded by theoretical underpinnings and bolstered by robust analytics that require studied understanding.

If you are on the front lines of helping couples you likely have professional training as a counselor or a minister.¹² So the SYMBIS Assessment training is predicated on you already having an advanced degree in a recognized area of mental health (such as psychology, social work, pastoral counseling, and so on).

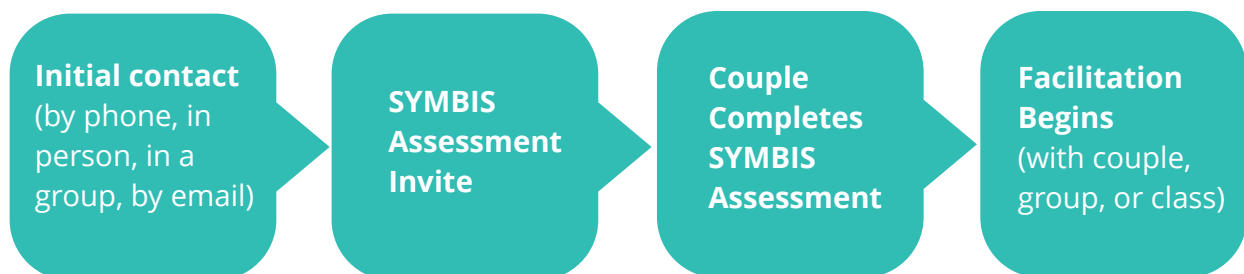
We also recognize that you may be entering this training as a facilitator or a marriage mentor couple who is passionate about helping couples. This training is appropriate for you as well – even if you don't have an advanced degree in the mental health field. We simply ask you to also complete additional training through our online Marriage Mentoring Academy (MarriageMentoring.com) It will give you the foundational skills you need for being effective and it will also help you clearly delineate when you need the assistance of a professional.

Whether you are a counselor, minister, chaplain or a mentor, SYMBIS Assessment training and certification gives you a proven, effective, and turn-key approach to structuring your sessions and facilitating life-changing exercises for the couples in your care.

Once you complete your online training, you'll be considered one of our SYMBIS Facilitators.

SYMBIS ASSESSMENT STEP-BY-STEP

The process for on-boarding couples into the assessment is simple:



1. INITIAL CONTACT

Depending on your role as a SYMBIS Facilitator, this may involve the couple contacting your counseling office by phone, showing up to the church office or attending a pre-marriage small group.

Once you and a couple have agreed to work together, you'll want to set them up for taking the SYMBIS Assessment in an optimal way. This means you'll need to introduce them to the online inventory and alleviate any fears they may have. While most couples are highly motivated to jump in and get started, some couples may carry a bit of anxiety about doing so.

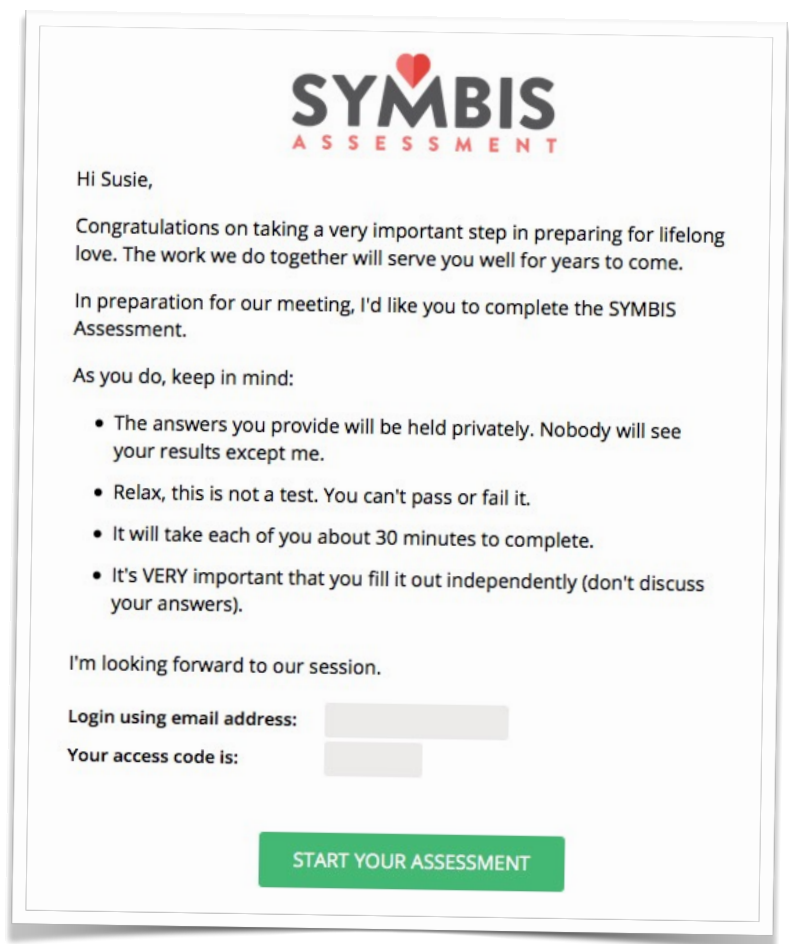
Regardless, here are some talking points you may want to address:

- *The SYMBIS Assessment is not a test.* Some couples perceive an assessment as something they will either pass or fail. The SYMBIS Assessment is not designed as a predictor of success or failure in marriage. Rather, it is a catalyst for personalized insight and exploring how they can leverage their unique combination of their personalities for lifelong love.
- *The process is completely confidential.* Assure the couple that the results of their assessments are held privately and will never be made public.
- *Using the SYMBIS Assessment speaks highly of them as a couple.* Let them know that the very fact that they are investing in their marriage on the front end speaks volumes about how much they prize each other and their future together.

Introducing the SYMBIS Assessment to the couple in an affirming and comforting manner will set them up for an optimal experience with you and the instrument.

2. SYMBIS ASSESSMENT INVITE

Inviting couples to take the SYMBIS Assessment is easy. Click the Invite Couple button on your SYMBIS Facilitator Dashboard and an invitation email (pictured at right) will be automatically sent to each person in the couple to begin their assessment immediately.



3. COUPLE COMPLETES SYMBIS ASSESSMENT

It will take each individual 35 minutes to answer the questionnaire. Keep in mind that they will be doing this independently to ensure their answers are not influenced by one another.

There's no need to select a particular version of the SYMBIS Assessment for your couple to take. The assessment will automatically customize the question-set for the couple (e.g., a couple where one or both are bringing children into the marriage; they are already married).

If there is a need for a particular set of questions to be asked because of a couple's circumstances, The SYMBIS Assessment will know to do so automatically - including whether the report is for an engaged couple (SYMBIS) or a married couple (SYMBIS+).

You will be notified by email in real time once both individuals have completed the SYMBIS Assessment. You'll find the completed SYMBIS Report on your Facilitator Dashboard. You can then peruse and print their report as you prepare for your first session with them.

Keep in mind that only *you* receive their SYMBIS Report. This puts you in the driver's seat to dispense the information as your sessions progress.

4. FACILITATION BEGINS

In preparation for your first session with your couple, it's helpful to print the entire report (approximately 15 pages; a couple pages more for couples who are already married) for your review together. We highly recommend printing the report in color. While the report can certainly be used effectively in grayscale, it's optimal in color. It will be easier for both you and your couple to quickly surmise various findings with the strategic color coding. Of course, you may also use your electronic tablet to view the report with your couple as well.

You'll want to retain all copies of the SYMBIS report until your final session. Why? Because this makes your sessions more compelling—the information remains fresh as they discover it with you. Also, you don't want your couple to be reading ahead and attempting to interpret their results without you.

The SYMBIS Report contains all you need for your series of sessions together – structure, discussion starters, exercises, and even assignments if you wish to give them.

We highly
recommend printing
the report in color.

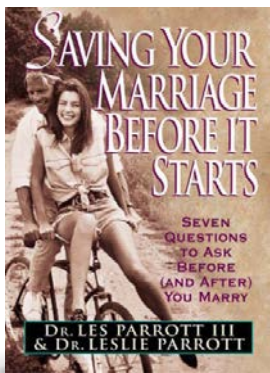
It's important to note that The SYMBIS Assessment is flexible. It's expressly designed to fit your needs in working with a couple or a group of couples. Therefore, we don't prescribe a rigid number of sessions for unpacking The SYMBIS Assessment with your couple.

You may choose to conduct your SYMBIS experience in a single elongated and intensive session or you may want to spread it over as many as ten sessions or more. However, most typically, it is used in three to seven sessions.

Refer to *Appendix C: Session Schedule Models* for how you might structure the content of the SYMBIS Report in relationship to the number of sessions you'd like to have. These create a roadmap to follow that may be helpful to you.

SYMBIS CURRICULUM AND SYMBIS ASSESSMENT

In 1990 we began a live marriage preparation event for engaged and newlywed couples in Seattle. We called it *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* – SYMBIS for short.¹³



ORIGINAL EDITION, 1995

At the time, we had no idea we'd conduct this live seminar countless times across North America and around the world. And when we wrote the book by the same name, we never expected it to be read by more than a million couples. We've been interviewed about SYMBIS on nearly every media outlet you can think of, from *CNN* to *Oprah* and from the *Los Angeles Times* to the *New York Times*.

The book struck a nerve.

So if you happen to be using the updated and expanded edition of SYMBIS in your work or ministry to engaged and newlywed couples, we want to answer a few common questions around it and let you know how it integrates with The SYMBIS Assessment.

IS USING SYMBIS REQUIRED WITH THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT?

No. SYMBIS Assessment stands on its own as a robust and effective assessment and can be used independent of the book, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* and His/Her Workbooks. But if you're looking for material to augment your counseling, however, it dovetails perfectly.

IF USING SYMBIS WITH THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT, HOW DOES IT WORK?

Easy. We've built into the couple's report some subtle prompts for additional His/Her SYMBIS Workbook exercises. You can assign these for later use by the couple or use them in your sessions if you like. What's more, we've structured the report to correlate with the progression of the SYMBIS material from the book.

WHAT ABOUT SAVING YOUR SECOND MARRIAGE BEFORE IT STARTS?

When one or both persons in a couple are coming into the SYMBIS Assessment experience with a previous marriage, the SYMBIS Assessment question-set automatically populates

with questions related to re-marriage. As with all SYMBIS Reports, it will connect with *Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts* in the same fashion.

DO YOU RECOMMEND USING THE SYMBIS VIDEO?

To augment a couple's experience with the SYMBIS book and the His/Her Workbooks, we produced an optional video series. You may find this helpful in your work with couples especially in group settings. Many facilitators find that it takes the pressure off of them needing to teach or invent group material for themselves. While it's not required, the feedback we receive is that it creates a much more dynamic experience for groups.

THE RESEARCH BEHIND SYMBIS

Research is a systematic investigation on a topic to establish facts. That's it. As anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston said, "Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose." It's about finding new knowledge that helps us describe, explain and predict things. But research not only advances understanding, it creates innovation.

In fact, research is what enabled us to build SYMBIS in the first place. And during the course of your training, you'll notice frequent references to numerous research studies and how they support and undergird the SYMBIS Assessment (you'll find over 100 references in the endnotes of this Training Manual).

Every element of every page of the SYMBIS Report is built on the latest and best research available. Research enables us - and the couples we serve with SYMBIS - to make smart decisions, evidenced-based decisions, helping us avoid mistakes and prevent problems. Because of research you can be confident you are helping couples choose the best course of action.

Research seeks the truth. Without research, you're left with mere opinions. That's why research is central to the SYMBIS Assessment. We want to *know* what works and what works *best* for specific people and couples when it comes to enjoying lifelong love. We don't want mere opinions about what is best - we want facts. We want objective, research-based information to inform every step of the way. And that's why every page of the SYMBIS Report is built on a mountain of research - both primary and secondary research.

WHY RESEARCH MATTERS

There are many different types of research: Applied, Basic, Exploratory, Confirmatory, Quantitative, Qualitative, and so on. There are also numerous research methodologies. This

isn't the place to unpack all of this. But it's important to note two broad research categories: primary and secondary research.

Primary Research is conducted to gather first-hand information on a specific issue or problem. The advantage here is that you are zeroing in on exactly the information you want to understand through first-hand study.

Secondary Research involves using information obtained originally by primary research. The advantage here is that you are drawing from numerous primary research studies to build on knowledge from multiple research questions.

Both primary and secondary research are important and equally valuable. In fact, they are synergistic, feeding further research inquiries to continue uncovering facts and applying the findings to real-life issues.

The SYMBIS Assessment takes advantage of both types of research. For example, the section of the report dedicated to Mindset stems directly from primary research we conducted first hand (at the University of Chicago) to identify and understand the attitudinal mindset of marriage when it comes to young adults between the ages of 18 and 35. The research was done over several years and involved thousands of hours of interviews by a team of researchers working together to discover one thing: attitudinal sets toward marriage.

When it comes to the Dynamic section of the SYMBIS Report, it is built on secondary research that spans nearly a century. In other words, this section is the result of a synthesis of studies by hundreds of researchers - something that would literally be impossible to do first hand. Why is this to our advantage? Because this secondary research ensures that we are using questions and analytics that yield the highest levels of reliability and validity. It incorporates numerous research studies that are all seeking to understand the complexities of personalities and how they fit, or don't fit, together. In other words, this section of SYMBIS is built on the most in-depth and respected research possible. Which is why the results are so on-target.

So the next time you find yourself in a conversation about primary and secondary research, know that both are important and work together to help uncover what works best.

WHERE WE ARE HEADED

The remainder of this training guide is dedicated to helping you: 1) master the SYMBIS Assessment content, and 2) become highly proficient at walking couples through their SYMBIS Report.

We will walk you through the report page by page. Literally. We'll not only explain each of the sections, we'll show you how to generate positive discussions, and facilitate exciting moments of insight for your couples.

Throughout your video training, you'll discover 82 practical tips noted on the lower third of the screen. Some Facilitators-in-training find it helpful to complete a fill-in-the-blank reference along the way. Depending upon your learning style, you may find this helpful, too. You'll find the fill-in-the blank sheet on the following page. You'll also find a listing of all the tips in Appendix A: (82 Practical Tips).

GETTING STARTED

- Ask them about their _____ (...of taking the assessment)
- Setup _____
- Build _____
- Use _____ on bottom of report page 1
- Ask for their _____

MARRIAGE MOMENTUM

- _____ the page
- _____ whenever you can
- Lower _____ when possible
- Explore the use of _____, if appropriate

MINDSET

- Invite couple to _____ favorite parts
- Having them _____ can be helpful
- Highlight how they _____ each other

WELLBEING

- _____ their ages
- Make sure they understand _____
- _____ softly here (when dealing with caution flags)
- Caution flags often come in _____

- Talking about getting help in _____ is helpful
- Affirm _____
- If no caution flags indicated, _____
- Let them explain their _____ here (about dating and falling in love)

SOCIAL SUPPORT

- Clarify what _____ means to them
- If couple attends your church, make _____ (about connecting)

FINANCES

- Get a feel for their money _____
- _____ out differences
- Don't make _____ about budgets
- If a couple is deep in debt, they'll need a _____
- Sometimes a referral to a _____ is helpful
- Set up an expectation for routine _____

EXPECTATIONS

- Make a connection to _____
- Help them picture _____
- Zero in on _____ expectations

DYNAMICS OVERVIEW

- _____ there's no right/wrong combination (of personalities)
- Clarify what they _____ with and why.

DYNAMICS DETAIL

- Set it up and _____
- Underscore _____ traits
- You'll need to briefly _____ what these mean (spontaneous vs. cautious)
- Tease out real life _____
- Help them _____ the future
- Review the _____ here (of the personalities - what was the biggest insight gleaned about themselves and each other)

LOVE

- Set them up to express their _____

- _____ questions work well here (and give examples)
- _____ their lists brings insights
- Project into the future and _____
- Help them get _____
- _____ your couples' comfort level
- Many couples don't _____ (who is going to initiate sex?)
- Invite their _____ about sex (what causes the most anxiety?)

ATTITUDE

- Have them reflect on their _____
- Invite them to _____ with results
- _____ results with both partners
- Steer clear of _____ mentality
- Draw out real _____
- _____ them of the big picture (how they can become easier to live with?)

COMMUNICATION

- Invite them to _____ their results
- Help them _____ with each other (...on ways to improve communication)
- Let them _____ their results
- See if partner _____ trait in other

GENDER

- Help them see the _____
- Get _____ about what can be done
- Invite partners' _____
- Asking about _____ creates insight
- Echo _____ of the report
- This is a _____ question (How will you know when these needs are met?)

CONFLICT

- _____ a real life example
- Have them circle what they _____ with
- _____ have places to improve
- _____ can be powerful

- This is why role playing is _____
- With _____, we'd role play again
- _____ are often a new insight
- _____ on these as time permits

SPIRITUALITY

- If faith is not a value, use at your _____
- Tease out potential _____
- Helping them _____ is key
- Explore specific _____
- Let them _____ concrete picture
- These _____ can be powerful and revealing
- Put a positive _____ on your sessions together
- Give specific _____
- Learn more: _____
- _____ unlocks after completing quiz

So keep this guide handy as you journey through the online training videos. It will serve as your roadmap to these sessions and, in all likelihood, it will become a quick reference even after you've completed your training and have your certificate hanging on your office wall. After all, we have packed it full of helpful aids and practical suggestions for leveraging each of your sessions for maximum success.

PART TWO:

UNPACKING THE SYMBIS REPORT

Before moving into the pages of the SYMBIS Report, we want to give you an overview. The report has 5 distinct sections, some of them more extensive than others:

- **About Us**—a brief but helpful intake summary about your couple (1 page).
- **Momentum**—an aggregate summary of how your couple is doing on all aspects of the report (1 page).
- **Mindset**—a measure of your couple's attitude toward marriage (1 page).
- **Wellbeing**—an exploration of the psychological and emotional health of your couple, along with possible caution flags (1 page).
- **Context**—a look at the proverbial “baggage” each person in your couple is bringing into the relationship, specifically social support, finances and role expectations (3-4 pages).
- **Dynamics**—the most extensive portion of the report exploring the two personalities and how they interact in the areas of Love and Sex, Attitudes, Communication, Bridging the Gender Gap, Conflict, and Spirituality (8 pages).

When you use the instrument with couples who are already married you will note that the title on the cover page become SYMBIS+ and it also adds two additional sections to the last part of the report:

- **Time Style**—an insightful look at how each person in the couple experiences time; so they can reclaim moments they've been missing together (1 page).
- **Harmony**—a depiction of more than a dozen vital factors shaping their relationship; and showing them in order of contentment (1 page).

Each of these sections will be unpacked in detail as we go through our training. In most cases, we'll look at:

1. What it is
2. Why it's important
3. How you can become proficient at using the personalized content for the couples in your care

Tip: keep this guide handy and use Adobe Acrobat's search tool to search for keywords.

Near the conclusion of your training, you'll be presented with a brief quiz that includes questions about each of these sections. The purpose of this quiz is to ensure proof of knowledge before using the SYMBIS Assessment with couples. If you are not able to answer

these questions at an acceptable level, don't worry, you'll have the opportunity to review and retake the quiz until you do.

As we go through this training, keep in mind that you will have this manual as a reference point to refresh your knowledge on any of these sections.

ABOUT US

WHAT IS “ABOUT US”?

Consider this page of the report your “intake” summary on both individuals in the couple.

WHY ABOUT US MATTERS

This page saves you time by already having your couple’s demographic information at the ready. It may also serve as a quick ice-breaker and provides a little goal-setting as you build your relationship with the couple. However, you may decide to not even go over this page with your couples - depending on whether you deem it useful in relationship to the amount of time you have and how well you already know the couple.

PROCESSING ABOUT US WITH YOUR COUPLE

In all likelihood, you won’t spend more than just a few minutes on this page as you review it with your couple—this page is more for you as the facilitator than it is for your couple. Use it to connect and affirm the couple for doing this work with you.

For example, you may want to briefly highlight one or two of these items with them:

- their employment status
- their birth order
- where they live
- their wedding date

Anything that gives a little connection to spark some personal interest helps to ease all of you into this process.¹⁴ You might say things like: “So you’re both from large families. That’s interesting. Was that part of what drew you together?”

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR SYMBIS REPORT
What you're about to experience through this report will help you launch one of the greatest adventures of your life: marriage. With the help of your certified facilitator, you will discover countless new insights and dozens of new skills to strengthen your bond.

ABOUT US
Date Completed: 9/12/2014
Invite Code: CXYZXYZ

General

Age	27	29
Ethnic Background	Caucasian	Caucasian
Religious Affiliation	Christian/Non-denominational	Christian/Non-denominational
Education	College	College
Employment Status	Full Time	Full Time
Employment Category	Education	Professional Services

Family of Origin

Parents' marital status	Divorced	Married
How you were raised	Raised by mother	Both biological parents
Birth order in family	Third born	Fifth born
Number of kids in family	3	5

Relationship

Wedding Date	10/1/14	10/1/14
Relationship Status	Engaged (not living together)	Engaged (not living together)
Previous Marriages	0	0
Number of children	0	0
Expecting a child	No	No
Length of dating relationship	18-24 months	18-24 months
Stability of dating relationship	Smooth & steady	Smooth & steady
Long distance relationship	No	No

Our Goals Together with SYMBIS

1. Obtain a clear picture of your personal and relational momentum for marriage.
2. Gain new insights into your personalities and how they work together.
3. Gain new skills to strengthen your relationship for lifelong love.

© Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott

SYMBIS 1

Of course, by far and away, the quickest way to build rapport with your couple in this first session is by asking them about their relationship and/or their wedding preparations.¹⁵ You might ask questions like:

- How did you two find each other?
- Do you have a memorable engagement story?
- How are your wedding plans coming along?
- How did you decide to get pre-marriage counseling?

A brief word of caution: These questions can literally fill an hour for some couples so you have to curb this discussion on some occasions so that you manage your time well and get to the heart of the report.

A Note about Cohabitation

The “About Us” page will also give you an indicator about whether your couple is living together. As you are aware, this is common and you may want to use it as a talking point at this stage.¹⁶ However, later in the SYMBIS report you will find a page devoted to love and sexuality (page 10) where a discussion on cohabitation may be more appropriate.

It’s a worthy topic of discussion because some research suggests cohabitation before marriage increases the risk of divorce.¹⁷ Scott Stanley, co-director of the Center for Marital and Family Studies at the University of Denver, calls it relationship “inertia.” It happens when couples end up spending more and more time together until finally all the stuff gets moved into one person's place. “People who are cohabiting might end up marrying somebody they might not otherwise have married,” Stanley says. They’re “sliding, not deciding.”¹⁸

If this is a subject you’d like to explore with your couples, we encourage you to explore our guide, “Cohabitation and Premarital Sex,” in the Resources Tab of your Facilitator Dashboard once you have completed your training.

Near the bottom of this page you'll also see a prompt to discuss your goals together – you and the couple – as you do this pre-marriage work. You can simply read them aloud from the page:

Our Goals Together with the SYMBIS Assessment



1. Obtain a clear picture of your personal and relational momentum for marriage.
2. Gain new insights into your personalities and how they work together.
3. Learn new skills to strengthen your relationship for lifelong love.

Ask the couple how these goals sound and if they have any questions. We also suggest asking the couple if they have any particular goals in your sessions together. Most of the time they will not, but on occasion they can reveal something significant that you'll want to know at the outset.

Assure your couple that they are never going to regret the time they are making to review their SYMBIS Report with you. Let them know you are excited to be doing this with them.

Finally, before leaving this page, affirm the couple for making the time to prepare for their marriage – not just their wedding.

MOMENTUM

WHAT IS MARRIAGE MOMENTUM?

Consider this page of the report like an overall snapshot of the couple's relationship. But even more than that, it's also an X-ray summary giving you insight into what's going on beneath the surface.

WHY MARRIAGE MOMENTUM MATTERS

This page reveals the overall health of a couple's relationship. It quickly shows you how they are doing in a general sense as well as on the most critical dimensions of marital readiness.

PROCESSING MARRIAGE MOMENTUM WITH YOUR COUPLE

The first thing you'll notice on this page is a dial that points to the couple's overall Marriage Momentum. This is an aggregate measure of a variety of factors that will be unpacked in the remainder of the SYMBIS Report. But it also factors in the couple's overall satisfaction and happiness.¹⁹

You can expect to see the majority of your couples rating on the high side of marriage momentum.²⁰ Why? Because engaged couples are generally pretty happy.²¹ Issues that drag their momentum score down will be Wellbeing "caution flags" (explored later in this training manual), incompatibility issues, and so on.

If your couple's momentum meter is high, congratulate the couple and let them know that this puts them in a prime place to get the most out of your counseling and their SYMBIS Report.

If your couple's momentum meter is in the midrange, assure them that this is nothing to be alarmed about. You can say something like:

"This is frequently the case and that's why we are doing this work together."

If your couple's momentum meter is in the low range, take special care to nurture this couple. They are in some pain – whether it looks like it or not. You're likely looking at two people that have some wounds and some issues to work through. You might say something like:

"I know this looks discouraging, but let me tell you something. This report and our work together is going to help us move the needle here. As long as you are both motivated, we are going to be in a very different place by the time we go through our sessions together."

In other words, underscore to your couple that this ranking is changeable. It's not permanent.

The remainder of this page is simply an outline of the couple's results on the four main sections of their SYMBIS Report: Mindset, Wellbeing, Context and Dynamics. It's not expected that this information make sense to them or even be explained to them at this stage. They will likely come back to this page on occasion as you make progress together.

This page is equal parts overview and interest-generator to spur your couple's motivation to dig deeper.

Here's what you can say about the respective sections:

OVERVIEW: MARRIAGE MOMENTUM
Congratulations! Your relationship has strong momentum for a growing and thriving marriage. The combination of your mindsets, your psychological health as individuals, and your compatibility as a couple, provides you with promising vitality for lifelong love. Beware, however, this does not exempt you from bumps in the road – that's part of married life. The good news? Your strong momentum puts you in a prime place for maximizing what you'll learn during your SYMBIS Assessment. Use your momentum to get all you can out of this experience.

TONI **CHRIS**

Section	Result
MINDSET	ROMANTIC MINDSET (3 Caution Flag(s)) 88% and RESOLUTE MINDSET (0 Caution Flag(s)) 97%
WELLBEING	3 Caution Flag(s) 88% and 0 Caution Flag(s) 97%
CONTEXT	4 stars and 5 stars
DYNAMICS	COOPERATING SPOUSE and AFFIRMING SPOUSE

The Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts (SYMBIS) book and His/Her Workbook Set can be used to augment your experience with this report-however, it's not required. A small prompt on some pages will point you to relevant chapters. Learn more: www.store.LesandLeslie.com

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SYMBIS 2

- "Mindset has to do with your attitude toward marriage. There's no right or wrong results here. As we will explore it in a bit, you simply raise your level of awareness and help us personalize the results of your report even more."
- "Wellbeing has to do with helping you increase your individual readiness and your relationship readiness for marriage. It also highlights some issues that will be valuable to explore when we get to them."
- "Context is all about what surrounds your relationship. This section will help us explore the big picture of your relationship and help you to mesh your two worlds in the best way possible. The more orange you see here, the better."
- "Dynamics has to do with your unique personalities. This is a major portion of your SYMBIS Report and it will help us dig into how you can leverage your uniqueness as people and as a couple. This is also where we'll focus on learning new skills and strategies for a fulfilling, lifelong marriage."

Typically, you won't need to spend more than five minutes or so on this page of the report.

MINDSET

WHAT IS A MARRIAGE MINDSET?

Every person brings a mindset to marriage – what they are saying, thinking and believing when it comes to tying the knot. It's their attitude toward marriage, in general.

They have beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes about the concept of marriage. And knowing a person's marriage mindset reveals a wealth of information – about the person and their future relationship.

Research reveals that individuals have one of five distinct marriage mindsets:

- Resolute Mindset
- Rational Mindset
- Romantic Mindset
- Restless Mindset
- Reluctant Mindset

The SYMBIS Assessment not only reveals each person's mindset and what it means, but it sheds light on what happens when individuals are matched with the same or another Mindset category.



PURPOSE

By identifying an individual's Marriage Mindset we can know a great deal about that person. And when two people's mindsets are compared (whether they are the same or different) it reveals much about the probable course of their marriage. In addition, knowing a couple's combined mindset will help you, as their facilitator, know how you can work best to help them.

WHERE DID THE FIVE MINDSETS COME FROM?

Our research team interviewed more than 3,600 young adults, an equal number of men and women, spread evenly across the ages. See Diagram:

	AGES 18-22	AGES 23-26	AGES 27-30	TOTAL
Male	607	611	606	1,824
Female	620	614	614	1,848
Total	1,227	1,225	1,220	3,672

Our interviews included uncovering a wide swath of information about the participants: their intent to marry and/or have children, their childhood family background, life goals, values, their current expectations of marriage, reasons for and against marriage, attitudes toward divorce, opinions about what holds a marriage together and what breaks it apart, cohabitation, current relationship status, and so on.

The mountain of information was segmented based on five distinct attitudinal sets. Each of these five distinct Marriage Mindsets carries unique factors impacting their potential for lifelong love and fulfillment in marriage. See Diagram:

	RESOLUTE 22%	RATIONAL 23%	ROMANTIC 19%	RESTLESS 22%	RELUCTANT 14%
Marriage motivation	Highest	Moderate	High	Low for now	Lowest
Marriage theme	"Divorce is Not an Option"	"Marriage is Hard Work"	"We'll Live Happily Ever After"	"I Need More Time"	"Why Take the Risk?"
Expectation from marriage	Personal fulfillment	Bumps in the road	Lifelong love	Loss of independence	Loss of identity
Divorce Acceptance	No	It's an option	It's an option	As a last resort	Yes
Gender	Mixed	Mixed	67% Female	70% Male	Mixed
Age	Oldest	Older	Younger	Youngest	Average
Education	Highest	High	Lowest	In school	Low
Ethnicity	Caucasian	Highest Caucasian	Highest African American	Most ethnically diverse	Mixed

UNDERSTANDING THE FIVE MINDSETS

Before we dive into how you can use the information about your couple's mindsets, we want to give you a better understanding of each of them.

THE RESOLUTE MINDSET

DEFINITION

Res-o-lute /'reze,loo/

Adjective: Admirably purposeful, determined and unwavering.

This segment, 22% of the population, prizes marriage and holds tight to an unyielding determination for making it go the distance. When it comes to marriage, they are dedicated to ensuring that it's for life.

More than most, Resolutes have carefully considered what they want for their life and one thing is certain: they want to be married. More than likely, they resolved this important milestone for themselves some time ago. In fact, it's such a significant part of their life plan that they may not have even considered the option of not being married.

Resolutes are true believers when it comes to matrimony. They are more than twice as likely as others to say that divorce is not an option for them. They resonate with words like devotion, dedication, and commitment.

More than other people, they are also likely to want to have children at some point. In fact, only 2% of Resolutes say they never want children. They plan to invest in their family, making it a supreme priority in their life. And it will most likely be the greatest source of their life's happiness.

THE HOME OF A RESOLUTE MINDSET

They are more likely than any other group to have grown up in homes where they saw relatively good examples of loving and stable relationships. In fact,

Resolute Mindset

- 22% of population falls into this category
- They have traditional, optimistic views of marriage – expecting life-long love
- They feel in control of their life – they have a life plan and it includes marriage
- Education holds a strong and important value in their lives
- Religion plays a big part of their lives
- They are predominately Caucasian with a medium income
- The South and Midwest is where you'll often find them – usually in the suburbs
- This group skews older than the other four groups
- This category has an equal number of men and women

77% of Resolutes grew up with their parents being married (just 13% divorced) and they view their parent's marriage as stable, trusting, happy and emotionally fulfilling.

HOW RESOLUTES FEEL ABOUT DIVORCE

The pro-marriage attitude of Resolutes leaves little room for any mention of divorce. While 50% of their peers would say "falling out of love" is grounds for divorce, only 16% of Resolutes would agree with that. And when you ask Resolutes what holds a marriage together they are likely to say their religious beliefs, forgiveness, commitment and the value they place on marriage.

THE RATIONAL MINDSET

DEFINITION

ra-tion-al /'raSH ənl /

Adjective: agreeable to logic, sound judgment or good sense.

This segment, 23% of the population, takes a more practical approach to marriage than most. They view this lifelong commitment with more caution than others.

The Rational Mindset guards their heart. They're doing what they can to protect it from harm. That's why they tip the scales a bit more toward rationality than romance when it comes to matrimony.

They don't buy into the mystical idea of finding their *soulmate*. They view finding a potential partner to marry as a more rational endeavor that will inevitably require serious work.

When asked what they expect from marriage, Rationals, more than other segment expect the road to lifelong matrimony to have its share of bumps. They expect marriage to be personally fulfilling, for sure, but they know that fulfillment comes with a price. And that price is hard work.

Rationals know that marriage requires effort and

Rational Mindset

- 23% of singles, ages 18 to 30, have a rational mindset
- They have a rational and balanced view of marriage – approaching it with caution
- Their personal destiny is not tied to being married
- They reject the idea of a soulmate
- Cohabitation is a viable consideration for this group
- They are predominately Caucasian and affluent
- You're least likely to find them in the Midwest
- They have a higher education than most
- This category is made up of 52% women and 48% men

sacrifice. They know it requires compromise, learning the art of give and take. They're not expecting to be "lucky in love." In fact, they tend to agree with Thomas Jefferson when he said, "I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it."

THE HOME OF A RATIONAL MINDSET

When it comes to married life, Rationals have typically grown up in relatively loving and stable homes. In fact, 64% of Rationals grew up with their parents being married (23% divorced) and they tend to say their parent's relationship was as good as any other.

HOW RATIONALS FEEL ABOUT DIVORCE

The pragmatic attitude of Rationals allows for divorce if things don't work out – particularly if infidelity or physical abuse enters the picture. While 48% of their peers would say "constant fighting" is grounds for divorce, 59% of Rationals would agree with that. And when you ask Rationals what holds a marriage together they are likely to say their communication, compromise and compatibility.

THE ROMANTIC MINDSET

DEFINITION

Ro-man-tic /rō'mantik /

Adjective: Inspired by the ideal of affection and love.

This segment, 19% of the population, brings a heavy dose of *idealism* to marriage. Romantics expect love to be lived out with unending passion and ongoing intimacy. Love, for the Romantic, is a bit like a movie. It is adventurous, poetic, starry-eyed, chivalrous. In a word, love for the Romantic is idyllic. They see love as standing strong, overcoming all, and being the source of unending bliss.

Romantics believe in a soulmate. In fact, they are nearly twice as likely as the average person their age to say, "There's only one perfect marriage partner for me." So they bring a great deal of idealistic hope and not a short supply of unconscious pressure to their marriage.

Romantic Mindset

- 19% of singles, ages 18 to 30, have a romantic mindset
- They're often young females (67%) believing in the existence of their Prince Charming
- They don't have much of a plan; life "just happens" for them
- Education is not valued as much by them as it is in other segments
- They believe there is one person out there for them
- You're most likely to find them in small town in the south and Midwest
- They tend to be service workers and clerks by trade

THE HOME OF A ROMANTIC MINDSET

Despite their desire for marriage, Romantics are more likely to have grown up in homes where they were raised by a divorced, single parent. In fact, only 49% of Romantics grew up with their parents being married (31% divorced) and they view their parent's marriage as somewhat tense.

HOW ROMANTICS FEEL ABOUT DIVORCE

Divorce is an acceptable option to Romantics – especially if it's related to cheating, dishonesty, violence or discovering you're not with your soulmate. In fact, 32% of Romantics say "finding someone else" is grounds for divorce. And when you ask Romantics what holds a marriage together they are likely to say love and trust.

THE RESTLESS MINDSET

DEFINITION

Rest-less /restləs /

Adjective: characterized by discontent or uneasiness.

This segment, 22% of the population, isn't so sure about marriage – at least for now.

You've heard the phrase, *ants in your pants*, right? It usually refers to a fidgety kid who never seems to sit still. This same restlessness, however, is found in some young adults – especially cavalier males who dominate the Restless Mindset.

They aren't ready to settle down. They're too busy exploring their options. They're not looking for more responsibility. In fact, words like dependable, conscientious, loyal, serious and responsible seldom enter the picture. Their "go-for-it" attitude is focused on fun. And the fewer responsibilities they take on – including marriage – the more fun they believe they'll have.

Do Restless Mindsets ever want to be married? Sure. Seventy-two percent of them say they will marry someday. But not now. They're not ready and they know it. They don't have the motivation or the skill set to pull it off. Yet they *do* fear ending up alone. In fact, they are more likely than any group to sadly say they would rather eventually marry the wrong person than not marry at all.

They carry an obvious ambivalence about marriage. It offers something they want, but at the same time, they fear it will be too demanding - too restrictive. So for now, these free spirits are not giving marriage anything close to serious attention.

THE HOME OF A RESTLESS MINDSET

While they are more likely to have stayed married (just 17% divorced), the parents of Restless Mindsets are more likely than other group to have done so “for the sake of the kids.” Restless Mindsets tend to be a bit closer to mom than dad and, more than most, they describe their parent’s marriage as business-like.

HOW RESTLESS MINDSETS FEEL ABOUT DIVORCE

The fear of a failed marriage causes Restless Mindsets to say divorce is not acceptable in their family nor among their friends. Relative to their peers, they have a greater tolerance for physical abuse (just 75% see it as ground for divorce, compared to 91% by their peers). And the same is true for drug use. They have expectations when it comes to sexual fulfillment. Still they are far more likely than their peers to not get married for fear of possible divorce. When asked what holds a marriage together they are likely to say loyalty.

Restless Mindset

- 22% of singles, ages 18 to 30, have a restless mindset
- Marriage is a distant goal for this group
- Their ambivalence about marriage is reflected in their strong feeling for and against it
- They lack confidence in their skills to make marriage work
- Predominantly young males (70%)
- They are risk-takers and focused primarily on having fun
- They’re ethnically diverse with higher incomes
- You are least likely to find them in the Midwest, and mostly in urban areas

RELUCTANT MINDSET

DEFINITION

Re-luc-tant / ri'ləktənt /

Adjective: Exhibiting resistance or unwillingness.

This segment, 14% of the population is “not the marrying kind.” More than any other segment, Reluctants are cynical about matrimony. In fact it’s the only segment to lack a desire to wed, probably because their own homes were examples of how not to do it.

Not only is their marriage motivation very low, one in five say they never want children. You might even say that this group is scared single. Why? Because they are twice as likely as their peers to say “lifelong commitment scares me.” They are also the least likely group to say they expect to be married for life.

When studying the differences between the “marrying kind” and the non-marrying kind you’ll see that Reluctants are not only more accepting of divorce, they are more likely to question the very value of marriage.

Have you ever heard of a “starter marriage”? In her book *The Starter Marriage and the Future of Matrimony*, author Pamela Paul defines the phrase as first-time marriages that last five years or less and do not yield children. Obviously, no one thinks they are embarking on a brief marriage, but this is somewhat of the mindset of Reluctants – if they do marry. Their eyes are focused on the wedding day, and they don't give much thought to what is going to happen in the next 50 years. After all, they reason, they can simply divorce. Starter marriages, according to Paul, often involve the first generation of children of divorce.²²

What Reluctants expect from marriage you can put it in two words: *Not much*. If anything, they mistakenly expect to lose their identity in exchange for very few payoffs.

THE HOME OF A RELUCTANT MINDSET

This group has the lowest incidence of being raised by both parents (just 45%). The majority were raised by single parent households. More than any other group, Reluctants have grown up seeing poor examples of loving relationships. In describing their home life they are apt to say it was “distant.”

HOW RELUCTANT MINDSETS FEEL ABOUT DIVORCE

Reluctants are nearly twice as likely as their peers to say that divorce is acceptable in their family. Consequently, they find many reasons for divorce, including falling out of love. That’s one reason they are the strongest proponents of cohabitation before, or as a substitute for, marriage.

Reluctant Mindset

- 14% of singles, ages 18 to 30, have a “reluctant hearts” – the smallest segment
- They are “anti-marriage,” fearing lifelong commitment more than others
- They believe people are better off staying single
- Strongest proponents of cohabitation
- Having children does not appear to influence their decisions to marry or stay married
- They show average education and slightly lower income
- They have an average distribution of ethnicity
- They are less suburban and more urban
- This group skews older than the other four groups
- This category is made up of 46% men and 54% women

PROCESSING YOUR COUPLE’S MINDSETS

The first thing you and your couple will notice about this part of the report is that it depicts all five mindsets, highlighting the two that identify each person in the couple.

You'll want to give your couple some context for this. You might say something like:

"A great deal of research has revealed that people about to be married can be identified as having one of five distinct attitudes about marriage – it's their mindset about marriage in general, not their specific relationship."

You can then give them a little sense for what each of the mindsets are about (they will be curious to know what they "aren't" as much as what they are). Of course, most of your time here will be devoted to reviewing their individual mindsets and what they mean.

We suggest reading each of their individual descriptions aloud (or even having them read aloud the paragraph about themselves). Then ask them what they each think about the commentary. Ask them if they agree with it. Discuss briefly why they agree or why they do not.

If time permits, you may also want to ask them if they agree about the description for their partner.

Then read aloud for the couple their insights on the combination of their two mindsets and ask them what they think.

Depending upon their personalities and their mindsets, this information can begin a lively conversation. So be conscious of how you are managing your time in this session.

HOW KNOWING A COUPLE'S MINDSETS HELPS YOU

This particular section of the report is as insightful for you as the counselor as it is for the couple. Knowing their mindsets gives you a good sense of what information and guidance will be most critical to your couple.

Most of the individuals you see in pre-marriage counseling will be in the first three mindsets: Resolute, Rational, or Romantic. Each of these three is motivated to be married. The Restless and the Reluctant, not so much (we'll say more in a moment about having them in pre-marriage counseling).

HELPING THE RESOLUTE MINDSET

When you have a Resolute in pre-marriage counseling you know you have an individual who is highly committed to marriage. This person will typically be very motivated and genuinely interested in their SYMBIS report and all you can help them glean from it.

However, because Resolutes expect marriage to make them happy, you'll want to take special care in helping them moderate their expectations. Marriage can't always deliver on their high hopes. The same is true about their expectations for having a baby once they are married. These are the people that fall for the myth that says, "having a baby will bring us closer together." Helping Resolutes calibrate their expectations is essential as you explore the remainder of their SYMBIS report.

HELPING THE RATIONAL MINDSET

When you have a Rational in your sessions you have a person who is not expecting to "live happily ever after." This person knows that hard work lies ahead. So they are looking for effective tools from you in their pre-marriage education. Rationals are often more apt to follow your advice as a pre-marriage facilitator than any other segment.

However, the Rational's cautious perspective on marriage can cause them to sometimes put off marriage to the consternation of their partner. Be on the lookout for this because it typically means there is some material to process there for a couple. Also, Rationals often believe that cohabitation is a valuable way to prepare for marriage. This will come up in a later part of the SYMBIS report if that is the case, but this can give Rationals a false sense of security about their relationship and it may be an issue worthy of exploration.

HELPING THE ROMANTIC MINDSET

The Romantic typically loves everything about the process of getting married. They tend to enjoy the celebration of love and how it is expressed in their ceremony. And pre-marriage counseling can be a part of that for them. They aren't necessarily seeing it as "work." In fact, the Romantic is often in pre-marriage counseling because it was gifted to them or their partner wants to do it – so they agree that it could be "fun."

For this reason, the Romantic will sometimes require a bit more incentive to get immersed in pre-marriage education. Relative to other segments, they tend to think marriage will "just happen" because they are in love. You'll want to keep in mind here that this person needs to understand the value of long-term commitment – especially when they lose "those loving feelings."

HELPING THE RESTLESS MINDSET

Generally speaking, you are not likely to have many individuals in your pre-marriage counseling sessions that fall into the Restless or the Reluctant categories. For obvious reasons, these two segments of the population, a combined 36%, are not likely to get engaged. However, that doesn't mean you'll never see them.

The most common scenario for seeing a Restless Mindset in pre-marriage counseling is when the couple has become pregnant or they are feeling some other external pressure to marry. It could be a military leave. It could be rebellion against their parents. A number of motivators may play a role.

Regardless of their motivation, when you have a Restless Mindset in your pre-marriage counseling office you need to spend some time exploring this with the couple. You can say something like this:

"It's unusual to have someone with a Restless Mindset headed into marriage. Tell me your story and what's behind your motivation to get married when you have ambivalence about it."

Something along these lines is typically enough to get a couple talking.

HELPING THE RELUCTANT MINDSET

When it comes to having a Reluctant in pre-marriage counseling, that is even more rare. Very rare, indeed. A possible scenario is the person who got married in a rather spontaneous fashion and is now wanting to get some counsel. Or perhaps they are marrying for some legal or monetary reason. Then again, it could be that they are simply very cynical about marriage but jumping into it anyway. Regardless of the scenario for this person, you'll certainly want to explore it carefully by noting how paradoxical their mindset is to what they are doing.

THE BOTTOM LINE ON MINDSET

Helping your couple become aware of their individual mindsets about marriage and exploring how they mesh will help you as much as it helps them in the pre-marriage process. No need to spend an inordinate amount of time on this area unless the conversation seems especially fruitful. Think of it as a quick lesson in self-awareness for the couple.

PROCESSING MINDSETS IN SYMBIS+

While the Mindset page is often more helpful for you than for the couple you are working with (e.g., any combination of Resolute, Rational and Romantic), there are specific instances where it may become important to drill down on what it reveals for a married couple. Generally speaking, this is true whenever one or both persons in a marriage are either Restless or Reluctant.

PROCESSING THE RESTLESS MINDSET IN SYMBIS+

Typically, a married person may be Restless for two primary reasons. First, they may have misunderstood the questions. This is very rare but worth double checking with the person - especially if they are surprised to be in this area. If they did indeed misunderstand or answer the items incorrectly, simply process with them the category that they believe best fits them (no need to have them take the assessment again). Second, they may genuinely feel restless. That is, they may feel that their marriage has constrained them in some way (e.g., pursuing their dreams).

It's important to process the issue. When you have a married person who is Restless, you can say something like:

"Tell me why you think you landed on this area of having a Restless Mindset."

No need to say more than that. Use this as a discussion starter. No need to show any kind of alarm or puzzlement (that will only heighten the anxiety of their spouse). And you certainly don't need to label it as bad. You want to open the door for an honest discussion about what is going on for them. They may reveal that they are feeling like the responsibilities of married life are keeping them from pursuing their recreational or vocational dreams. Hear them out.

Once they have given you some insight into their situation, if you're wondering about their commitment to the marriage relationship you can say:

"How would you rate your commitment to your marriage - on a one-to-ten scale?"

Their answer to this question will get to the real matter and either alleviate your concerns about why they are in this category or it will exacerbate them. Either way, the issue will be out on the table so that an honest discussion of their mindset can take place.

PROCESSING THE RELUCTANT MINDSET IN SYMBIS+

If a married person is revealed to have a Reluctant Mindset, it generally means that they don't value the institution of marriage. It doesn't necessarily mean that they aren't committed to their relationship. They may be making a point that "marriage is just a piece of paper." On the other hand, having a Reluctant Mindset as a married person may mean that they are done, that they want out of the marriage. In either case, you'll want to find out what is going on by asking something like:

"What do you think about being Reluctant? Tell me why that is the case right now."

As always, use this as a discussion starter to uncover what is going on for this person. And find out where their commitment level is. As with the Restless Mindset in marriage, you can ask:

"How would you rate your commitment to your marriage - on a one-to-ten scale?"

Listen with compassion and don't pass judgment. You want them to open up. Seek understanding of what is going on for them. And once you've heard their perspective, invite their spouse into the discussion:

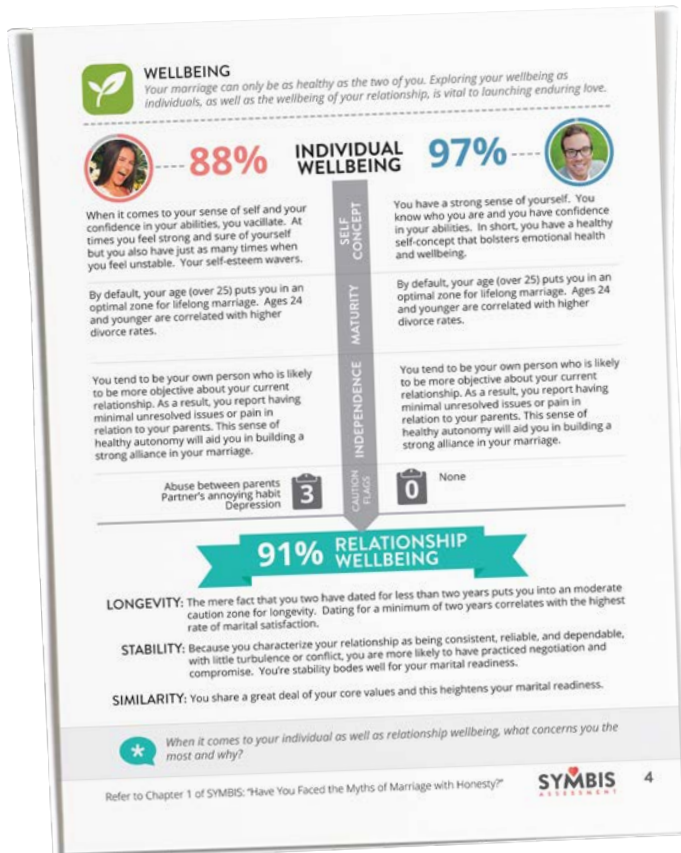
"How do you feel when you hear your spouse process this right now?"

Again, listen carefully and compassionately. This could be very tender ground you're walking on but it ground that needs to be covered.

WELLBEING

WHAT IS WELLBEING?

Wellbeing is a measure of psychological health for both individuals (plus any caution flags) as well as the emotional health of their relationship together.



WHY WELLBEING MATTERS

A couple's relationship can only be as healthy as the two individuals.²³ This is a central principle of the SYMBIS Assessment. To say it another way: If a person tries to build intimacy with another person before they've gotten healthy on their own, the relationship becomes an attempt to complete themselves. And that's a set up for misery in marriage.²⁴ That's why a serious look at a couple's respective wellbeing is critically important to pre-marriage work.

PROCESSING WELLBEING WITH YOUR COUPLE

The top portion of this page provides a percentile score for each individual. This score is derived from three measures: Self-concept, Maturity, and Independence. Let's take a look at each.

1. SELF-CONCEPT

The person's level of confidence and their level of positive self-esteem.

Self-concept embodies the answer to "Who am I and do I like who I am?" It's often thought of as the gap between one's ideal-self and real-self. This kind of self-appraisal is perhaps one of the most well-established and researched psychological constructs in the literature.²⁵ And with good reason. An unhealthy self-concept has been found to be a factor in nearly every aspect of poor mental health and poor relationships.²⁶

Over 30,000 scholarly articles, chapters, and books have been published on self-concept.²⁷ Not surprisingly, many of these studies find that marital satisfaction is positively related to a positive self-concept.²⁸ Likewise, many of these studies have documented a negative correlation between low self-esteem and a fulfilling marriage commitment.²⁹ Some studies have looked at global satisfaction in marriage related to self-concept and others have looked at specific areas of fulfillment. For example, a longitudinal study of 70 couples revealed that a person's self-concept is one of the highest predictors of marital sexual satisfaction for couples.³⁰ Suffice it to say, that when it comes to marriage preparation, self-concept is a worthy area of exploration.

The SYMBIS Assessment includes a measure of self-concept resulting in three general levels of feedback:

- **High score:** You have a strong sense of yourself. You know who you are and you have confidence in your abilities. In short, you have a healthy self-concept that bolsters emotional health and wellbeing.
- **Medium score:** When it comes to your sense of self and your confidence in your abilities, you vacillate. At times you feel strong and sure of yourself but you also have just as many times when you feel unstable. Your self-esteem wavers.
- **Low Score:** You struggle with having a strong sense of yourself and you are often not confident in your abilities. You feel more inadequate than most people. In short, you suffer from low self-esteem.

Exploring each person's self-concept in your session can be quite productive, especially if one person's score confirms your clinical sense that they are struggling with low self-esteem or inferiority.³¹ For example, you may see evidence of defensiveness, lack of confidence, or social withdraw.

This subsection of the report can serve as a jumping off point for a conversation that can become a turning point, setting them on a path for significance. Of course, the primary task at hand is pre-marriage education. But if a person's self-concept is flagging, you can be sure it will have a significant effect on the marriage. You might say something like:

"Because your self-concept is not as strong as it could be, it's probably a good idea to spend some effort working on that. What do you think?"

Research reveals that improvement in this area occurs when the individual learns to localize their inferiority feelings (e.g., social, body, etc.), to develop more positive self-statements, modify unrealistic standards, and so on. It's proven. An individual can improve

their self-concept with work. So if it's needed, you may want to either augment your pre-marriage work with this in mind or refer the individual for it.

2-A. MATURITY (SYMBIS ONLY, NOT SYMBIS+)

The person's age.

The age at first marriage has been climbing steadily for all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. The median age is now the oldest since the U.S. Census started keeping track in the 1890s: almost 26 for women and almost 28 for men.

It's well documented that those who marry before age 20 are two to three times more likely to divorce.³² According to research at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, age plays a critical role in marital success:

- Of college grads who wed in the 1980s at 26-plus, 81 percent were still married 20 years later
- Of college grads under 26 when they wed in the 1980s, 65 percent were still married 20 years later
- Of high school grads under 26 when they wed in the 1980s, 49 percent were still married 20 years later.³³

There is some debate over whether waiting to marry is a good idea, and if so, how long is best. Those who advocate marriage in the early to mid-20s say that's the age when the pool of possible mates is larger, it's when couples can "grow up" together and it's prime for childbearing. But others favor the late 20s or early 30s, saying maturity makes for happier unions and greater economic security — both of which make divorce less likely.

The SYMBIS Assessment spells out the issue in four age brackets based on research. Here are the possible results a person can receive under Maturity:

- **Score of 19 or younger:** This may surprise you, but your age puts you at risk. Marriages among teenagers are twice as likely to end in divorce as marriages of those in their 20s. Of course, this is simply a caution note to discuss.
- **Score of 20-22 years of age:** Did you know the divorce rate for those between the ages of 20 and 22-years is twice as high as it is for 24-25-year-olds. Because of this, your age puts you in a moderate maturity level for marital readiness.
- **Score of 23-25:** Your age, by default, puts you into a relatively safe zone for marital readiness. The optimal zone for predicting lifelong love when it comes to age is 25 and older – and you're pretty close to that.

- **Score of 25 and older:** By default, your age (over 25) puts you in an optimal zone for lifelong marriage. Ages 24 and younger are correlated with higher divorce rates.

Of course, there's no magic number for everyone. Every couple is different. So this subsection of Maturity simply allows you to explore it with the individuals you see. If they are younger than 23, it's worth talking about it.

One more thing is worth highlighting on occasion for some couples. It's equally as important as age. It's their inner voice.

According to author Carl Weisman, people who have serious doubts about getting married should follow their gut instincts and not walk down the aisle. For his book *Serious Doubts: Why People Marry When They Know It Won't Last*, Weisman surveyed 1,036 people across the country who had been through a divorce. Nearly 8 in 10 said that before the wedding they felt "somewhat" or "extremely certain" the marriage would end in divorce. The rest of those surveyed identified themselves as "slightly certain."

Know thyself.

- INSCRIPTION ON THE ORACLE
OF APOLLO AT DELPHI

In an interview with *USA Today* about his research, Weisman said that they all had one thing in common: "They all ignored their inner voice. They knew it wasn't going to last." So why did they go through with it? A separate survey listed the three top reasons as "[I] figured I could make it work," "It seemed the next logical step," and "[I] thought I could change some aspect of my partner."³⁴

2-B. EMPATHY (SYMBIS+ ONLY)

The person's capacity to see the world from their partner's perspective.

It's difficult to exaggerate the value of empathy in a marriage relationship. Research reveals, for example, that mutual empathy is the number one most effective way to instantly resolve conflict.

Most people believe they empathize much better than they actually do. And of course, some people confuse sympathy (which is more feelings based) with empathy (which includes feeling and thinking) That's why having a little objectivity on this ability is helpful. It's a great piece to explore with your couples - asking them for concrete examples of when they are most likely and least likely to put themselves in each other's shoes.³⁵

3. INDEPENDENCE (SYMBIS ONLY, NOT SYMBIS+)

The person's individuation from their parents.

It's difficult to exaggerate the link between a person's psychological wellbeing and their relationship with their parents and siblings while they were growing up.³⁶ The conditions of the home environment, including the quality of parents' marriages and parent-child interactions has consistently been shown to influence the quality of adult children's choices within pre-marriage relationships.³⁷ And chief among the issues impacting the launch of a successful marriage is the process of individuation. This is the process of separating from your family-of-origin to successfully create your family-of-creation.

From toddlerhood through early childhood and then adolescence, individuating from parents takes on great importance.³⁸ Ideally, families make room for the growing selves of their children and allow them to be (within reason) whom they are and are becoming.³⁹ As adolescents move into young adulthood, they continue to individuate from their parents. They choose schools, friends, hobbies, careers, travel, and hundreds of life choices that may be different from who their families are or what their families want for them.⁴⁰

For those who have successfully individuated, these choices will be able to be realized and there will be little anxiety associated with them. For some young adults, however, the amount of anxiety (or depression) associated with knowing what they want and how to get it interferes with having the lives they want – including whom they date and whether they marry. Paralysis or dependency can result. Individuation cannot proceed: the capacity to know what one wants and the ability to get it is impaired.

For this reason, it is imperative that this construct of independence be assessed and explored as a person is exploring marriage. The SYMBIS Report provides a catalyst for conversation on this point. Each individual receives a high, midrange, or low score on independence:

- **High score:** You tend to be your own person who is likely to be more objective about your current relationship. As a result, you report having minimal unresolved issues or pain in relation to your parents. This sense of healthy autonomy will aid you in building a strong alliance in your marriage.
- **Medium score:** You report having a moderate degree of unresolved issues with your parents. At times in your marriage, this may drive you to be reactive or less objective than you might otherwise be. You may also find yourself leaning on your partner to meet needs that weren't met when you were growing up. So your moderate sense of autonomy from your parents is worth exploring.
- **Low Score:** You report having unresolved pain or unfinished business in relation to your parents. These emotional loose ends can keep you from being objective in your

marriage. It can also compel you to look for healing from your spouse because you haven't found it with your parents. This lack of healthy independence is worthy of discussion.

This gives you the opportunity to delve into this topic of individuation more deeply if needed. If a low score is reported on independence, you can say something like:

"Tell me more about the home you grew up in and how you might still be feeling pretty attached to mom and dad."

Of course, this conversation will require sensitivity and clinical acumen to get the person talking. But it's vital. And it's extremely helpful for their fiancé to listen in.

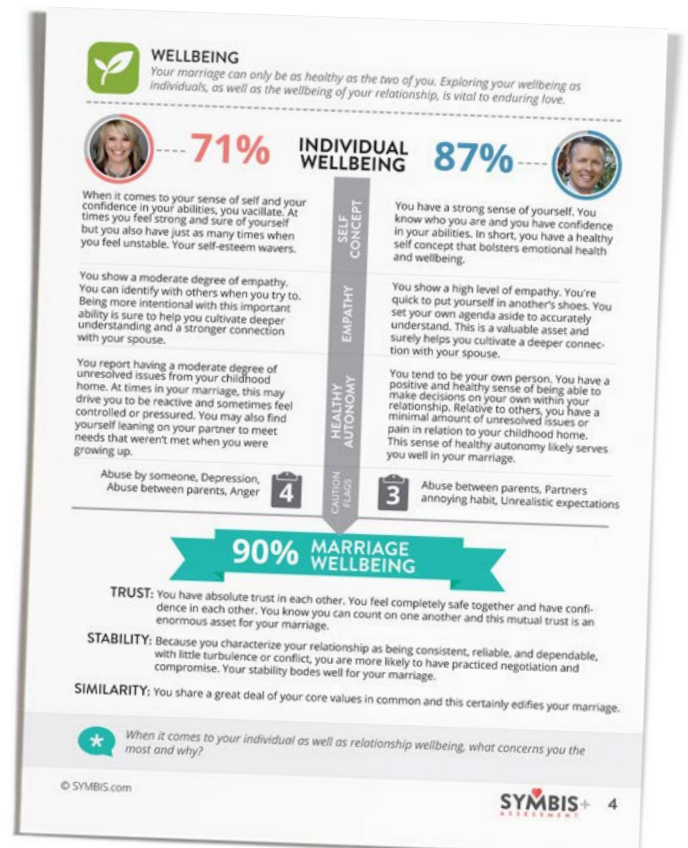
NOTE: In SYMBIS+ this section is called "Healthy Autonomy" and serves the same function but with more appropriate verbiage for persons who are already married.

CAUTION FLAGS

After a brief personal summary for each individual of self-concept, maturity, and independence, you'll see that they may have any number of 16 potential caution flags. Most require professional intervention, often from a specialist. If the noted area is not a clinical specialty for you, you'll want to find them a competent referral if they're not already seeking help.

Here's a list of the 16 issues that may be raised on this portion of the SYMBIS report:

1. **Anger:** If a person is struggling to manage their emotions, especially anger, we want you to be aware of it and process that with the couple. You'll want to explore how often their temper flairs up, what triggers it, and what they are doing to work on it.
2. **Anxiety:** If a person is coping with any form of an anxiety disorder or excessive apprehension and worry, you'll want to ensure they are getting competent treatment.



3. **Depression:** If a person is struggling with a mood disorder at any level this is an issue that needs to be addressed and treated by a competent counselor.
4. **Addiction:** Whether it is substance abuse/addiction or alcoholism, or any other addiction, it's imperative that this be addressed and treated by a professional.
5. **Stress:** If a person lacks coping skills for managing stress adequately, they will need to obtain professional help for learning these skills.
6. **Eating disorder:** Whether it is anorexia, bulimia, binge eating or another type of eating disorder, ensure that this person is getting professional help.
7. **Body Image:** If a person is struggling with insecurities surrounding their body (typically feeling/being over or under weight), you'll want to ensure they are getting competent help (often beginning with an exam from their physician).
8. **Suspensions:** If a partner's past is not fully known, the SYMBIS Report will raise this issue for discussion.
9. **Sexual promiscuity:** If a partner's sexual promiscuity is a concern, the SYMBIS Report will raise the issue.
10. **Problematic Online Activity (Pornography):** This caution flag appears when a person admits to struggling with pornography. It's noted on the report as "problematic online activity" so that it is not a surprising jolt to the other partner.
11. **Physical illness:** If a person contends with a serious and chronic physical illness, the report will note this.
12. **Abuse between parents:** If a person has observed abuse between their parents at anytime growing up the report attempts to reveal this and note it as a point of discussion. You'll want to find out how frequent and what kind of impact this had on the person. If they haven't done so already, this may require some additional counseling for this person to process such a devastating childhood experience.
13. **Abuse by someone:** If the person was abused by anyone – a relative or otherwise – the report attempts to bring that out. Again, professional help in this area may be needed if the person is not already obtaining it.
14. **Current abuse:** If the person reports any current abuse of any kind – verbal, emotional, sexual or physical – this is a serious concern and must be addressed head-on immediately to ensure their safety. If you do not have professional credentialing in this area or have a ready personal referral for it, contact the authorities in your area by calling 911.

15. **Annoying habit:** If a person reports that their partner has an annoying habit that gets under their skin, this caution flag needs to be assessed by asking them about it and finding out how serious it is.
16. **Unrealistic expectation:** If a person believes they will be able to change their partner once they get married, that's an obvious caution flag that needs to be explored and put on the table for discussion.

Each of these 16 caution flags is only likely to show up on a couple's report if they admit to it. Generally speaking, these are self-report issues. If you have a suspicion that one of these is present but it's not showing up, trust your instinct and put it on the table.

While the space on this page allows for up to 6 caution flags to be noted, some individuals may have more than 6. When this is the case, the number will be noted on the clipboard icon. And when this number is more than 6, we recommend that you have the individual consider what those other caution flags might be. This is typically enough to get the issues on the table. If not, you may want to review the list of potential caution flags noted in your Training Manual. The primary reason for not including every caution flag for an individual (when the number exceeds 6) is to protect the individual from having a proverbial "laundry list" of items listed on this page next to their partner - and in the case of a group administration or classroom setting it's also best to not reveal a long longer list for fear of making them particularly self-conscious.

Any one of these caution-flag-issues holds the potential to be a significant issue for the wellbeing of a couple. Some issues are more detrimental than others, but each is worthy of exploration if they are present.

RELATIONSHIP WELLBEING

The later portion of this page gives you a percentile score for the couple's Relationship Wellbeing. This score is an aggregate of their two individual scores plus three additional qualities:

LONGEVITY (SYMBIS ONLY, NOT SYMBIS+)

The length of the couple's dating relationship

When people first become close in a dating relationship they feel a tremendous sense of validation from each other, like their partner is the only other person on earth who sees things as they do. That feeling sometimes fades, and when it does, it can take a heavy toll on the marriage.⁴¹

This fading dynamic is, of course, called "disillusionment" and it can be devastating to a newlywed couple.⁴² While dating, people initially put their best foot forward, ignoring each other's – and the relationship's – shortcomings.⁴³ But after they tie the knot, hidden aspects of their personalities emerge, and idealized images give way to more realistic ones.⁴⁴ This can lead to disappointment, loss of love and, ultimately, distress and divorce.⁴⁵

A primary way of circumventing this situation and lessening the impact of whatever disillusionment a couple could experience is found in the length of their dating relationship.⁴⁶

How long a couple has been dating is a simple, objective measure that is an important factor for a couple's relationship wellbeing.⁴⁷ For this reason the SYMBIS Report takes research on dating longevity into consideration when assessing relationship wellbeing.

A couple's score on this dimension falls into one of three categories based on what research indicates:

- **Score of having dated for 2 years or more:** The mere fact that you two have dated for two or more years puts you into a more optimal longevity category that correlates with higher marital satisfaction than those who have dated for shorter amounts of time.
- **Score of having dated for 1-2 years:** The mere fact that you two have dated for less than two years puts you into a moderate caution zone for longevity. Dating for a minimum of two years correlates with the highest rates marital satisfaction.
- **Score of having dated for less than a year:** The mere fact that you two have dated for less than a year puts you into a caution zone for lack of longevity. Dating for a minimum of two years correlates with the highest rates of marital satisfaction.

Keep in mind, that dating longevity is a mere indicator, not an independent predictor. That is, dating two years or more is by no means a stand-alone sign that the couple will succeed. It's simply one of many factors taken into account on their relationship wellbeing.

How can you use this information in your SYMBIS Assessment process with your couple? The primary occasion is when you're concerned about how quickly a couple is moving toward marriage. Having longevity show up on their report gives you a catalyst for talking about it with them.

TRUST (REPLACING LONGEVITY IN SYMBIS+)

The confidence they have in each other and their relationship.

Trust replaces "longevity" in SYMBIS+. Trust is the the bedrock of a healthy and enduring marriage. If either partner can't trust the other, if there is suspicion around the other's

behavior, the relationship falters. Use the information here to either affirm your couple (if their trust score is strong) or explore why they are struggling to trust each other (if the score is weak).

STABILITY

The quality of their relationship

It's important to inventory how stable their relationship has been over whatever that length their dating relationship has been - or their marriage (if they are already married).⁴⁸ Dating stability is known to be a strong predictor of future stability for a married couple.⁴⁹

Ted Huston, Ph.D., a professor of psychology and human ecology at the University of Texas at Austin, says pre-marriage problems can be likened to a virus that "will surface in the marriage and erode the partners' bond, making the relationship vulnerable."⁵⁰

For this reason, the SYMBIS Assessment gives you the opportunity to explore this important part of your couple's story. The report will give your couple one of two scores:

- **Score of having high stability:** Because you characterize your relationship as being consistent, reliable, and dependable, with little turbulence or conflict, you are more likely to have practiced negotiation and compromise. Your stability bodes well for your marital readiness.
- **Score of low stability:** Because you characterize your relationship as being somewhat turbulent or even conflictual, your relational readiness score drops for lack of stability. This indicates you are not yet practicing skills like negotiation and compromise.

SIMILARITY

The number of core values they have in common

You've heard that "opposites attract." We believe that can be true, but opposites that attract eventually "attack." The truth is that the more two people have in common – particularly on the issues that matter most – the easier their life together is.⁵¹ That's why we assess their religious values, spiritual practices, political perspectives, family values, and even hobbies and interests.

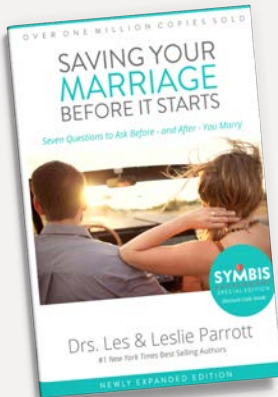
All of these core values play an important part in a couple's relational wellbeing together. Here's how their three potential levels of similarity are reported:

- **Score of having high similarity:** You share a great deal of your core values in common and this heightens your marital readiness.

- **Score of having medium similarity:** You share only some core values and this dampens your marital readiness a bit.
- **Score of having low similarity:** You have very few core values in common with each other and this lowers your marital readiness.

After reviewing both individual's wellbeing scores and their relationship wellbeing, explore what might concern them. What points of information do they have questions about? What do they wish they could change and why?

Particularly if some important caution flags are raised on this page, you'll likely spend up to 30 minutes on this page as you process it with the couple.



At the conclusion of this session on wellbeing, after exploring individual wellbeing, caution flags and relational wellbeing, you may want to suggest they read chapter one of *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*. Of course, this is optional but highly recommended.

Chapter one, Have You Faced The Myths of Marriage With Honesty?, of SYMBIS will prime the pump for a terrific experience when it comes to the next section of the report.

CONTEXT

WHAT IS CONTEXT?

Think of a couple's Context as the proverbial baggage they bring into the relationship. Everybody's got baggage – for good or ill. This section makes it explicit. As a reminder, the more orange you see here on the Overview (page 2), the better.

WHY CONTEXT MATTERS

Two people marry more than each other – they marry a set of circumstances.⁵² Becoming aware of how their two worlds combine on a practical level is essential to making sure they don't collide on an emotional level.

PROCESSING CONTEXT WITH YOUR COUPLE

SOCIAL CONTEXT

The first page of this section is devoted to a couple's "social context." It examines four aspects of each person's social world and reveals where they both land on a measurable scale.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY SUPPORT

This indicates how strong each person feels their immediate social network is – from a great deal of social support to very little support. It's important to note, as their facilitator, that this is social support specifically around their relationship as a couple.⁵³ In other words, this is a measure of whether or not the people that know them best as individuals are feeling good and supportive of their engagement, for example.

If the support they are sensing is strong, that bodes well for their relationship.⁵⁴ It means these people are giving them their "blessing." If the support is low for an engaged couple,

CONTEXT: SOCIAL SUPPORT
You're marrying a set of circumstances as well as each other. Being aware of how your two worlds combine on a practical level is essential to making sure they don't collide on an emotional level.

SUPPORT OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP

Toni: You have a great deal of social support from your friends and family as it relates to your relationship. Having their blessing is a tremendous advantage for having a great start in your marriage.

Chris: You have a great deal of social support from your friends and family as it relates to your relationship. Having their blessing is a tremendous advantage for having a great start in your marriage.

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY IN-LAWS

Toni: The relationship you have with your partner's parents seems optimistic and supportive.

Chris: The relationship you have with your partner's parents seems optimistic and supportive.

NETWORK OF MUTUAL FRIENDS WE BOTH ENJOY

Toni: You feel very good about how your individual networks of social relationships are melding. You feel good about your partner's investment in your friends and visa-versa.

Chris: You feel very good about how your individual networks of social relationships are melding. You feel good about your partner's investment in your friends and visa-versa.

SOCIAL SUPPORT FROM MY FAITH COMMUNITY

Toni: You view your religious faith and the people you worship with to be a significant part of your social support system.

Chris: You view your religious faith and the people you worship with to be a significant part of your social support system.

Are you each satisfied with your current level of social support? What do you wish were different and why? What can you do to improve your social support as a couple?

Refer to Chapter 1 of SYMBIS: "Have You Faced the Myths of Marriage with Honesty?"

SYMBIS 5

this is a bit of a caution flag. It means that those who know them are not feeling that this relationship is a good match for whatever reason.⁵⁵ And when this is the case, you'll want to explore it. You can simply ask:

"Why do you think your friends and family are not supportive of your relationship?" Listen for clues as to why these people are not in favor of the relationship and see if the couple gives their perspective any validity.

IN-LAW RELATIONSHIPS

This is a measure of how much support and connection each person feels they are getting from their partner's parents. In some cases, of course, they may not yet have much of a relationship with their about-to-be in-laws. But even if they don't, this can be a great discussion.

Proverbial in-law issues are real and this subsection gives you a place to explore each person's expectations and hopes for their in-law relationships.⁵⁶ It's also a place for a little coaching that can help them get off to a positive start.

Here are some talking points you may find useful in this area:

- Encourage each to stay positive. For some couples, complaining about the mothers or fathers-in-law becomes a blood sport. Guide them to avoid negative conversations about each other's parents and give them the benefit of the doubt as much as possible – not to mention overlooking the little irritants.
- Remind them to show gratitude. Whenever in-laws do something nice, let them know that they are valued and appreciated. A quick phone call, a note or email to say thanks goes a long way to maintaining a good relationship.
- Help them set boundaries. On occasions, some in-laws can get pushy or nosey. That's when it's certainly permissible to let them know that's off limits. Of course, the key is to do this in a kind manner while taking care of the marriage and each other.

INVESTING IN PARTNER'S SOCIAL WORLD

This assesses the degree to which each person is investing in one another's social network. That is, it gives a chance for each person to discuss whether the other person is exerting effort to get to know their partner's friends and family.

This is natural for most people to do, of course, but when it's not, it can be quite painful – not only for the partner, but for their family and friends who want to get to know this person.⁵⁷

So on those occasions where one person is not investing in the other person's connections, ask about it. Find out what's going on for them (they may be shy or intimidated, for example). And help them realize how important it will be in the long run for them to have an inviting spirit with their partner's social world.

FAITH COMMUNITY

Many people gain significant and meaningful support from their religious community.⁵⁸ In fact, a person's faith community may be at the hub of their support system.⁵⁹

You'll want to explore this by asking what that means to each of them – if this is, indeed, the case. You can also use this question to talk about things like expectations around church attendance once they get married and how each sees their faith community in relationship to their life as a married couple (you can dive deeper into spiritual expectations on page 15 of the SYMBIS Report).

Before you leave this page of the report, ask your couple a more global question about how satisfied they are with their current level of social support as a whole. Ask them what they would change if they could.

PROCESSING SOCIAL LIFE IN SYMBIS+

When you invite a couple who is already married to take the assessment this page will contextualize to their relationship. You'll notice this page will be titled Context: Social Life in the SYMBIS+ Report. Debriefing it will be pretty straight forward and intuitive but here are few thoughts to consider as you do so.

CONTENTMENT WITH FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

We all know that family, both immediate and extended, can be a tremendous support system for any married couple. Of course, family can also be the source of incredible consternation. This continuum serves as catalyst for conversing with your couple about how each of them is doing on this front. Explore what's missing for them in this area - and what they may be able to do as a couple for each other and for the family system as a whole to make it function in health-giving ways.

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY IN-LAWS

Whether a marriage is just starting or has surpassed the first decade milestone, in-law relationships can be a boon or a bane for any couple. In fact, the longer the marriage, the more entrenched in-law "scripts" become and so you'll want to treat any dissatisfaction

here with compassion and genuine understanding. Avoid the temptation to be flippant or humorous about proverbial in-law problem. These can be quite troublesome and painful for certain couples. Focus on what each partner can do for the other when it comes to improving this relationship for their spouse.

PRIORITIZING TIME WITH MUTUAL FRIENDS

Enjoying a rich social life can add significant fulfillment to a couple's marriage. Why? Because, among other things, it not only bolsters their social support in times of need, it creates fun memories and peer-models of marriage. Don't be surprised if one person in the couple is feeling far more content in this area than the other. The imbalance may have something to do with their personality - which you will get to on a later page in their SYMBIS+ Report. For example, an Energizing Spouse can have a near-unquenchable thirst for social activity while the Analyzing Spouse can be quite content with only intermittent interactions with friends. In other words, the person's hard-wiring is an important factor here. As you explore this dimension of the page, uncover how important this is to each person in the marriage and if their satisfaction is not strong, get tactical about how they can build a circle of mutual friends they both enjoy being with. For example, maybe they would want to start a small group or a dinner club or host a game night or whatever. The point is that they can be intentional to improve this area together.

PRIORITIZING TIME WITH MUTUAL FRIENDS

Many couples, even after years of marriage, can struggle to have a shared social life. He might have his golf buddies and she might have her exercise partners or whatever - and the two worlds don't seem to integrate. So as you explore this dimension of the page, uncover how important this is to each person in the marriage and if their satisfaction is not strong, get tactical about how they can build a circle of mutual friends they both enjoy being with.

SOCIAL SUPPORT FROM MY FAITH COMMUNITY

As couples move along in their marriage, they typically sink their spiritual roots down deeper within a faith community, or they begin to feel their faith flagging. You can use this continuum to spark a conversation about this area that can be especially helpful to each spouse. Why? Because this is a topic that is often pushed aside in the pace of life for some couples. So don't hesitate to tease out of each person what's going on for them personally here and how they'd like to see it potentially change. Also, use this information on this continuum to delve into their expectations on social support from their faith community. Are their expectations reasonable? Are they healthy? Don't hesitate to explore what they appreciate most and what they would like to see improved. Importantly, what can each of them do in practical terms to realize that improvement?

FINANCIAL CONTEXT

The second page of this section on Context is devoted to a couple's financial situation as well as their financial styles, skills, and outlook. According to a survey by the American Institute of CPAs, more than 27% of people who are married or living with a partner cited money as the topic most likely to cause an argument. That makes it the most volatile topic for couples – far more sensitive than children, careers or friends.⁶⁰

This page examines several aspects of each person's money perspective.

MONEY STYLE

Researchers at the Wharton School and Northwestern University found that while people hope to marry someone with a money style similar to their own, they, more often than not, marry their financial opposite.⁶¹

This means that you're very likely to have a "saver" and a "spender" together in your pre-marriage office.

The report reveals how each person self-identifies with these two basic styles. You'll want to help them explore their styles by asking them for examples of how they see themselves and each other – whether they share the same style or not.

This is not a bad place to have a little discussion on compromise. Say something like:

"So when your money styles clash, how are each of you likely to bend a bit to find a middle ground? What will make that especially tough for each of you?"

Before you leave this subtopic, make it clear that they'll be doing a disservice if they only view each other in relationship to money by their style. It will likely lead to name calling like "cheapskate" or "tightwad" – something you want to help them short-circuit before it even happens.

BUDGET SKILLS

One of the most important financial areas for newlyweds surrounds the need for a budget. If your couple is highly motivated, they are already likely to be thinking in these terms. If a couple is not highly motivated, you'll want to help them with understanding the need for a budget. You'll also want to give them basic tools for building a budget together.

SYMBIS Assessment makes this easy. We have the essential tools a couple will need for doing just that built into Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts.

You may want to share the simple budget template that's included in the resource area of your facilitator's dashboard.

FINANCIAL FEARS

Money often represents power and control in a marriage relationship. Therefore the more a couple agrees on their financial approach, the more likely they are to feel respected by one another. That is, they will tend to feel less manipulated, deceived or controlled by their partner.

For this reason, it's important to explore their financial fears. Too often, they remain unspoken for most couples. Getting them to talk about their financial fears at this early stage will go a long way in helping them get a great financial start.

SYMBIS Assessment has each person choose which financial fear tops their list from these four:

Lack of Influence – not having a say in their financial approach

Loss of Security – not having enough to live on or enough for emergencies

Lack of Respect – not receiving respect from their partner on finances

Not Realizing Dreams – not being able to do what they want in the future

Your couple may share the same fear or not. That doesn't matter. The goal is to get them talking about any anxiety they may have when it comes to their financial context.

DEBT

A study looked at survey data gathered from 1,010 randomly sampled newlywed couples and found that starting a marriage with consumer debt has a “negative impact on newlywed levels of marital quality.” Not surprisingly, those with the “highest amounts of debt (e.g., \$20,000 – 50,000) had the lowest marital satisfaction and adjustment scores of all participants.”⁶²

CONTEXT: FINANCES
Your financial skills, attitude and history, make up an important part of the context you're bringing into marriage. A healthy "money talk" will curtail countless currency conflicts.

MONEY MATRIX

TONI **CHRIS**

SAVER **SAVER**

MONEY STYLE
BUDGET SKILLS
FINANCIAL FEARS
DEBT

TONI "I live by a budget religiously."
CHRIS "I live by a budget religiously."

TONI
Less than \$10,000; You report having some financial debt and you'll want to explore how the two of you will manage that.

CHRIS
You report having no financial debt. Terrific!

TONI **CHRIS**

Lack of Influence ☐ ☐

Lack of Security ☐ ☐

Lack of Respect ☐ ☐

Not Realizing Dreams ☐ ☐

What concerns you most about the financial context you're each bringing into your marriage and why? What gives you peace about your financial future?

MONEY TALKS
To minimize friction over finances, you'll want to keep the communication channels clear. Completing these sentences with your Facilitator will help you do just that:

- In my home growing up, money was...
- When I think about our financial future...
- What you may not know about money and me is...
- The thing I appreciate about you in relationship to money is...
- When it comes to money, I'd like to improve my...
- One specific action we could take right now that would help me is...

What's one practical action step you can both take within the next month to ensure your relationship is on the best financial path?

Refer to Chapter 1 of SYMBIS: "Have You Faced the Myths of Marriage with Honesty?"

SYMBIS **ASSESSMENT** **6**

Knowing what kind of financial debt each person is carrying into the relationship is vital. A surprising number of people discover massive amounts of school debt or credit card debt only after they marry. This obviously creates friction because the other partner feels duped, asking: “Wonder what else they are hiding from me?”

So this is a place for plain talk on how much debt each person has. If they have debt of any kind, explore their plan for getting out from under it. But don’t stop there. You can extend the conversation, even if neither has any debt, by saying something like: “One of the most common mistakes newlyweds make is accumulating debt in the first year of marriage. How do each of you feel about taking on debt right out of the gate?” Debt can be a major source of conflict for couples and it’s best for them to have this discussion at the outset.⁶³ Of course, later in this report when the issue of Conflict Management is covered, financial matters like debt can be explored again.

The bottom line of a debt-discussion with your couple is to ensure that they are not blaming each other for the debt. Help them see that it’s time to pull together, dig out of it, and stay out of it.

MONEY TALKS

The last portion of this page gives you and your couple the opportunity to explore several additional features of their financial contexts by simply completing a half dozen sentence stems:

- In my home growing up, money was ...
- When I think about our financial future ...
- What you may not know about money and me is ...
- The thing I appreciate about you in relationship to money is ...
- When it comes to money, I’d like to improve my ...
- One specific action we could take right now that would help me is ...

Of course some of these issues will be more salient than others, depending on the couple. But one of the easiest onramps to a productive conversation about money contexts is through their family of origin. We highly recommend making time for the first sentence stem. It is often enough to generate a lively and revealing conversation about their financial expectations, needs and skills (or lack thereof).

A nickel ain’t worth
a dime anymore.

-YOGI BERRA

And remember, this may be the first time your couple has ever talked about bringing their financial worlds together. Take caution to not inundate a couple

like this with too much information at once. The key is to heighten their motivation and get them to ask you questions about what they should do.

Finally, here are two tips for newlywed couples from the National CPA Financial Literacy Commission that you may find helpful as you cover the issue of finances:

- **Set a money date.** At least once a month—and preferably weekly—set aside time without other distractions to meet about family finances. This ensures an ongoing, open dialogue about money at a time when both people can free themselves from outside distractions.
- **Divide and conquer.** It's typical in a relationship for one person to take the role of chief financial officer, managing accounts and paying bills. This arrangement can lead to unnecessary stress, tension and, at times, confusion. Split the duties. One person can act as bill payer, the other as money tracker, for instance. This removes the burden from one person and provides a check-and-balance on the family finances.

EXPECTATION CONTEXT

Perhaps the biggest piece of baggage that a person brings into a marriage is their bundle of expectations. Uncovering these expectations – especially the ones that are rarely articulated or even unconscious – is an instant insight for engaged couples.

So the third page of this section on Context is devoted to a couple's expectations. And to hone the discussion a bit and make it more productive, this page of the report is devoted primarily to an exercise that is sure to generate a healthy and insightful conversation.

It has to do with making each person's roles more conscious. In other words, the page reveals what each person learned about being a husband and a wife from their family of origin. These unconscious role expectations significantly shape a new couples marriage. This exercise helps the couple become more intentional and agreeable about their roles.

This is a popular exercise lifted from *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*.

Just as an actor in a dramatic

CONTEXT: EXPECTATIONS
Making your roles conscious: for most people, the biggest part of their "context" is what they unconsciously learned about a husband and wife's roles from their family of origin.

We both agree on who is doing these things:

	Mom	Dad	Me	You
Toni: Staying home with children	☒	☐	☐	☐
Chris: Paying bills and handling finances	☐	☐	☒	☒
Both: Yard work	☒	☒	☒	☒
Both: Gassing up the car	☒	☒	☒	☒
Chris: Fixing things around the house	☒	☐	☒	☒
Both: Laundry	☒	☐	☒	☒
Toni: Making the bed	☒	☐	☒	☒
Toni: Cooking meals	☒	☐	☒	☒
Toni: Grocery shopping	☒	☐	☒	☒
Neither: Caring for a pet	☒	☐	☒	☒
Toni: Decorating the house	☒	☐	☒	☒
Toni: Disciplining the children	☒	☐	☒	☒

We need to decide on:

	Mom	Dad	Me	You
Doing the dishes	☒	☐	☒	☒
Taking out the trash	☒	☐	☒	☒
Cleaning the house	☒	☐	☒	☒
Providing income	☒	☐	☒	☒
Maintaining ties with friends	☒	☐	☒	☒
Maintaining ties with relatives	☒	☐	☒	☒
Planning vacations & holidays	☒	☐	☒	☒
Talking about spiritual matters	☒	☐	☒	☒
Auto maintenance	☒	☐	☒	☒
Making major decisions	☒	☐	☒	☒
Initiating talks about relationship	☒	☐	☒	☒
Scheduling social events	☒	☐	☒	☒

How are you going to handle role behaviors where you are currently not in sync?
 What can help you decide who does what?

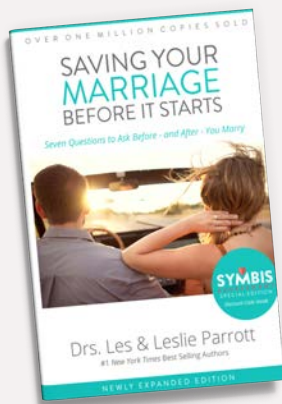
Refer to Chapter 1 of SYMBIS: "Have You Faced the Myths of Marriage with Honesty?"

SYMBIS 7

performance follows a script, so do married couples. Without knowing it, a bride and groom are drawn into acting out roles they form from a blend of their personal dispositions, family backgrounds, and marital expectations.

Of course there are an endless number of unconscious roles husbands and wives fall into. This exercise helps your couple instantly organize many of their expectations to discover the scripts that have been written by their role models as they grew up (their mom & dad). Becoming aware of this natural tendency is often all it takes to save a couple from a disappointing drama. Once they are aware of the roles they each tend to take, you can discuss how they can write a new script together.

From answers to questions on the assessment, this page will order and organize what roles they agree on and what they don't. As you review this page together, your tendency may be to focus on the roles where they are not in sync. While this is certainly important, we also recommend that you talk through those roles they agree upon and what that means to each of them.



If you are using *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* (SYMBIS) to augment your counseling sessions, Chapter One, "Have You Faced the Myths of Marriage with Honesty?" is the companion chapter where you can direct your couple. The his/her workbook exercises in this chapter include:

- Your Personal Ten Commandments
- Making Your Roles Conscious
- From Idealizing to Realizing Your Partner
- Exploring Unfinished Business
- Assessing Your Self-Image

At the conclusion of this session on context, after exploring social support, finances and role expectations, you may want to suggest they read chapter two of *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*. Of course, this is optional but highly recommended.

Chapter two, *Can You Identify Your Love Style?*, of SYMBIS will prime the pump for an even more compelling and insightful next session.

REMARRIAGE & BLENDING A FAMILY

If one or both persons in a couple experiencing the SYMBIS Assessment are not entering marriage for the first time, their report will include an additional page of information in the Context section. It's dedicated exclusively to challenges faced by remarriage couples.

And if one or both of the persons are bringing one or more children into the marriage this page will include information on blending a family as well.

Just to be clear, if one of the persons in your couple is getting remarried, and the other is getting married for the first time, the SYMBIS report will only show results for the remarriage person (because the questions won't pertain to that person). However, the information on this page will be important to review with both people. That is, listening in on the debriefing of the remarriage person will be beneficial to both.

Of course, the information pertaining to blending a family will have information for both partners (even if just one of them is bringing children into the marriage).

REMARRIAGE

This portion of the page focuses on two aspects of remarriage: 1) Motivation and 2) Readiness.

Remarriage motivation is a means to exposing common potential cautions that include the following:

- Rebounding from the pain of a previous marriage
- Rebelling against an ex-spouse
- Persistent loneliness

CONTEXT: REMARRIAGE & BLENDING A FAMILY
You have a unique set of challenges but there is no reason you can't make your second marriage a first-class success.

MOTIVATION TO REMARRY
Reasons to proceed with caution

Not at All	Rebounding from a previous marriage	Not at All
Not at All	Rebelling against my ex-spouse	A Little
More Than a Little	Persistent loneliness	Not at All
A Little	Financial advancement	Not at All
A Little	Pressure from others	More Than a Little
Not at All	Sense of obligation	Absolutely

What questions or concerns does this raise in your mind?
Which issue, if any, provokes distress or unease?

YOUR REMARRIAGE READINESS
Contexts you're bringing with you:

A Little	Unresolved issues with ex-spouse or ex-in-laws	Not at All
Not at all	Financial or legal issues with ex-spouse	Not at All
More Than a Little	Still deeply grieving the loss of previous marriage	Absolutely

In general, how do you feel about your remarriage readiness?
What gives you peace of mind and what causes you anxiety?

BLENDING A FAMILY
Thoughts to explore:

No	Feel uninformed about how to blend family	Yes
No	Feel sure children will adjust quickly	No
Yes	Feel torn between partner and children	Yes
Yes	Feel like I'm competing for attention	Yes
No	Feel the kids will work us against each other	No

What's your biggest concern in relationship to the children?
What are you looking forward to? What are your fears?

Refer to Chapters 1 & 8 of *Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts: "Are You Ready to Get Married Again?" & "Do You Know How to Blend a Family?"*

SYMBIS 7A

- Financial advancement because of duress
- Pressure from others
- Sense of obligation

You'll get a read from both partners on any of these detrimental motivations for remarriage.

READINESS

This portion highlights potential “baggage” either or both partners are bringing into the new marriage from a previous marriage. These include the following:

- Unresolved issues from a ex-spouse or ex-in-laws
- Financial or legal issues related to previous marriage
- Grief related to the ending of the previous marriage

BLENDING FAMILY

This section appears on the page if one or both partners are bringing at least one child into the marriage with them.

The first item here reveals whether they feel informed about how to best blend a family. If they are not informed, you may want to suggest they read *Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts*.

The remaining items here simply highlight cautions that you'll want to explore with the couple. These include:

- I'm sure the children will adjust to the new relationship quickly
- I feel torn between my partner and the children
- I feel like I'm competing for attention because of the children
- I fear the kids will work us against each other

We recommend using each statement on this page as a discussion starter. Use them to pull for more thoughts and feelings.

And keep in mind that while the divorce rate for first marriages is 50%, the number increases to 67% for second marriages and 73% for third marriages. And when it comes to blending a family, it takes an average of 3 to 6 years to find equilibrium.

The bottom line is this: remarriage and blending a family adds a complicated layer to the prospects of getting married again and deserves special attention.

In addition to the discussion starters on this page of the SYMBIS Report you can also have each person complete these sentence stems for more discussion points:

- The reason I think I'm ready for this marriage is ...
- The one area I'm most concerned about as it related to remarriage is ...
- My biggest fear about blending a family is ...



If you are using *Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts* (SYMBIS-2) to augment your counseling sessions, Chapter One, “Are You Ready to Get Married Again?” and Chapter 8, “Do You Know How to Blend a Family?” are the companion chapters where you can direct your couple. The his/her workbook exercises in these chapters include:

- The Remarriage Motivation Test
- The Remarriage Readiness Questionnaire
- Creating a Clean Slate
- Remarried with Children

DYNAMICS

This section of the SYMBIS report is devoted to unpacking the couple's unique personalities and how they are each designed to approach everything from communication and conflict to sex and intimacy.

This is a major section of the report - with six subsections – and it can be revolutionary for most couples.

Here we unpack their DNA – that molecule found in every cell of their body that encodes not just their biology, but their psychological temperament.

WHAT IS DYNAMICS?

Think of a couple's Dynamics as the underlying forces in their personalities that shapes their relationship. It's the DNA of their marriage. It's what makes their relationship exceptional. It's what shapes how this couple will approach the subsections of Dynamics:

1. Love and Sex
2. Attitudes Toward Challenges
3. Communication
4. Bridging the Gender Gap
5. Conflict Management
6. Spiritual Intimacy

How two distinct personalities work together in these important areas of marriage life is vital to their success. And the interplay of their personalities is what is meant by a couple's Dynamics.

WHY DYNAMICS MATTER

Every marriage relationship is unprecedented. Every couple is unique.⁶⁴ There has never been a marriage like the one your couple is about to start. When two personalities come together, the combination of their dynamics creates a unique blend of characteristics and qualities. The better they understand their combination of traits, the more likely they are to appreciate them and use them to their advantage.

It's what caused German poet Heinrich Heine to liken marriage to "the high sea for which no compass has yet been invented!" Sure there are universal techniques and strategies that can help nearly every couple. Empathy is a good example. What married relationship couldn't benefit from more of that? But putting a technique or strategy for more empathy into practice for each couple becomes a challenge that hinges on that couple's combined personalities.

That's why a close examination of a couple's combined personality dynamics is essential for effective marriage preparation.

RESEARCH AND THEORY BEHIND DYNAMICS

Some counseling practitioners have an academic background in test-construction, theory and research. Some do not.

If you are in the latter group, you may not have an eager interest in what we are about to describe. But we want you to know what's behind this powerful section of the SYMBIS report. It has been studied thoroughly over many years and the research is robust.

No need for you to dwell on this subsection in detail if you are not research-minded (you will not be responsible for knowing every specific detail here when it comes to your certification quiz at the conclusion of your training). But you'll certainly want to be knowledgeable about this section of the SYMBIS Report.

All weddings are similar, but every marriage is different.

-JOHN BERGER

Among the numerous items in the SYMBIS Assessment question bank, 48 of them are dedicated to the Dynamics section of the report. These items force respondents to choose one word as being least like them and one being most like them.

A large body of research has supported the reliability and validity of these items in describing a person's unique personality.⁶⁵ In fact, more than 19,860 combinations are possible here. This means that every person's information is personalized and unique.⁶⁶ It's highly unlikely that you will ever see the exact same descriptors for another person in many of the personal insights on this section of the report.

Research has shown that the resulting descriptions from these items is 94% accurate.

Here's how this strong accuracy rate breaks down: This research has provided evidence of high test-retest reliability (the stability of test scores over time); strong construct validity (the relationship of the analysis to other tests measuring similar constructs); robust content validity (how well the dimensions measure what they are supposed to measure); significant

criterion or predictive validity (the ability of the dimensions to predict performance on another activity such as marriage).⁶⁷

The research findings on test-retest reliability show that the scores on the Style Analysis exhibit very little change over time. Six-month test-retest correlations average in the .90 range where a correlation of 1.0 is a perfect relationship (absolutely no change) and .0 is no relationship (random change). The Style Analysis is a reliable instrument that consistently measures the same thing.

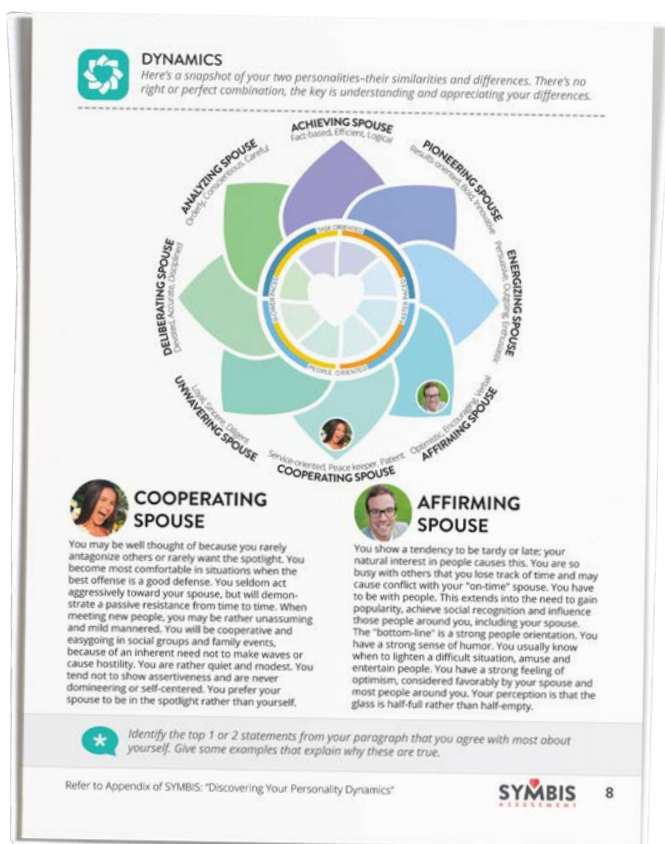
The items of this section are derived from the work of Dr. William Moulton Marston who was born in Cliftondale, Massachusetts in 1893. Dr. Marston was educated at Harvard University and received a Ph.D. in 1921 from that institution. Most of Dr. Marston's adult life was spent as a teaching and consulting psychologist.

Emotions of Normal People, a book he published in 1928, described his basic theory and began a long line of research around personality assessment.⁶⁸ He viewed people as behaving along two axes, with their actions tending to be active or passive depending upon the individual's perception of the environment as either antagonistic or favorable.

By placing these axes at right angles, four quadrants were formed with each circumscribing a behavioral pattern:

- Dominance produces activity in an antagonistic environment.
- Inducement produces activity in a favorable environment.
- Steadiness produces passivity in a favorable environment.
- Compliance produces passivity in an antagonistic environment.

Dr. Marston believed that personality is basically in accord with one of the four factors. Using Marston's theory, it is possible to apply the powers of scientific observation to behavior. Thus, we can be Objective and Descriptive rather than Subjective and Judgmental.



This theoretical insight from Dr. Marston spurred decades of research and development of personality assessment and eventually resulted in one of the most widely used and well-researched personality assessments of all time. Today it's known as the DiSC (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness) and has been used by more than 50 million people since it was first introduced in 1972.

We have licensed the DiSC and incorporate it into the question bank, generating an extremely valuable and proven personality profile. Not only that, the SYMBIS Assessment leverages the patented Style Analysis Instrument of the DiSC which generates a profile based not only on the person's answers to the questions, but how they answered the questions (e.g., whether they changed their mind about an answer). In short, the SYMBIS Assessment includes one of the world's most reliable, valid and sophisticated measures of personality available.

PROCESSING DYNAMICS WITH YOUR COUPLE

The first page of the Dynamics section of the report provides a graphic display of where each person in your couple lands on one of 8 different personality types:

1. **Achieving Spouse** – Fact-based, Efficient, Logical
2. **Pioneering Spouse** – Results-oriented, Bold, Innovative
3. **Energizing Spouse** – Persuasive, Outgoing, Enthusiastic
4. **Affirming Spouse** – Optimistic, Encouraging, Verbal
5. **Cooperating Spouse** – Service-oriented, Peace Keeper, Patient
6. **Unwavering Spouse** – Loyal, Sincere, Diligent
7. **Deliberating Spouse** – Devoted, Accurate, Disciplined
8. **Analyzing Spouse** – Orderly, Conscientious, Careful

This page gives a very brief description of each of the eight types and it notes the typology of each person in your couple. This allows each person to see the context of personality types (where they are among the 8).

This page immediately increases a level of intrigue for most couples. They'll want to know what it means to be identified as a particular type. However, you don't need to go into detail with them yet (that's what the next paragraphs and following page will do). At this stage, you simply want to give them the big picture.

You can say something like:

"Let's look at this together. Here's where each of you land on this diagram."

You can read aloud the brief description of each of them and look for signs of agreement or surprise as you do. You might ask:

"Do you resonate with those words?"

You can then feel free to look at the other descriptions around the wheel. Don't be surprised if each person resonates with the descriptors on either side of their own. That's common. In fact, you may ask them: "If you were to choose another type that's next to yours – one that also describes you – which one would it be?" This will give you further insight into their personality type and, for some, it will free them just a bit from feeling that they are locked into their type.

The goal here is just to ease into the dynamics of their personality. Let them know you'll be going into more detail on the next page.

You'll also find it helpful to paint the big picture of this personality wheel. Point out the two circles: 1) Fast-Paced vs. Slow-Paced, and 2) Task Oriented vs. People Oriented.

Research reveals that all of us fall somewhere along this continuum:



If one is near the Task Oriented end of the continuum, they prize getting things done. They love an assignment. They probably live by a to-do list. They're gratified by accomplishment – whether solving a minor problem or moving up in their career. They stay on task and they're probably competitive. Getting a job done, whether big or small, can take priority over other considerations (including people's feelings). In fact, anything that stands in their way of getting the task accomplished will likely become a "distraction." They like concrete objectives. They like to measure their progress. Plainly put, they like to be productive.

When a person is near the People Oriented end of the continuum, they generally value the emotional well-being of others over productivity. They're good at working with people and are friendly. They get a "feeling" for people early on in a conversation and seem to know just what to say. They're rarely forceful or domineering. They're flexible and adapt easily to other people's situations and attitudes. They're diplomatic. They prize consensus and harmony. They're a team player. Nobody would describe them as a "loner." In short, they're a people-person.

You might even pose this question to each person in your couple as you are explaining this:

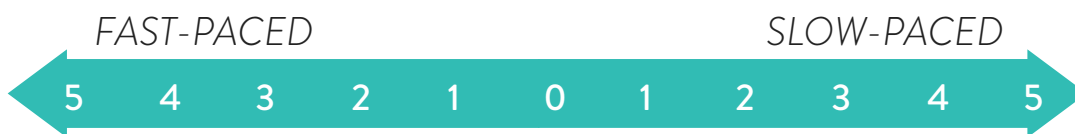
"Do you see yourself as hardwired primarily for projects or for people?"

Make it very clear that one is not better than the other. And they may have qualities from both sides of the continuum. In fact, many are somewhere in the middle. But if they had to choose a side, which one would they lean into most often? The little chart below might help you more clearly see the contrasts of the two ends of this scale.

Here's a chart to help you distinguish the two ends of the continuum:

<i>TASK ORIENTED</i>	<i>PEOPLE ORIENTED</i>
Driven	Nurturing
Measurable goals	Heart-felt connections
Work from a to-do list	What to-do list?
Concentrated and focused	Welcome interruptions
Delay gratification	Procrastinate
Make others feel nervous	Make others feel comfortable
"Fish or cut bait"	"Easy come, easy go"

Research also reveals that all of us fall somewhere along this second continuum:



If one is near the fast-paced end of the continuum, they probably live their life with a certain level of urgency. They like to get things done yesterday! They don't want to waste time. They're ready to get going. They want to use their time wisely. They often measure success according to speed. When they come home from the grocery store with eight or nine bags to bring into the kitchen from their car, how many trips does it take them? Just one, of course. Why? They put a bag or two on each finger, even if it means suffering a bit of temporary pain, in an effort to avoid a second trip. They prize efficiency and speed. They can become impatient more easily than others because their days are packed. They typically schedule things back to back. Others are often amazed by how they can get so

much done in such a short time. They run on rocket fuel. In short, they're a fast-paced person.

If, on the other hand, one is on the slow-paced end of the continuum, they take their time. They don't over schedule. They like to linger. If they don't get something done today, they'll get it done tomorrow – or the next day. Why rush, right? Why let the clock run your life? So they take their time. If you've ever heard the military phrase, "slow is smooth, smooth is fast," you know it means that moving fast, or rushing, is reckless and will likely get one killed. If they move slowly, carefully and deliberately, however, they are really moving as fast as they can without needlessly increasing the risk of mistakes. If they are slow-paced in general, they see its application to more than military maneuvers. They move more deliberately. They take time to ponder and muse. They are measured and unhurried. Plainly put, they are slow-paced.

Again, one is not better than the other. You can ask each person if they see themselves primarily as hardwired for a fast-pace or slow-pace. If they see themselves somewhere in the middle, ask them to choose a side.

This chart will help you make more clear distinctions on this continuum.

<i>FAST-PACED</i>	<i>SLOW-PACED</i>
Divide and conquer	Unite and concede
Impatient	Patient
Raring to go	Ready to rest
Excited and energetic	Steady and stable
To the point	Round about
"Don't just sit there, do something"	"Think before you act"
"Early bird gets the worm"	"Slow growing trees bear the best fruit"

When you combine these two questions—when you look at the dimensions of pace (fast or slow), and orientation (task or people)—you can easily see they help to determine where a person falls on the personality wheel.

Of course, the SYMBIS Assessment does far more than assess where each person is on these two continuums. It assesses multiple levels of gradation. In fact, it even weighs the process of how the person answers the questions (e.g., whether they change an answer

from one to another), as well as what their answers are. As we said, this is a very sophisticated and patented system.

You may be wondering how accurate this is. Research reveals that on average it has a 94% accuracy rate with users. That is, 94 people out of 100 agree that the report correctly identified their personality type.

While this is incredibly accurate, we want you to keep a very important point in mind as you explore this content with your couple – on this page as well as on the pages that follow: Whether a person agrees or disagrees with the results on the report doesn't matter as much as the conversations you'll have because of them. Think of their results on these pages as discussion starters more than diagnostics.

The goal of marriage
is not to think alike,
but to think
together.

- ROBERT C. DODDS

The goal is to have engaging and insightful conversations that create an environment where they will learn new skills, concepts, and strategies from you.

The next paragraphs delve into more of the specifics related to their personalities. It allows them to see them spelled out, side-by-side.

We suggest having each of them read aloud the paragraph that pertains to them. If they want to make comments as they do so, all the better. How they read it can often reveal more than how they respond to you reading it to them. Have them circle what they agree with most and scratch out what they don't resonate with.

You'll also want to invite each partner to speak into the descriptions of the other person. Do they agree? Why or why not? If you're trying to dig into a particular quality for further clarity, ask them for examples that paint a clearer picture of their personalities.

The goal here is to raise awareness – of themselves and their partner. And that sets up the on the next page of the report very well.

On the next page, you'll want to also read aloud the paragraph that describes the dynamics of their two personality types together.

The eight types result in a possible 36 combinations where a couple may have the same or similar personality types – or personality types that are polar opposites.

Whatever their combination, you'll want to assure your couple that one combination is not better or worse than any other. They each have their own specific assets and unique challenges.

After reading their paragraph aloud, ask them what they think. What portions do they agree with most? What do they disagree with? You may even have them circle what they agree with and cross-out the sentences they don't favor. The goal is to get them talking about it.

Talk about how this paragraph makes them feel. Ask about what questions they might have at this point. Inevitably, they'll want to know more.

The next little section on this page notes several strengths each of them bring to their relationship – as a result of their personality type. This is a chance to give them specific compliments about what they do well in this partnership.

DYNAMICS
There has never been a marriage like the one you two are creating together. The combination of your two personalities can be mapped out to discover how you are hard-wired to give and receive love.

YOUR DYNAMICS: COOPERATING SPOUSE + AFFIRMING SPOUSE
You two are a fun and relatively easygoing couple. You share an encouraging spirit and social graces. Others are likely drawn to the two of you because you're easy to be with. Chris (Affirming Spouse) may be a bit more talkative than Toni but you're both verbal. This will serve your marriage well. You'll both need to beware of reading signs of disapproval from each other where they don't exist – instead giving each other the benefit of the doubt. This can help you avoid unnecessary tension. Chris (Affirming Spouse) is likely a bit more impulsive while Toni (Cooperating Spouse) may be a bit more persistent. This is a helpful combination that brings fun and productivity to your relationship.

What do you think and feel about the shared dynamics of your two personalities and how they mix? What can you do, in practical terms, to leverage your Dynamics?

STRENGTHS YOU BRING TO THE RELATIONSHIP

- An excellent "win-win" type of negotiator.
- Will gather facts before offering an opinion.
- Socially poised and people-oriented.
- Enthusiastic about activities and involvement.
- Bring a feeling of security and stability.
- A good team player—positive participation.
- Never a dull moment.
- Excite others into getting involved.
- Creative in playtime with your spouse.
- Motivate others toward positive goals.

Identify the top 1 or 2 statements you agree with most about yourself. Explain why. Note the top strength you appreciate about your partner.

Toni top / Chris bottom

YOUR STYLES

SOLVING PROBLEMS REFLECTIVE 1 2 3 4 5 AGGRESSIVE

INFLUENCING EACH OTHER FACTS 1 2 3 4 5 FEELINGS

REACTING TO CHANGE ACCEPT 1 2 3 4 5 RESIST

MAKING DECISIONS SPONTANEOUS 1 2 3 4 5 CAUTIOUS

Consider some real life examples in your relationship where these play out. How can you genuinely appreciate your differences in these four categories?

Refer to Appendix of SYMBIS: "Discovering Your Personality Dynamics" **SYMBIS** 9

The exercise on this page suggests that they identify their top personality strength from the list. While focusing on one person at a time, ask the other partner to chime in with their thoughts. You can also ask for examples of how they do some of these things. If for example, their top strength is "good at reconciliation" or "gathers facts before offering an opinion," find out when they've done this and what it looked like. Surprisingly, the person may not even know they are particularly good at certain things until they are highlighted. For this reason, this can be a very meaningful little exercise for couples.

This page also includes a graphic display of their two personality types across four dimensions (both people are integrated into one graph). It displays where each person lands in relationship to four dimensions involving 1) problem solving, 2) influencing each other, 3) reacting to change, and 4) making decisions.

The further away from the midline of this graph, the more intense their trait will be. In other words, the higher their number, the more observable their trait becomes.

Here's the general attitude or depiction of each end of the continuums:

1. How you solve problems: Reflective vs. Aggressive

<i>REFLECTIVE</i>	<i>AGGRESSIVE</i>
"Let's give it some time."	"Let's do it now."

2. How you influence each other: Facts vs. Feelings

<i>FACT</i>	<i>FEELINGS</i>
"Let's look at all the evidence."	"Trust me, it will work great."

3. How you react to Change: Accepting vs. Resisting

<i>ACCEPTING</i>	<i>RESISTING</i>
"Let's try something new."	"Let's keep it the way it is."

4. How you make Decisions: Spontaneous vs. Cautious

<i>SPONTANEOUS</i>	<i>CAUTIOUS</i>
"Let's go for it."	"I'm not sure yet."

Being able to see each individual's profile in relationship to the other is valuable. As you walk through each continuum, allow them to react and ask questions about the information they're discovering. This will be brand new information for your couple and should create several new insights.

PROCESSING LOVE WITH YOUR COUPLE

Every personality type has its own unique perspective on romantic love. This page of the report reveals how each of the two individuals experience and perceive love.

The page begins by showing them how their personality type tends to view love in practical terms. You'll want to explore this with each person, asking them how much they resonate with the description. Make it clear that this is not the only way they view love, but it's distinct about their personality type. And keep in mind that the goal is to get them talking about how they feel most loved and how they like to express love.

You'll also want to ask the partner what they think and feel about their partner's view of love. You might ask:

"Are you surprised by the way your partner tends to view love?"

And you may want to encourage them to discuss some real-life examples from their own relationship.

The page also provides a brief exercise derived from what qualities of love each person ranks as most important to them. This can be quite revealing for some. For the life of their relationship they may have assumed that their partner felt the same way they did about what conveys love.

So take some time to unpack their two lists on this page – finding out what they make of the other person's list and so on.

You'll find a prompt on this page to also have them each complete the sentence stem: "I feel most loved when you ...". In fact, you may even have each of them write their answer so as not to be influenced by one another. That's up to you, of course. The goal is to simply uncover each person's perspective on love: what it is and how it's expressed most meaningfully.

The final section of this page explores their sexual expectations in marriage. Realizing this is a very personal and sensitive topic, the SYMBIS Report helps you guide the conversation with four specific talking points.

DYNAMICS: LOVE
What is love? Perhaps it's no surprise that everyone seems to have their own answer. After all, each of us is hardwired uniquely for giving and receiving love.

HOW YOU VIEW LOVE IN PRACTICAL TERMS

COOPERATING SPOUSE
Being heart-felt, vulnerable, and giving the benefit of the doubt.

AFFIRMING SPOUSE
Being attentive and giving each other affection and acceptance.

What aspects of your definition do you agree with most and how would you elaborate on it? How can you help your partner love you in ways you most desire? Use concrete examples.

HOW YOU DEFINE LOVE

QUALITY	RANK	QUALITY
KINDNESS	FIRST	TRUST
LONGING	SECOND	HONESTY
EXCITEMENT	THIRD	FRIENDSHIP
COMMITMENT	FOURTH	KINDNESS
FRIENDSHIP	FIFTH	RESPECT

How are your top 3 items similar or different from each other? Elaborate on the qualities you chose. How would each of you complete this sentence: "I feel most loved when you..."

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

Are you abstaining from sex?
TONI: YES
CHRIS: YES

How do you rate your desire?
TONI: 7
CHRIS: 10

Who do you expect to initiate sex?
TONI: YOU
CHRIS: BOTH

How often do you expect to have sex?
TONI: EVERY OTHER DAY
CHRIS: EVERY OTHER DAY

As you prepare for marriage, what other sexual issues or questions come to mind? What issue related to sexuality causes some anxiety for you?

Refer to Chapter 2 of SYMBIS: "Can You Identify Your Love Style?"

SYMBIS 10

The first point pertains to whether the couple is abstaining from sex before marriage or not. SYMBIS Assessment also reports whether the couple is cohabiting on the intake summary page. Some studies suggest that the majority of dating couples have sex within the first month of dating.⁶⁹ Studies also report that saving sex until after marriage makes for a stronger marriage and healthier sex once married.⁷⁰ Once you complete your training, you may want to review our guide, “Cohabitation and Premarital Sex.” You’ll find it in the Resource tab of your Facilitator Dashboard.

Another point pertains to sexual desire. This has to do with sexual attraction and libido levels.⁷¹ It can be triggered by internal and external cues. It can be amplified through sexual tension, which is caused by sexual desire that has yet to be consummated. If either partner rates their sexual desire as low, it’s an issue that needs exploration. The experience of desire can ebb and flow with the passing of time, but it is highly unusual for partners to not share a strong sexual desire on the front end of marriage.⁷² If one person rates their desire as low, it can be due to a physical issue, a side effect of medication, or a sexual desire disorder.⁷³

A third talking point pertains to each person’s expectations surrounding initiating sex. Surprisingly, this can be an issue that couples never discuss because it makes them uncomfortable.⁷⁴ You can help your couple by not only shedding light on their expectations about who is initiating but how they are initiating. This will help them eliminate the stigma or pressure they may be carrying.⁷⁵ For some couples they may need to explore creative ways to initiate sex that don’t feel so direct, such as a lit candle, a code word, a particular love song, a rose in a vase, etc. Other couples, of course, will have no issue initiating sex.

The last talking point here has to do with how often each person expects to have sex in marriage. According to the General Social Survey, married couples have sex an average of 58 times per year. However, this number lumps 25-year-old newlyweds into the same pool as senior citizens who’ve celebrated their golden anniversary. Couples in their 20s have sex 111 times per year on average, with frequency dropping steadily, about 20 percent per decade, as couples age. In other words, young couples have sex slightly more than twice per week on average, with the number declining steadily over time.⁷⁶ Regardless of the statistics, every person brings their own expectations into a new marriage about frequency. Exploring this together can help you align expectations as you help them get their sex life off to a great start.

PROCESSING LOVE IN SYMBIS+

When you invite a married couple to take the assessment the Love page for SYMBIS+ will look similar to the page for engaged and dating couples. But don’t let appearances deceive you. They each contain different kinds of information.

Unpacking this page will be pretty intuitive but we want to draw your attention to two specific portions of this page.

HOW EACH OF YOU WOULD IMPROVE YOUR SEX LIFE

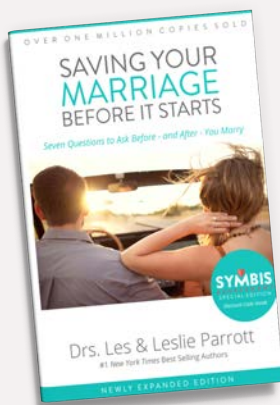
Use this as a catalyst for a conversation about what each partner in the marriage would like to see happen on this front. Of course, tread softly. This can be a tender place for many couples. But for many couples it just might be one of the most honest and helpful conversations they've had in a long time about their love life and how it can be better for each of them. So take your time in noting each of the three items for both people. Your conversational prompt can be as simple as saying something like:

"Tell me about the first item here that you think would improve your sex life."

That's typically all that's required to get the conversation going. Beyond that, take special care to be sure both spouses are feeling understood - by you as well as their partner.

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

There are four questions that they have responded to and you can simply discuss each one. The important thing to keep in mind as you do so is guiding the couple toward mutual empathy. Help them accurately see how and why their partner answered the way they did and unpack what that means to both people. Of course, the first of the four questions to begin with might be the one related to how comfortable each of them are when it comes to talking about sex. Exploring this one first can help you ease into the other topics as you acknowledge their comfort level in discussing this highly personal topic.



If you are using *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* (SYMBIS) to augment your counseling sessions, Chapter Two, "Do You Know Your Love Style?" is the companion chapter where you can direct your couple. The his/her workbook exercises in this chapter include:

- Defining Love
- Getting Your Sex Life Off to a Great Start
- Your Changing Love Style
- Cultivating Intimacy

PROCESSING ATTITUDE WITH YOUR COUPLE

Every marriage, no matter how good it is, eventually bumps into bad things. It's inevitable. That's why exploring how a couple can adjust to things beyond their control is crucial.

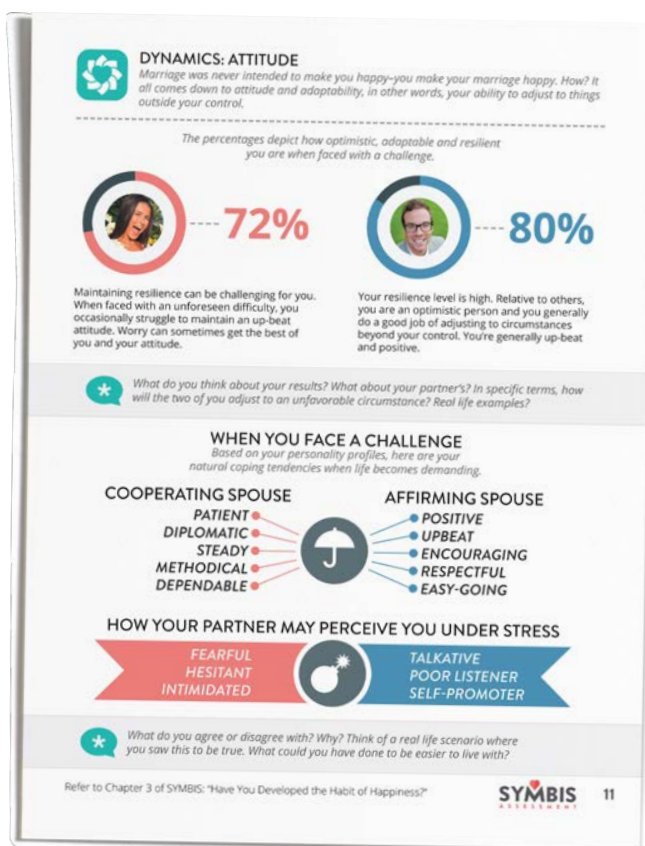
Additionally, one of the most pervasive happiness myths is the notion that when we find our perfect partner—when we say “I do” – we'll have a lock on happiness. And we will, for a time. No doubt about it. Marriage makes us happy. The problem is that marriage—even when initially perfectly satisfying—will not make us as intensely happy or for as long as we believe it will. Studies reveal that the happiness boost from marriage lasts an average of only two years.⁷⁷

Unfortunately, when those two years are up and fulfilling our goal to find the ideal partner hasn't made us as happy as we expected, we often feel there must be something wrong with us or we must be the only ones to feel this way. It's a common course of love.

Happiness, for a marriage, is like a vital sign. It's the heart rate of love. Like all vital signs, it can fluctuate. And for couples who are not prepared in advance on how they can adjust to life's jolts, marriage becomes a very rocky road.

That's why this page of the report is dedicated to what we call “the habit of happiness.” It's all about resiliency and attitude.

One of the first things you'll notice on this page is that each person receives a percentage score, indicating their general level of resiliency and optimism when faced with a challenge.



Reviewing their individual descriptions and having a discussion about their joint capacity to adjust to circumstances beyond their control can be very fruitful.

Most engaged couples are not thinking about how they would bounce back or cope in response to adversity, stress, change, or misfortune.⁷⁸ They aren't thinking about tough times at all. That's why this issue is crucial.

Research shows that resilience and a flexible attitude protects against (and reverses) stress, depression, anxiety, fear, helplessness, and other negative emotions so often connected with marital struggles.⁷⁹ It's often what enables couples to hold on to their commitment when it seems like all the romance is barely present. It's what fuels the determination to keep going despite difficulties, discouragement, and disappointment.

For some couples you work with, this information will be new. And it just may be the most important content you cover for some.

The support a couple can gain from each other in tough times is the single most critical means of handling both the ordinary and extraordinary levels of stress they are bound to eventually encounter. Their capacity to adjust to circumstances engenders reciprocal support and caring. In other words, healthy couples bolster each other's resilience.

Studies show that there are several other factors which develop and sustain a person's resilience:

1. The ability to make realistic plans and being capable of taking the steps necessary to follow through with them
2. A positive self-concept and confidence in one's strengths and abilities
3. Communication and problem-solving skills
4. The ability to manage strong impulses and feelings⁸⁰

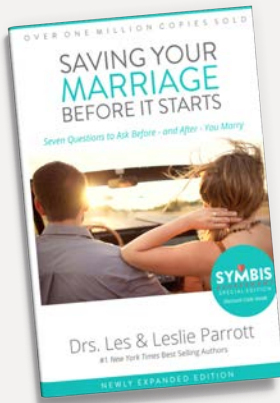
These factors are not necessarily inherent; they can be developed in any individual. For this reason, it's important to make clear to your couple that their resiliency scores can improve. They can learn to adjust and cultivate positive emotions even while facing difficulties.⁸¹

The second portion of this page examines the characteristics each person, based on their personality type, is likely to demonstrate. In other words, this helps each person get a glimpse into how they behave when facing a challenge and when under stress.

Each person will have several words that describe them. We suggest that you have each person select the top two words they believe depict them best when they are facing a challenge. Explore why they chose them.

Do the same with the customized list of words describing how their partner may perceive them. That is, have them circle the words they would use to describe their partner when under extreme stress.

Many engaged couples haven't thought about how their partner will express themselves when under severe pressure. But as you help each person increase their level of awareness and understanding in this area they will be far more likely to offer grace and help to soothe their partner in these trying times.



If you are using *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* (SYMBIS) to augment your counseling sessions, Chapter Three, “Have You Developed the Habit of Happiness?” is the companion chapter where you can direct your couple. The his/her workbook exercises in this chapter include:

- Listening to Your Self Talk
- Avoiding the Blame Game
- Adjusting to Things Beyond Your Control

PROCESSING COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR COUPLE

Communication is the lifeblood of marriage. Almost all couples (97 percent) who rate their communication with their partner as excellent are happily married, compared to only 56 percent who rate their communication as poor. The study concluded: "In an era of increasingly fragile marriages, a couple's ability to communicate is the single most important contributor to a stable and satisfying marriage."⁸²

Marriage maintains itself linguistically.⁸³ That's why the first portion of this page provides a personalized paragraph of each person's "talk style." Because it's based on their personality, it's unique and specific to each person.

As you have done in previous portions of the SYMBIS report, you'll likely want to read these aloud with your couple (or have them read them aloud) and generate a healthy discussion on what they agree with and what they don't. The goal here is to get them talking in order to raise their levels of self-awareness as well as awareness about each other.

The next portion of this page gets very specific – again, based on their personality types – about how each person likes their partner to talk with them. This can go a long way in bringing their unspoken expectations around communication out into the open.

We recommend having each person review their list and select the two they resonate with most and then talk about why they selected them. Urge them to give examples so that their partner has a clear idea about each expectation. Help them to be as concrete and specific as possible.

You may also want to ask something like: "What do you think of your partner's desires of you when it comes to communication?"

The final portion of this page reveals the three communication skills each person would most like to improve. This can be a very constructive and proactive section. Here's where you can do some direct teaching, role-playing, and modeling of various communication skills. After all, these are skills they want to improve. Dig deep here. Ask for

DYNAMICS: COMMUNICATION
Communication is the lifeblood of your relationship. The more understanding and better understood each of you feels, the stronger your marriage.

COOPERATING SPOUSE
You specialize in listening. You create a warm and safe environment for great conversations, allowing your partner to feel at ease and open much of the time. Your conversations are rarely judgmental and you're often quite patient, listening long after others would have interrupted. This goes a long way in helping you and your partner have collaborative conversations. You help your partner feel understood and valued and that helps them to open up. You try to stay clear of conversations that involve confrontation.

AFFIRMING SPOUSE
You're rarely at a loss for words. You love to talk. You bask in the attention of being listened to. It's one of your most telling ways of monitoring your approval rating with your spouse. The more your spouse listens, the more you feel loved. And you're adept at moving the conversation to be as entertaining as possible. You're likely a great listener, as well. But you want the listening to go both ways or it's no fun. So, communication for you is a primary means for giving and receiving love in your marriage. If you're having communication problems, you are, by default, having marriage problems.

What do you agree or disagree with? Why? What real life examples comes to mind in illustrating your talk style?

HOW YOU LIKE YOUR PARTNER TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU

- Plan sufficient time to talk and listen.
- Take time to be certain that you reach an agreement.
- Talk about expectations.
- Be sincere and use a tone of voice that shows sincerity.
- Plan interactions that support dreams and goals.
- Offer opinions and ideas that are stimulating.
- Be stimulating, fun-loving, and fast-moving.
- Attempt to isolate him from potential interruptions.
- Offer immediate rewards for accomplishments.
- Ask for opinions and ideas.

Select the two you resonate with most. Explain why they are important to you. Give examples of when and how they can do this for you? How can you help your partner succeed?

3 COMMUNICATION SKILLS YOU'D LIKE TO IMPROVE

TONI

- Being ready to apologize
- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Inviting and receiving feedback

CHRIS

- Listening without interrupting
- Coming across as personally warm
- Expressing more genuine interest

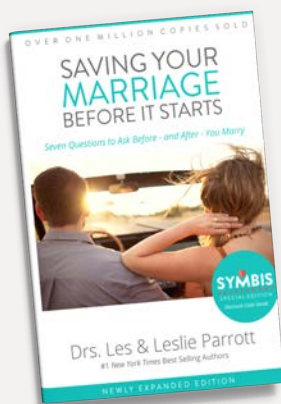
Why did you each choose these items? In practical terms, how can you improve and help each other in the process? Give examples.

Refer to Chapt 4 of SYMBIS: "Can You Say What You Mean and Understand What You Hear?" **SYMBIS** 12

examples of how and when they can do the things they're working on. Talk about why they chose these particular skills to work on.

If they want to “listen without interrupting” better, for example, explore when they are most prone to do this and why. Is it at the end of the day when they are talking through their day? Is it when they are on the phone? Or maybe it can't be localized. That's okay. Just get them thinking about when it happens. Then talk about what this would look like once they are better at it. Does it mean they would be able to listen for feelings, not just content? What's that look like? You might have them role-play reflective listening with each other or with you.

As you walk through this page with your couple, keep in mind that some, if not most, engaged couples don't see the need for learning communication skills. They often feel that they “do communication” well already. They are happy with their relationship and expect to be happy together until “death do they part.” Communication isn't an issue for them.⁸⁴



If you are using *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* (SYMBIS) to augment your counseling sessions, Chapter Four, “Can You Say What You Mean and Understand What You Hear?” is the companion chapter where you can direct your couple. The his/her workbook exercises in this chapter include:

- How Well Do You Communicate?
- The Daily Temperature Reading
- I Can Hear Clearly Now

PROCESSING GENDER WITH YOUR COUPLE

Learning to bridge the proverbial gender gap can save newlyweds countless conflicts and moments of bewilderment. It's a topic that's not always covered in pre-marriage counseling – but it should be. Why? Because it's an area that you can instantly improve for a couple and a topic that they readily recognize as an important need.

The first portion of this page reveals one gender-specific need that each person should know about his or her partner. Of course, a long list of these needs could easily be generated. In SYMBIS, the gender chapter delineates three needs on each side. Men need to know that their wives need: to be cherished, to be known, and to be respected. Women need to know that their husbands need: to be admired, to have autonomy, and shared activity. The SYMBIS Assessment, however, simply lifts out one of these for each gender.

In the case of the woman, she needs to know that her husband needs shared activity.

Why this particular need? Because it's such a hidden secret. Dating couples, after all, do a great deal of shared activity. That's what dating is often about creative dates! So they may play tennis, go to car shows, work out at the gym, attend sporting events and movies, hit golf balls at a driving range, ride a motorcycle or bicycles, garden, hike, and so on.

But research reveals that for many women, these shared activities diminish significantly over time. A new husband wonders why his wife has lost her interest in going to the car show. She confesses that it was just something to do on a date, but that she never really enjoyed looking at cars. So she stops going and he begins going to the shows with his buddies or by himself. What the new wife doesn't understand is that when she shares an activity with her man, that's when his spirit opens up. That's when they'll have some of their best conversations. Men connect when they are doing.

DYNAMICS: GENDER
We all know men and women are different, but understanding how these differences drive our deepest needs, on top of our unique personalities, can make or break a relationship.

WHAT TONI NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT CHRIS:

As your husband, Chris will need more shared activity.

As a dating couple, you enjoy lots of shared activity. Research shows this tends to diminish once you marry. Husbands place surprising importance on having their wife as a recreational companion.

Why this matters:
Chris, more than you, connects emotionally by doing things together.

WHAT CHRIS NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT TONI:

As your wife, Toni will need to be cherished more than you think.

In your dating relationship, you focused a lot on wooing Toni. Research reveals that this will inevitably fade once you're married because you will become more focused on providing for her than cherishing her.

Why this matters:
Toni will be more passionate and intimate with you when she feels cherished.

YOUR TOP 5 NEEDS

What recreational activities can you enjoy with Chris through the years? In what practical ways will Toni know you are cherishing her?

1 INTIMACY 2 SEX

CONVERSATION AFFECTION

SEX COMPANIONSHIP

COMPAIONSHIP RESPECT

COMMITMENT ROOTEDNESS

Why do these needs top your list? How will your partner know when these needs are being met? Be as specific and concrete as you can.

Refer to Chapter 5 of SYMBIS: "Have You Bridged the Gender Gap?"

SYMBIS 13

For this reason, we highlight shared activity for every woman who experiences the SYMBIS report. And the topic is personalized by you facilitating a conversation around it. You can say something like:

“Far too many married women never understand how valuable shared activity is for their man. They don’t realize that it’s in the midst of activity that he will tend to feel most connected to you. So what activities do you do now together and what shared activities would you like to cultivate?”

You’ll want to ask her fiancée to chime in on what he imagines for shared activities, too.

You might also talk for a bit about how the couple can build shared activity into the grooves of their relationship right from the beginning. For example, what do they think about a routine date night once they marry?

The key here is to underscore the payoff for the woman when she invests in shared activities. And that payoff is deeper intimacy and a stronger connection.

In the case of the man, he needs to know that his wife needs to be cherished.

Why this need? Because most men neglect it shortly after crossing the proverbial threshold. They subtly shift from wooing their woman in their dating years to providing for her. It’s unconscious for most, of course. And it can become palpable for a young bride who comes to think, “he’s changed.”

Being cherished is not a high priority for most men. It’s a word that’s barely in their vocabulary. For this reason you’ll want to explore his understanding of the word. More importantly, you’ll want him to hear what his fiancée says it means to her. You might ask:

“What kinds of things does he already do that lets you know you’re being cherished?”

And follow that up with questions for him around how he might cherish her once they are married – and what she thinks of that. You can have her guide him a bit on what this will look like for her.

As you did on the female side, underscore the payoff here for the man. Help him see that the more cherished his wife feels by him, the more passionate she becomes with him.

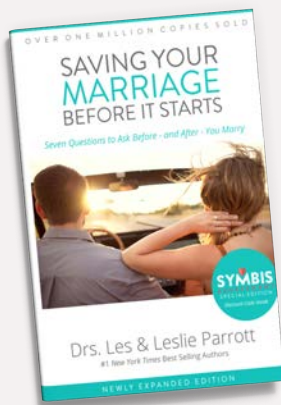
Unless you learn to play a duet in the same key, to the same rhythm, a slow process of disengagement will wedge you apart, first secretly, psychologically, and then openly and miserably.

-WALTER WANGERIN JR.

The second half of this page is dedicated to a personalized look at each person's "Top 5 Needs." These are needs they feel the strongest about and the page depicts them in descending order, side-by-side.

This is sure to spark a lively conversation about how each person can better bridge the gender gap with their spouse. Walk through the list in any order you like but you may want to start with the lower ranked needs and climb up to the highest. Have them each talk about why they chose the particular needs and how they got to their top need.

Of course, operationalizing how this top need, in particular, can be met by their partner will be beneficial.



If you are using Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts (SYMBIS) to augment your counseling sessions, Chapter Five, "Have You Bridged the Gender Gap?" is the companion chapter where you can direct your couple. The his/her workbook exercises in this chapter include:

- Couple's Inventory
- Your Top Ten Needs

PROCESSING CONFLICT WITH YOUR COUPLE

Some researchers view conflict management as the most important skill-set to explore in counseling engaged couples.⁸⁵ And with good reason. Studies have shown it's a powerful predictor of marital longevity and success.⁸⁶

The first portion of this page provides each person with a personalized description (based on their personality type) of their unique approach to conflict. After all, everyone comes to conflict in their own way. Some are highly expressive, for example, others prefer to tip-toe around it.

These two individual paragraphs deserve exploration. Have each person discuss their paragraph. Find out what they agree with and what they don't. And, of course, explore the

reasons behind their opinions. You'll also want to draw them both out on what they think of each other's fight types. We also suggest that you explore how conflict was handled and expressed in each of their homes while they were growing up. This can be particularly enlightening for them to hear about each other. It engenders empathy.

The middle section of this page looks at the personal challenges each person is likely to have in managing conflict. These are the character issues that are likely to spark or exacerbate conflict.

These four challenges are unique to each individual, based on their personality type. Walk through them with your couple, exploring their thoughts about each. Most importantly, discuss how they might work in healthy ways to improve these areas of challenge.

DYNAMICS: CONFLICT
Conflict is inevitable, even for loving couples. It's the price we pay for a deeper level of intimacy. When you learn to fight a good fight, you can use conflict to your advantage.

COOPERATING SPOUSE
When making plans, you can be precise and systematic. You will display discernment and a good sense of timing in selecting the right decision at the appropriate time. At times, you may be rather hesitant in making decisions. This may occur because you have a need to obtain and evaluate information before making a decision. You may not attempt to commit yourself or declare intentions initially, but will win in situations where you can weigh the pros and cons of various ideas or activities. You are usually careful and cautious in most social and family situations. You will probably not go over the speed limits, or disobey written or unwritten rules in the community.

AFFIRMING SPOUSE
When working on plans for activities, you must feel that you are "in on things." You will generally offer creative ideas or suggest activities. You can be intense when confronted with a tough problem. The intensity may not always fit the problem; that is, sometimes you can get intense over a problem that looks tough, but in actuality is not. To be more effective, you should be more organized. Don't let things pile up; handle matters and get them out of the way, especially things that your spouse is counting on to be finished. You mean well in starting numerous activities, but your involvement with so many usually forces some aside. As a result, some things go unfinished.

PERSONAL CONFLICT CHALLENGES
These can limit your ability to successfully manage conflict.

- You hesitate to act on a problem unless a solution is clear, or the risk is small.
- You become evasive if not sure of a position, or the position of others.
- You become defensive when involving risk—preferring to keep things the same.
- You yield position to avoid controversy—attempt to avoid an antagonistic environment.
- You are not attentive to detail; as a result, some small details might be ignored or forgotten.
- You spend money impulsively rather than evaluating affordability.
- You are a situational listener if not given an opportunity to share ideas.
- You become so enthusiastic that you are impulsive in activities.

HOT TOPICS
Every couple has a list of issues that are prone to conflict. Your hot topics, listed in priority below, are most likely to spark tension for the two of you:

Chores	Chores
Priorities	Children
Money	Careers
Sex	Money
Communication	Sex

Knowing these topics are likely to spark tension, how can you use this information to curb conflicts? Give a concrete example of how you can better manage each one.

Refer to Chapter 6 of SYMBIS: "Do You Know How to Fight a Good Fight?"

SYMBIS 14

If one of the challenges is "keeping to a plan," for example, ask when this is likely to occur (have them give examples). And ask how the other person feels when their partner doesn't stick to a plan. Does it come across as being untrustworthy? Draw both sides out. The person with the challenge needs to see how this causes their partner to feel. And their partner needs to see how this quality stems from their personality – that it's not necessarily a message they are sending. Discuss how they might work together on the challenge, to

cope with it and see it improve. The whole dialogue is designed to give them greater understanding and empathy for each other.

Since each person will have four challenges listed, you may want to focus on just a couple from each list, for managing time in your session.

The final section on this page explores the couple's "hot topics." These are the issues that they are most prone to argue about. Some of the items that may appear include:

- Careers
- Children
- Chores
- Communication
- Friends
- Illness
- In-laws
- Jealousy
- Money
- Priorities
- Recreation
- Relatives
- Religion
- Sex
- Sleep habits

Whatever the issues are, you may want to simply make a general and open-ended inquiry to get them talking: "Tell me about your list." This allows them to zero in on the topics that tend to be hottest.

The reason for pin-pointing topics is to help them get proactive about managing them. If "friends" is a primary hot topic, for example, you can drill down on what would make this less of a problem area. You may learn that one partner is feeling left out by the other's circle of friends, or that they are too involved in their partner's lives. Whatever is rubbing them the wrong way can be out in the open and you get proactive together.

On occasion, engaged couples will say something like, "we don't really have any hot topics because we don't fight." That's okay. The idea of having conflicts may be threatening to them.⁸⁷ So the dialog will likely be most productive when you simply help them imagine how they might handle some of the issues that appear on their hot topic list. For example, if "chores" appears on their list, you can ask them what kinds of potential conflicts might come up around this topic. You can also normalize conflict a bit for a couple like this by letting them know that all couples eventually have interpersonal struggles and your work here can focus on what to do when that eventually happens.

No couple, no matter how loving, is immune to conflict. It's inevitable. Recent research reveals that arguments about small, nagging things happen as often as 312 times per year for the average married couple.⁸⁸ That means most couples experience a tug-of-war of some kind on a near daily basis. This doesn't mean they don the proverbial boxing gloves

and step into the ring for a major bout. It just means that conflicts in marriage, the little scrapes, spats and squabbles, are endemic.

If time permits, you may want to explore one more issue while you are on the topic of conflict. It's pride. Study after study shows how pride is often the primary barrier to resolving conflict.⁸⁹ And it's often the source of conflict, as well. As the Bible says, "Pride leads to conflict."⁹⁰ It's that simple. A prideful spirit keeps us from cooperating, flexing, respecting, compromising, and resolving. Instead, it fuels defensiveness and discord.⁹¹ It stands in the way of saying "I'm sorry." It lives by the motto, "The only unfair fight is the one you lose." Self-centered pride is at the heart of every bad fight.

Research shows that when pride sets in, a partner will continue an argument 34% of the time even if he knows he's wrong — or can't remember what the fight was about. And a full 74% will fight on even if they feel "it's a losing battle."⁹²

We want to provide you with an exercise in this section that you may want to use. It's called "Sharing Withholds." It's designed to help manage conflict before it even starts. And while it is not noted directly on the SYMBIS report, it is part of the SYMBIS chapter on conflict. And it's an exercise that receives such overwhelming positive response from couples that we feel compelled to at least make you aware of it.

The idea behind Sharing Withholds is this: Every day in every marriage we hold onto information our spouse doesn't know about. Not because we're secretive or private but because we're traveling at the speed of life. Issues register in our mind and just before we have a chance to talk about them we're interrupted by a phone call or another distraction. The issue could be positive or negative.

Marriage is one long conversation, checkered by disputes.

- ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

On the positive side, you might be ready to compliment your spouse on the way they handled an issue with their parents, for example, when you realize it wouldn't be appropriate to say so in front of your spouse and your in-laws. So you plan to tell your spouse later. But as time moves along, the thought recedes and your partner never knows you felt that way. That's a positive withhold.

A negative withhold happens when your spouse does something that rubs you the wrong way but for whatever reason you aren't able to tell them. Maybe it's a joke they made but it ended up being a zinger aimed in your direction. You might be in front of friends and don't want to make it public or maybe you're just too exhausted to bring it up in the moment because you know it will involve some tension. So it becomes a negative withhold.

And what happens to negative feelings we bury? They have a high rate of resurrection. They pop up or even explode when we're least expecting them. That's why sharing withholds is such a valuable rule and tool for cultivating cooperation.

This is an exercise you can teach your couple to do routinely, on a weekly basis, and it will take just ten minutes or so. If they do this each week they'll see the level of tension in their relationship drop dramatically. They'll avoid all kinds of needless conflict. And they'll also notice an uptick in positive connections as well.

Here's how it works. Have each person write two things that partner has done in the last forty-eight hours that they sincerely appreciated but did not tell him or her. For example, "I appreciate the compliment you gave me as I got out of the car yesterday," or "I appreciate the help you gave me in planning for my meeting this morning."

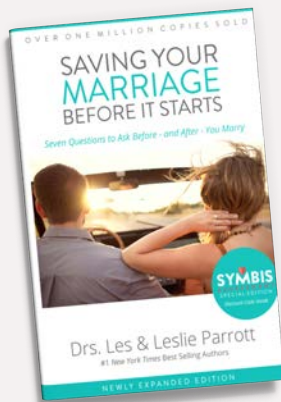
Next, have them write one thing their partner has done in the last forty-eight hours that irritated them but they did not say anything about. For example, "I didn't like it when you borrowed my umbrella without telling me," or "I didn't like it when you said nothing about the meal I made for us yesterday."

Once both have written their statements, have them take turns sharing them. One person shares all three statements one after the other. Then the other person shares their three statements. And here is an important part of sharing withholds. The person on the receiving end can only say "thank you" after each statement. That's all. Just "thank you." This rule allows couples to share something that bugs them without fearing a blow-up or a defensive reaction. It creates what researchers call a soft-onset to conflict. It also allows couples to receive critiques in the context of affirmation.

And one more thing. Once they've each shared their three withholds, the negative ones are off limits for thirty minutes. They can't talk about the negative withholds for a half hour. This allows them to gain a bit of objectivity by moving from reacting to responding.

The best way to teach this exercise is to actually have the couple do this in the counseling session. It will take ten minutes or so. If time permits, it's worth considering. Of course, you can also assign them to do this exercise in their SYMBIS his/her workbooks, if you are using them.

The bottom line of this page of the report is to help all the couples you work with see that conflict is normal, that they can learn to manage it, and then when they do, conflict doesn't need to be threatening – it can actually bring them closer together.⁹³



If you are using Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts (SYMBIS) to augment your counseling sessions, Chapter Six, “Do You Know How to Fight a Good Fight?” is the companion chapter where you can direct your couple. The his/her workbook exercises in this chapter include:

- Identifying Your Hot Topics
- Money Talks And So Can We
- Mind Reading
- Sharing Withholds

PROCESSING SPIRITUALITY WITH YOUR COUPLE

The final section of the SYMBIS report explores spiritual intimacy and faith. You may be working with a couple for whom this is negligible. If spirituality and faith is not a value for the couple you're working with you may want to set this page aside.

But if you're working with a couple (or one of the persons in a couple) who prizes a personal faith or even has a mere interest in it, we suggest you use this page to explore this information in a meaningful way.

In fact, this page of the report is for every couple who is searching for a faith or longing for a deeper spiritual connection. And it is especially for those who aren't willing to settle for a superficial faith that only mimics a marriage they long for. It is for all who dare to share life's ultimate meaning with our soulmate and discover the oneness that only a shared commitment to an authentic spiritual walk can bring.

The first portion of the page explores how each individual feels closest to God. Based on information they provided on the assessment, they will receive a little information about what helps them become most spiritually attuned to God. Of course, they may share the same approach as a couple, but more than likely, they will each have a different one.

DYNAMICS: SPIRITUALITY
Even happily married couples eventually discover a soulful longing to bond with their lover, not just for comfort or passion—but also for spiritual meaning.

YOU FEEL CLOSEST TO GOD THROUGH:

Being compassionate and loving others even if it means significant sacrifice. You are drawn to people in need, and the more needs you meet, the more energized you feel.

Connecting in a small group and being accountable to them. You may struggle to pray on your own but not in a group. You are energized by socializing and fellowship with other believers.

Explore what each of you does to feel closest to God. Give specific examples of when and what you do. How can you support each other in these practices?

YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE TOGETHER
What you believe about spiritual practices in marriage:

Yes	Attend church weekly.	Yes
Yes	Go to the same church.	Yes
Yes	Discuss spiritual issues.	Yes
No	Receive communion together regularly.	Yes
Yes	Agree on theology.	Yes
Yes	Give a financial tithe and/or offering.	Yes
Yes	Pray for each other.	Yes
Yes	Pray together every day.	Yes
No	Be involved in serving others together.	Yes
Yes	Study the Bible together regularly.	Yes

Would you consider yourselves in sync spiritually? Why or why not?
How would you finish these two sentences right now:
"My spiritual life has been..."
"When it comes to our shared spiritual life..."

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
Congratulations on completing your SYMBIS Assessment! To help you get your marriage off to a great start, we have additional resources you may find helpful on the following page. With every good wish and prayer. —Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott

Refer to Chapter 7 of SYMBIS: "Are You and Your Partner Soul Mates?"

SYMBIS 15

One of the single biggest stumbling blocks to spiritual intimacy in a marriage – where two believing individuals feel out of sync with each other's spirit – is a failure to understand and appreciate the other's spiritual language. In other words, if one doesn't recognize that their partner's means of communion with God is valid, they discount it. Intentionally or not, they send a message to their partner that says you don't know God like I do.

Of course, there are a number of equally valid pathways to God because spirituality is not "one-size-fits-all."⁹⁴ There is a wonderful variety of ways to relate to God that are equally compelling. This first segment of the report helps you explore each individual's approach and will help them see their partner's approach as valid.

Think of this bit of information as an attempt to translate their spiritual language. You can have them interact with this information by asking them to amplify it with some examples of how they do these things. Explore what they each think of the other's approach. How do they compliment each other?

And the two will
become one flesh.

-EPHESIANS 5:31

The next section of the page reveals the couple's spiritual practices. It's what they "do" to live out their faith.

Beware that you'll encounter many engaged couples where one person is more interested in spiritual matters than the other person. Of course, this needs to be explored.

A major reason couples get out of sync spiritually is due to an uneven level of interest in spirituality itself. Let's be honest. As two unique human beings with different needs, backgrounds, dispositions, and interests, it is only natural that we will have differing desires to discuss spiritual issues. In nearly every marriage, one partner leans more heavily on spiritual conversations than the other. Even in marriages between two sincere, church going people, one partner will want to get lost in deep conversations about God, while the other is content simply to share activities like going to church. One partner wants to pray lengthy, intimate prayers with his or her spouse, while the other is content to simply say grace at the dinner table.

Why the difference? A multitude of reasons. Perhaps the more-interested spouse is experiencing a spiritual "growth spurt" while the less-interested partner is on a plateau. Maybe the more-interested spouse grew up in a home where spiritual issues were discussed more often. Or maybe the less-interested spouse is more introverted in general than the partner who is more expressive and vulnerable about all areas of his or her life. Or maybe the less-interested partner feels manipulated into a spiritual role that does not feel natural or genuine. There are many reasons for an uneven level of spiritual interests between partners. But whatever the reason, over time, as the dichotomy of differences seems more and more pronounced for some couples, a deadly potion of two major ingredients is brewing. Disappointment on one side and guilt on the other, mix to create a powerful saboteur of spiritual intimacy. It is a bitter drink that too many couples swig as their spirits collide. Eventually, these couples give up on spiritual intimacy and develop a chronic ache in their marital soul.

This is exactly why this section of the page deals with practices that are important to each person. By highlighting what is important to both – what they agree upon – you can help them build a spiritual foundation together. For example, they may both agree on going to church but they may not agree on tithing or praying together. While it's important to validate those practices they both desire, it's even more important to discuss the issues where they differ. In fact, this may be the very first time they have even discussed the

matter between themselves. So tread gently and listen carefully. And do your best to draw each person out on what they believe and why. Honest dialogue is the goal.

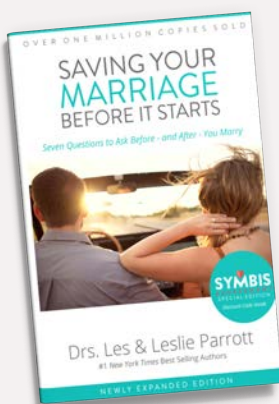
The final piece of this page of the report is very brief. It's an exercise, having them each finish the sentence stem: "My spiritual life has been...." It's typically a nice way to bring a bit of closure to the discussion of spiritual matters because it's deeply personal (and they'll hopefully be more relaxed to answer it at this stage of your session) and because it allows them to reveal how they've experienced their relationship with God.

Expect to hear answers like this: My spiritual life has been ...

- The most important part of my life.
- Boring.
- Filled with doubts.
- A great adventure
- Handed down to me by my parents.
- Filled with peaks and valleys.

Allow them to elaborate on their sentence. And, as always, invite questions and comments from each partner.

If you're working with a couple who is looking for a resource to help them join their spirits by routinely reading a weekly or daily meditation or devotion together, you may want to make them aware of *Becoming Soul Mates*. This book contains 52 meditations on marriage that are especially applicable for newlyweds.



If you are using *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* (SYMBIS) to augment your counseling sessions, Chapter Seven, "Are You and Your Partner Soulmates?" is the companion chapter where you can direct your couple. The his/her workbook exercises in this chapter include:

- Your Spiritual Journey
- Improving Your Serve
- Study Your Spouse

A FINAL NOTE ON PROCESSING SYMBIS

In your final session with your couple, be sure to let them know that you are here for them down the road if/when they might need some objective help.

Pre-marriage counseling can encourage couples to seek help before marital problems become too serious. Research reveals that couples who participated in pre-marriage counseling, as opposed to those who don't, are much more likely to seek help when they encounter problems in their marriages before those problems became too serious.⁹⁵

PROCESSING TIME STYLES WITH YOUR COUPLE

One of the biggest complaints married couples make has to do with time: “We just don’t seem to have enough time together.” Nearly every married couple will say something along these lines.

That’s why in SYMBIS+ we have an additional page dedicated to this specific issue. It reveals how each of their personalities is hard-wired uniquely for time. And showing this information to a couple can be an incredible revelation for them - even after being married for decades.

The model is based on our research found in our book, *Your Time Starved Marriage*, and is comprised of two dimensions: 1) future vs. present, and 2) scheduled vs. unscheduled. Where a person lands on these two dimensions will determine their unique time style:

Accommodator - present and unscheduled

Processor - present and scheduled

Planner - future and scheduled

Dreamer - future and unscheduled

Most couples will enjoy processing this page with you because it leads to practical solutions for situations that may have been difficult for some time. So as you explore this information with them, pull for specific examples to help them see how their time styles play out. For example, in looking at the sample SYMBIS+ Report, you might say:

“Michael, it’s pretty clear that you are all about the future. You are a Dreamer (as well as a bit of a Planner) when it comes to time - you are future oriented and a bit more unscheduled than scheduled. Does that sound about right to you? Can you think of some real-life examples?”



Of course, you never want to force a person into a category. Give them plenty of space to qualify and explain how they are or aren't resonating with the results. Always keep in mind that a page like this in SYMBIS+ is a discussion-starter more than a diagnostic tool. The goal is to get them talking about how they experience time.

Be sure to let the spouse weigh in on their partner's time style, too. You can say something like:

"What do you think about Michael being a Dreamer (as well as a Planner)? Does that ring true for you and your experiences with him? Any examples come to mind?"

It's important to pull for real-life examples because it will make applications of this model easier for you and for them.

In addition to exploring each person's unique time style, you'll also want to explore the combination of their two styles and how they are experiencing them together. You might say something like:

"Michael, you are primarily a Dreamer and Natalie you are primarily an Accommodator. What do you two make of that?"

Asking an open ended question like this will allow you to pick up on information you might miss otherwise. Of course, you can then drill down for more specific information, asking them how their two approaches to time work to their advantage in their marriage; and how they might also present some challenges. As you do, be sure to ask for real-life examples.

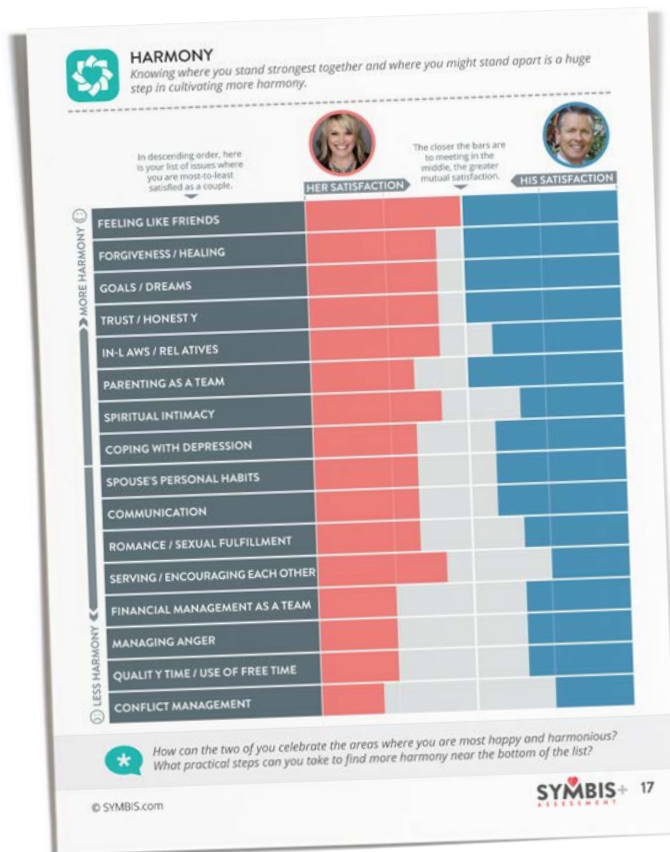
Before leaving this page of the SYMBIS+ Report with your couple, you'll also want to explore how this new awareness of their Time Styles might enable them to recoup moments they've been missing together. You might say something like:

"One of the biggest challenges for most couples is to continually empathize with each other more accurately - especially when it comes to how each person experiences time. Hopefully this page of your report will help you do just that. In fact, what did you learn about each other that you didn't know before seeing this information - and more importantly, what can you now do to find more quality time together as a couple?"

Encourage them to be creative and concrete as they consider this question.

PROCESSING HARMONY WITH YOUR COUPLE

The final page of SYMBIS+ is devoted to an overall snapshot of how content the couple is - how much harmony they are experiencing when it comes to the issues that matter most. It typically serves as a nice capstone to your session, however, it's perfectly acceptable to start with this page of the report, as well. In other words, use your judgment as you consider how it might be helpful to take a look at this page early on in your facilitation process. It can sometimes help you set the course for your upcoming session when you have explored their areas of harmony. Traditionally, however, this page is covered in your later sessions and may serve as a jumping-off spot for additional work together.



The page is a listing of 16 items that nearly every couple contends with - whether they've been married a few months or several decades. You can easily see how satisfied (content or discontent) each person is on each of these items. The layout of this page graphically reveals where they stand as individuals and as a couple.

Note the order of the list on the lefthand side. This is customized to each couple, revealing the items they are most content with at the top to the least content at the bottom. Walking through this list with your couple can be an extremely valuable exercise. And beware: This may take more time than you are anticipating since it is bound to bring up issues that you may not have already covered.

Also, note the gaps between their two ratings on each item (with the wider

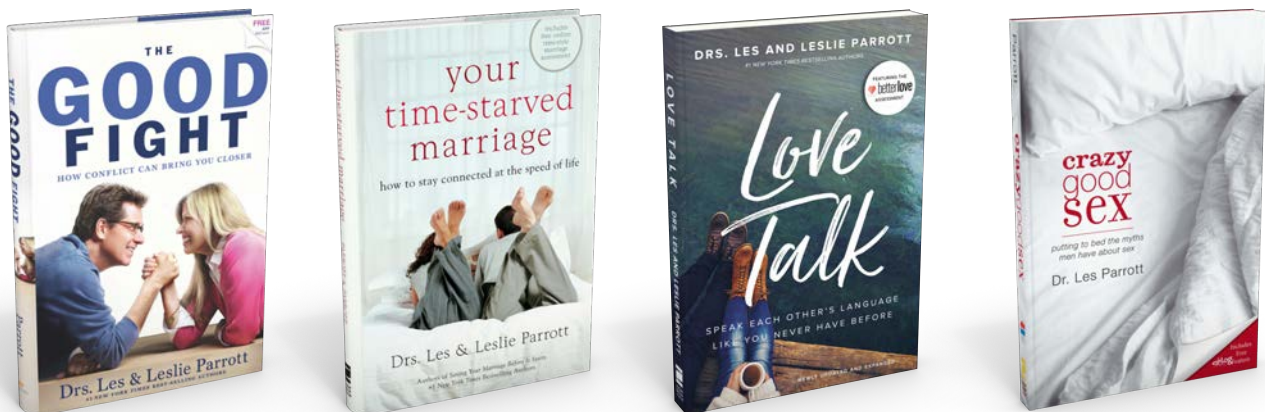
gaps appearing at the bottom of the list). The wider these gaps are on any given issue, the more discontent the couple is on that issue. Of course, you'll also want to note those item where one person is quite content and the other isn't. This reveals something that obviously needs to be explored. For example, in the sample SYMBIS+ Report you can see that when it comes to "serving and encouraging each other," Natalie is far more content

than Michael is. What you don't know is if Michael is discontent with his own performance in this area or if he's discontent with his wife in this area. That's where you will want to explore the topic by saying something as simple as something like:

"Let's talk about this issue of 'serving each other' - what's going on here?"

Give special consideration to the last three items on the list - and keep in mind that this list is dynamic, the order changes with each couple. These last three items are the areas where your couple is likely experiencing the most tension and potential pain. This means that these are the areas where you can help them the most. When you can help them move the needle toward more satisfaction and contentment in these areas, you are giving them an invaluable gift.

If you are a professional counselor using SYMBIS+ you will obviously have a good idea on where to go in helping your couple grow in these painful areas. However, if you are facilitating this experience with SYMBIS+ as a lay counselor or marriage mentor, for example, you may want to have some resources in mind that you can refer them to. Of course, there are a wide variety of books on nearly every one of the issues listed on this page and you've undoubtedly benefited from some of them and can recommend them based on your own experience. However, you will also find a number of resources in this regard at LesandLeslie.com. Some of these titles include *Your Time Starved Marriage*, *The Good Fight*, *The Parent You Want to Be*, *Trading Places*, *Love Talk*, *Crazy Good Sex*, and many more. Most of these books can also be used with accompanying his/her workbooks.



As you unpack this Harmony page of SYMBIS+ with your couple, you will also want to give special attention to the items at the bottom of the list. This is where they can, with your help, experience the most growth and improvement. But, by all means, don't neglect the

top of the list where you can affirm them on those items where they feel most content and happy. You can say something like:

"Look at how happy you are when it comes to 'feeling like friends.' You're both a 10-out-of-10. That deserves a celebration. Way to go!"

Don't neglect this - even if they don't have any items that are rated as a 10. You'll still want to affirm that they are doing well on the things at the top of their list. It's incredibly helpful for couples to take inventory of what is working well and where they are most happy. And this page makes that easy.

PART THREE: NEXT STEPS

Congratulations! You've made it through your training as a SYMBIS Facilitator and you're almost ready to begin using it with your first couple.

TAKING THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT YOURSELF

Before you administer and interpret the SYMBIS Assessment with your first couple, we highly recommend that you complete the questionnaire yourself. As a reminder, it will take you approximately 35 minutes. This experience is the most effective way to prepare yourself for leading another couple through the SYMBIS Assessment experience.

This will not only expose you to the report at a more personal level, it will show you the experience your couples will have once they receive an invitation from you.

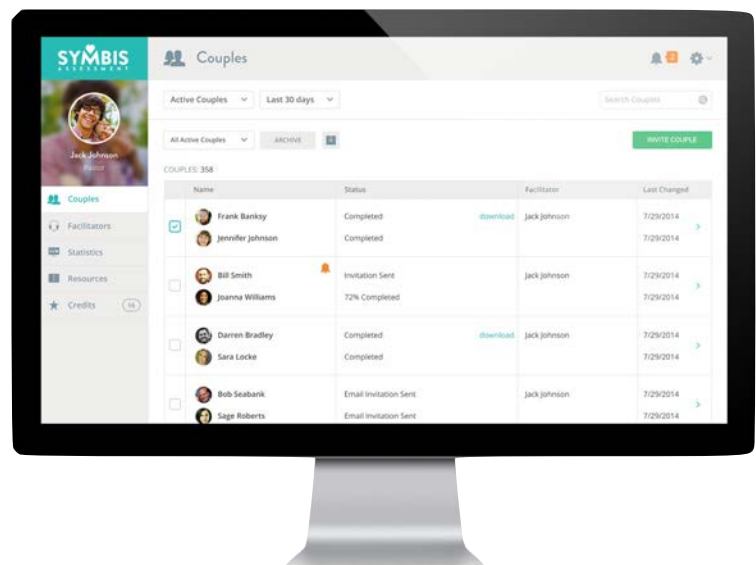
Included with your training is a complimentary couple credit for doing just that. It will show up as a credit on your Facilitator Dashboard. To start the process, invite yourself and your spouse from your Facilitator dashboard (as detailed below).

YOUR SYMBIS FACILITATOR CREDENTIALS

As a certified SYMBIS Facilitator, we will email you a certificate recognizing your accomplishment. This will be suitable for framing and displaying in your office. Many of our Facilitators proudly display their certificate as a mark of accomplishment. If your organization is certifying Marriage Mentor couples in the SYMBIS Assessment, giving them their certificate as a congratulatory gesture is a smart move.

ABOUT YOUR FACILITATOR DASHBOARD

Your Facilitator Dashboard is your hub for managing the couples you're working with. From here you can not only invite new couples to take the assessment but download their reports when they finish. In addition you can search, sort, and message existing couples.

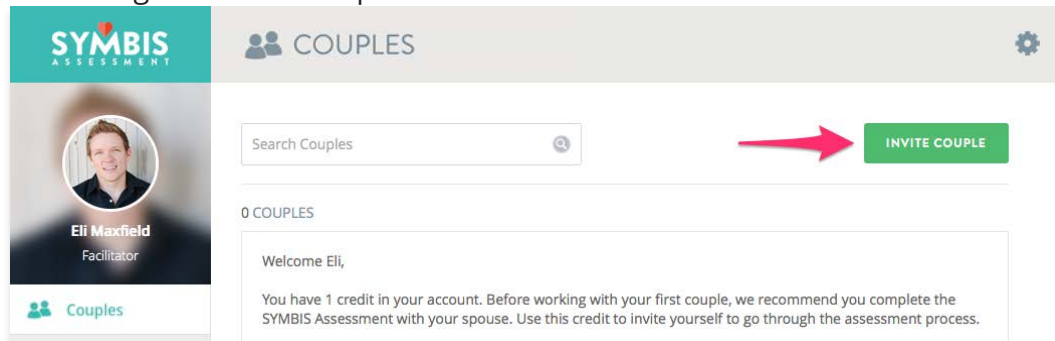


You'll have access to the training videos for an additional 30 days after completing the training so if your spouse wants to catch up on the training or you'd simply like a refresher on any of the sessions, they're available to you.

HOW TO INVITE YOUR FIRST COUPLE TO TAKE THE ASSESSMENT

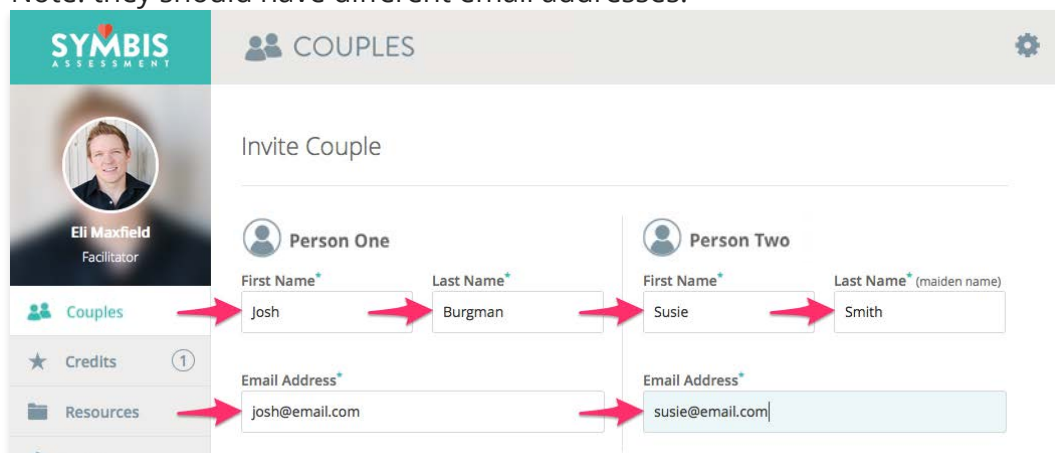
It's simple, just follow three easy steps:

1. Click the green Invite Couple button.



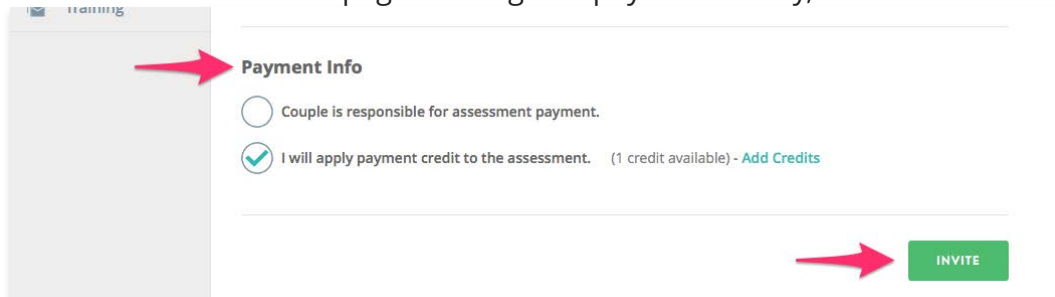
The screenshot shows the SYMBIS Assessment interface. On the left is a sidebar with the user's profile (Eli Maxfield, Facilitator) and a 'Couples' section. The main area is titled 'COUPLES' and contains a search bar, a green 'INVITE COUPLE' button (highlighted with a red arrow), and a message stating '0 COUPLES' and 'Welcome Eli, You have 1 credit in your account. Before working with your first couple, we recommend you complete the SYMBIS Assessment with your spouse. Use this credit to invite yourself to go through the assessment process.'

2. Complete the First Name, Last Name and Email Address Fields for each individual.
Note: they should have different email addresses.



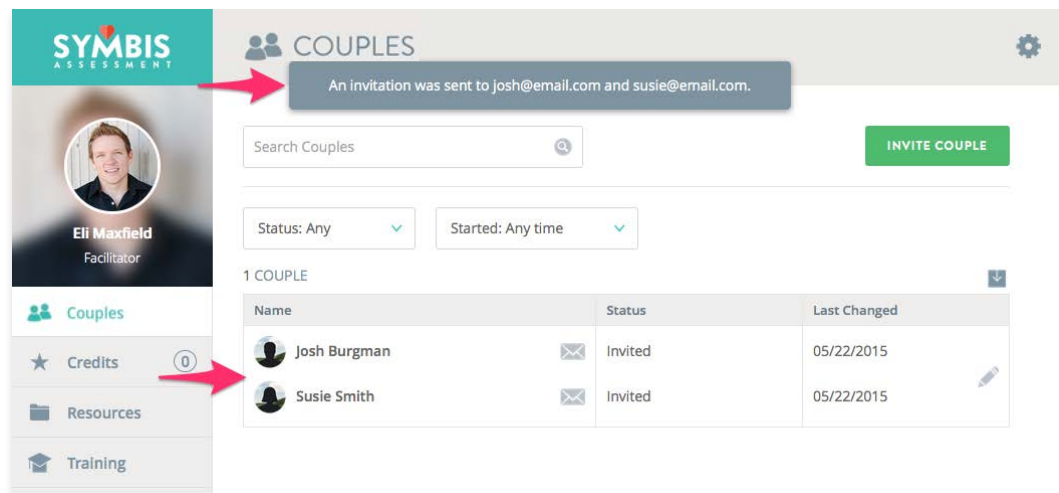
The screenshot shows the 'Invite Couple' form. It has two columns for 'Person One' and 'Person Two'. For Person One, the fields are First Name (Josh), Last Name (Burgman), and Email Address (josh@email.com). For Person Two, the fields are First Name (Susie), Last Name (Smith), and Email Address (susie@email.com). Red arrows point to each of these input fields. The left sidebar shows the 'Couples' section with a red arrow pointing to the 'Invite Couple' button.

3. Choose who is paying for the assessment, you or the couple. Use the radio button at the bottom of the invite page to designate payment. Lastly, click Invite.

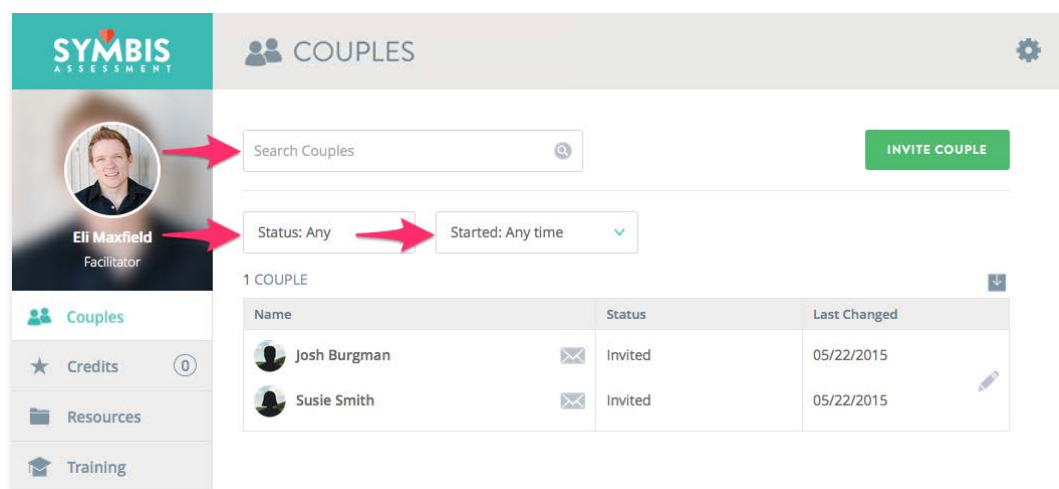


The screenshot shows the 'Payment Info' section. It has two radio buttons: 'Couple is responsible for assessment payment.' (unselected) and 'I will apply payment credit to the assessment.' (selected, with a green checkmark). Below the second option is a link '(1 credit available) - Add Credits'. A red arrow points to the 'Payment Info' section header, and another red arrow points to the green 'INVITE' button at the bottom right.

As soon as you click the Invite button, an email invitation will automatically be sent to each individual. The invited couple now shows up in your Facilitator Dashboard. You can monitor their progress of completing the assessment in real time. When both individuals finish the assessment, you'll be notified by email that their report is ready for download. Use the link in the email to access their report from your Facilitator Dashboard.



As you invite more couples and your list of couples gets longer, the search and sort features will become extremely useful. Use these features to quickly locate couples or sort based on their status.



If you have any questions on using your Facilitator Dashboard, don't hesitate to contact our team for help: info@SYMBIS.com.

HOW TO PROMOTE YOUR SYMBIS ASSESSMENT NETWORK

As much as we are dedicated to the highest levels of competency and professionalism when it comes to caring for engaged couples, we are equally motivated to get the word out on how these couples can access the help you provide.

That's why we have developed some tools for you do this well – and relatively easily. We fully understand that many, if not most, counselors are not innate marketers or promoters. And that's precisely why we want to help you attract engaged couples to your work.

Without promotion,
something terrible
happens ... nothing!

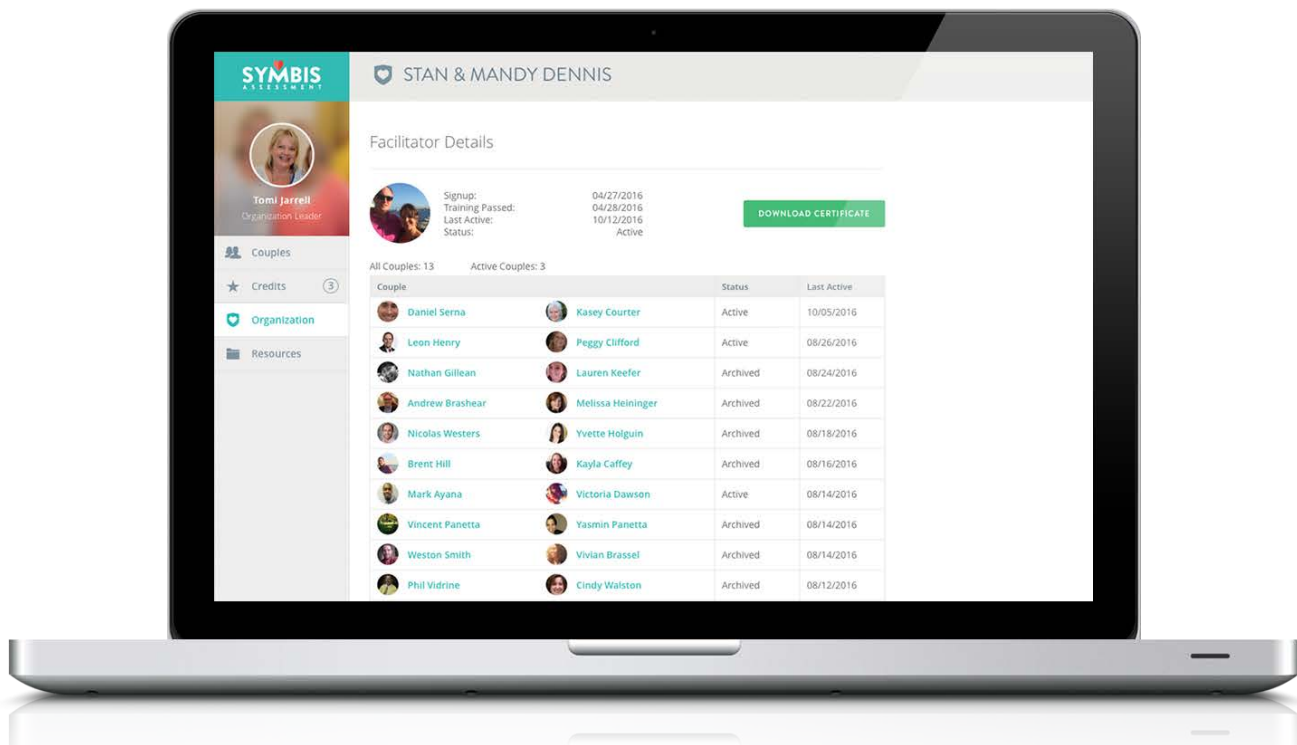
-P.T. BARNUM

How can we help you promote your work with engaged couples?
Here are several resources:

Inclusion in national directory of SYMBIS Facilitators

- Infographic
- Web banner
- Trifold artwork (PSD)
- Embeddable video
- Promote our blog posts on their site
- Custom video for bulk orders
- Program inserts
- Poster
- Social images

You may be in a church setting where every couple that gets married is required to go through pre-marriage counseling. And because it's required, you don't need to promote it. However, we think you still may find our branding tools to be useful.



UPGRADE TO ORGANIZATION LEADER

If you're using the SYMBIS Assessment as part of a team, we can add super powers to your SYMBIS Dashboard in the form of the Organization Leader upgrade. This feature set is designed for teams and will save you time and money in administrating your work with couples. Unique features allow you to:

- Add a custom logo to the cover of your SYMBIS Assessment reports
- Invite other members of your ministry team to complete the SYMBIS Certification and track their progress
- Assign couples to member Facilitators in your Organization
- Get a master overview of all your Facilitators and their couples in one place
- Dramatically reduced cost for training member Facilitators

To learn more and upgrade to Organization Leader, contact us: info@SYMBIS.com

APPENDIX A

82 PRACTICAL TIPS FROM THE VIDEO TRAINING

Throughout your video training, we provide more than 80 practical tips on the lower third of the screen. Here's is a compilation of all of these tips.

GETTING STARTED

- Ask them about their experience (...of taking the assessment)
- Setup expectations
- Build rapport
- Use goals on bottom of report page 1
- Ask for their input

MARRIAGE MOMENTUM

- Show them the page
- Affirm whenever you can
- Lower anxiety when possible
- Explore the use of book/workbook, if appropriate

MINDSET

- Invite couple to underline favorite parts
- Having them read aloud can be helpful
- Highlight how they complement each other

WELLBEING

- Discuss their ages
- Make sure they understand independence
- Tread softly here (when dealing with caution flags)
- Caution flags often come in clusters
- Talking about getting help in the future is helpful
- Affirm authenticity
- If no caution flags indicated, ask about them
- Let them explain their circumstances here (about dating and falling in love)

SOCIAL SUPPORT

- Clarify what social support means to them
- If couple attends your church, make suggestions (about connecting)

FINANCES

- Get a feel for their money conversations
- Tease out differences
- Don't make assumptions about budgets
- If a couple is deep in debt, they'll need a game plan
- Sometimes a referral to a financial expert is helpful
- Set up an expectation for routine money talks

EXPECTATIONS

- Make a connection to family of origin
- Help them picture scenarios
- Zero in on divergent expectations

DYNAMICS OVERVIEW

- Emphasize there's no right/wrong combination (of personalities)
- Clarify what they agree or disagree with and why.

DYNAMICS DETAIL

- Set it up and check in
- Underscore complementary traits
- You'll need to briefly explain what these mean (spontaneous vs. cautious)
- Tease out real life examples
- Help them project into the future
- Review the big picture here (of the personalities - what was the biggest insight gleaned about themselves and each other)

LOVE

- Set them up to express their desires
- Open ended questions work well here (and give examples)
- Comparing their lists brings insights
- Project into the future and get specific
- Help them get concrete
- Gauge your couples' comfort level
- Many couples don't explore this (who is going to initiate sex?)
- Invite their questions about sex (what causes the most anxiety?)

ATTITUDE

- Have them reflect on their scores
- Invite them to agree/disagree with results
- Confirm results with both partners

- Steer clear of 'fix it' mentality
- Draw out real examples
- Remind them of the big picture (how they can become easier to live with?)

COMMUNICATION

- Invite them to clarify their results
- Help them empathize with each other (...on ways to improve communication)
- Let them prioritize their results
- See if partner recognizes trait in other

GENDER

- Help them see the future
- Get specific about what can be done
- Invite partners' input
- Asking about surprises creates insight
- Echo earlier parts of the report
- This is a crucial question (How will you know when these needs are being met?)

CONFLICT

- Start with a real life example
- Have them circle what they resonate with
- We all have places to improve
- Role playing can be powerful
- This is why role playing is helpful
- With more time, we'd role play again
- Hot Topics are often a new insight
- Linger on these as time permits

SPIRITUALITY

- If faith is not a value, use at your discretion
- Tease out potential differences
- Helping them honor each other is key
- Explore specific expectations
- Let them paint a concrete picture
- These sentence stems can be powerful and revealing
- Put a positive capstone on your sessions together
- Give specific next steps
- Learn more: marriage mentoring.com
- Dashboard unlocks after completing quiz

APPENDIX B

USING THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT IN A GROUP OR CLASS OF COUPLES

While the SYMBIS Assessment works great with a single couple, it was designed to work well in group settings, too. In fact, groups and classrooms of couples have a noticeable bonus: peer interaction. To hear and observe others who are in the same situation as you can augment learning and build supportive relationships that last well beyond the class duration. These relationships can be tremendous assets to the entire SYMBIS experience.

Before you use the SYMBIS Assessment in a group setting, we strongly recommend that you first use it with individual couples. Why? Because you'll learn the ins and outs of the tool more effectively and be able to better manage the shifting dynamics of a group when they are going through the SYMBIS process.

Tell me and I forget.
Teach me and I remember.
Involve me and I learn.

-BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

So how do you use the SYMBIS Assessment with more than one couple at a time? Begin by structuring your sessions.

INITIATING CONTACT WITH COUPLES IN THE GROUP

Regardless of your schedule, each couple in the group will need to take the inventory in advance of the first meeting. Just as you would invite a couple through your Facilitator dashboard, invite each couple in your group or class. Each person will receive a personalized invitation to take the assessment. You will be notified when each person completes the assessment.

SCREENING COUPLES FOR A SYMBIS ASSESSMENT GROUP

Not every couple is in a good position to process their SYMBIS Report within a group setting. This is important. If you have a volatile or unhealthy couple in your group it will quickly change the dynamic. That's why it is imperative that you screen your couples in advance.

How? It's easy. Simply review the Marriage Momentum score of each couple's report. If a couple is scoring low on this aggregate measure of their relationship satisfaction and

wellbeing, they are not good candidates for a SYMBIS group. You'll want to meet with them in individual sessions.

SUGGESTED GROUP SESSION SCHEDULE

While you may have a particular schedule for your group to work within, there are four common scenarios:

- **3-Sessions Schedule**

This is quick and intense but some find it helpful to use this schedule when time is a factor. Sessions are typically 90 minutes to two-hours. This is particularly true when working with a single couple but it can also apply to groups.

- **5-Sessions Schedule**

This is perhaps the most common schedule for groups that are focused exclusively to unpacking the SYMBIS Assessment together. These sessions are typically 60-90 minutes each.

- **8-Sessions Schedule**

If you are augmenting the SYMBIS Report with *Saving Your Marriage Before It Stars* and/or the his/her workbooks, eight 60-minute sessions is common.

- **Weekend Schedule**

In some cases, it works well to use the SYMBIS Assessment in an intensive two or three-day seminar or retreat setting. Sessions are simply interspersed with breaks, meals, or other activities.

All schedules can cover the same content with the same exercises. See Appendix C for details on session schedules.

APPENDIX C

SESSION SCHEDULE MODELS

The SYMBIS report is divided into 7 sections – some more extensive than others. And the last section, Dynamics, has 7 subsections that are each substantive in themselves.

As a reminder, here are the SYMBIS report sections and subsections:

- I. About Us
- II. Overview
- III. Marriage Momentum
- IV. Mindset
- V. Wellbeing
 - 1. Individual Wellbeing
 - 2. Relationship Wellbeing
- VI. Context
 - 1. Social Support
 - 2. Finances
 - 3. Expectations
- VII. Dynamics
 - 1. Personality
 - 2. Love
 - 3. Attitude
 - 4. Communication
 - 5. Gender
 - 6. Conflict
 - 7. Spirituality

As was noted in your training, the SYMBIS Assessment is very flexible, fitting your needs and your schedule in working with couples. We don't prescribe a rigid number of sessions. It can be done in a long intensive session or it can be done in as many as ten sessions.

Because some of the report is designed as a catalyst for productive conversation between you and the couple, it can easily be managed for time, based upon the number of sessions you desire.

Below are a few schedule scenarios that may be helpful for you to consider. But keep these points in mind,

- Time can be managed by how much you allocate for discussion within the numerous exercises.
- You can elect to skim over a particular section to speed up the process, or even omit a section if you so desire.
- You can leverage the suggested "homework" assignments for the couple to cover some areas on their own and report back to you.

Flexibility is a
requirement for
survival

-ROGER VON OECH

Each of these make the SYMBIS Assessment process malleable and highly flexible. However, if you're looking for a suggested pace or session schedule, here are some examples that may be helpful.

3-SESSIONS SCHEDULE

Some prefer to move through the SYMBIS Assessment at a brisk clip, just three 60-minute sessions. You can certainly do this, but we suggest assigning "homework" related to a few portions the SYMBIS report. Again, the times you see below are merely general guidelines

Session One

About Us (5 min)
Marriage Momentum (3 minutes)
Mindset (5 minutes)
Wellbeing (20 minutes)
Context: Social Support (5 minutes)
Context: Finances (10 minutes)
Context: Expectations (15 minutes)

Session Two

Dynamics: Personality (10 minutes)

Dynamics: Love (20 minutes)

Dynamics: Attitude (30 minutes)

Session Three

Dynamics: Communication (30 minutes)

Dynamics: Gender (assign as homework)

Dynamics: Conflict (30 minutes)

Dynamics: Spirituality (assign as homework)

5-SESSIONS SCHEDULE

The most common SYMBIS Assessment schedule is five sessions of about an hour each. This is ample time to cover all of the content. But keep in mind, every couple is unique and you'll find that time on a particular topic is not enough for some and more than enough for others. That's where your own judgment as a SYMBIS Facilitator comes in. The times you see below are merely general guidelines – not prescriptions.

If your group is focused on the SYMBIS Assessment as a stand-alone tool, without the *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* book or his/her workbooks, this schedule is a common model. Of course, you can easily expand or contract the number of sessions to fit your needs.

If you're using this schedule in a group or class of couples, consider adding an icebreaker or game at the start of each session (you'll find example to use in the Slide Deck in the Resources tab of your Facilitator Dashboard).

Session One

About Us (5 min)

Marriage Momentum (5 minutes)

Mindset (10 minutes)

Wellbeing (30 minutes)

Session Two

Context: Social Support (10 minutes)

Context: Finances (20 minutes)

Context: Expectations (30 minutes)

Session Three

Dynamics: Personality (30 minutes)

Dynamics: Love (30 minutes)

Session Four

Dynamics: Attitude (20 minutes)

Dynamics: Communication (40 minutes)

Session Five

Dynamics: Gender (15 minutes)

Dynamics: Conflict (30 minutes)

Dynamics: Spirituality (15 minutes)

8-SESSION SCHEDULE WITH BOOK, DVD, WORKBOOKS & ASSESSMENT

This model gives your couples every advantage possible. You may choose to have them read the book chapter before or after the meeting, that's up to you. The same is true for the workbook exercises. You can have them do these in preparation and to discuss within the meeting and/or as homework following the meeting.

Session One

Book:

Chapter 1 - Have You Faced the Myths of Marriage With Honesty?

DVD:

Session 1 - Have You Faced the Myths of Marriage With Honesty?

Assessment:

Page 3 "Marriage Mindset"

Page 4 "Wellbeing" (NOTE: See "Word of Warning" about page 4 below)

Page 5 "Context: Social Support"

Page 7 "Context: Expectations"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 1 - Your Personal 10 Commandments

Exercise 3 - From Idealizing to Realizing Your Partner

Exercise 4 - Exploring Unfinished Business

Exercise 5 - Assessing Your Self Image

Session Two

Book:

Appendix - Discovering Your Personality Dynamics

Assessment:

Page 8 "Dynamics"

Page 9 "Dynamics"

His/Her workbooks:

Option: carry-over unexplored exercises from the previous session

Session Three

Book:

Chapter 2 - Can You Identify Your Love Style?

DVD:

Session 2 - Can You Identify Your Love Style?

Assessment:

Page 10 "Dynamics: Love"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 7 - Getting Your Sex Life Off to a Great Start

Exercise 8 - Your Changing Love Style

Exercise 9 - Cultivating Intimacy

Session Four

Book:

Chapter 3 - Have You Developed the Habit of Happiness?

DVD:

Session 3 - Have You Developed the Habit of Happiness?

Assessment:

Page 11 "Dynamics: Attitude"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 10 - Listening To Your Self-Talk

Exercise 11 - Avoiding The Blame Game

Session Five

Book:

Chapter 4 - Can You Say What You Mean And Understand What You Hear?

DVD:

Session 4 - Can You Say What You Mean And Understand What You Hear?

Assessment:

Page 12 "Dynamics: Communication"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 13 - How Well Do You Communicate?

Exercise 14 - The Daily Temperature Reading

Exercise 15 - I Can Hear Clearly Now

Session Six

Book:

Chapter 5 - Have You Bridged The Gender Gap?

DVD:

Session 5 - Have You Bridged The Gender Gap?

Assessment:

Page 13 "Dynamics: Gender"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 16 - Couple's Inventory

Session Seven

Book:

Chapter 6 - Do You Know How to Fight a Good Fight?

DVD:

Session 6 - Do You Know How to Fight a Good Fight?

Assessment:

Page 6 "Context: Finances"

Page 14 "Dynamics: Conflict"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 19 - Money Talks And So Can We

Exercise 20 - Mind Reading

Exercise 21 - Sharing Withholds

Session Eight

Book:

Chapter 7 - Are You And Your Partner Soul Mates?

DVD:

Session 7 - Are You And Your Partner Soul Mates?

Assessment:

Page 15 "Dynamics: Spirituality"

His/Her workbooks:

Exercise 22 - Your Spiritual Journey

Exercise 23 - Improving Your Serve

Exercise 24 - Study Your Spouse

By all means, make the schedule fit your needs. You may want fewer sessions. If so, simply double up on some of the pages and content into a single session. Or feel free to drop a content area or two if you like. And if you'd like it to cover more sessions, simply extend the content areas (especially from the first three areas noted above). Of course, the actual length of each session will determine how much content you cover in each one, too. If your sessions are 90 minutes or 2 hours, you'll make adjustments to this schedule accordingly. SYMBIS is flexible. Bend it to work best for you.

Also, if you are leading a group or class of second marriages and/or blended family couples, you can easily add a session or two and incorporate page 7A (Context: Remarriage and Blending a Family) of the report as well as Chapters 1 (Are You Ready For Remarriage?) and 8 (Do You Know How To Blend a Family?) from *Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts*.

FINDING YOUR OWN PACE

We'll say it again: the SYMBIS Assessment is designed to be flexible. As you use this tool with couples you'll soon discover a session schedule that fits you best. Don't feel any pressure to have it all figured out from the start. You'll discover exercises you like to assign as homework and then debrief in a session together. You'll find sections of the report that you like to camp out on more than others. That's completely acceptable and encouraged. The SYMBIS Assessment is expressly designed to make it work for you in your setting. Whether you pack it into a single intensive session or take your time with the content over several sessions, that's entirely up to you.

IMPORTANT CAUTION ABOUT WELLBEING PAGE

Almost every piece of every page of the SYMBIS Report is appropriate to share in a group setting – with one exception. Page 4, Wellbeing, may be particularly difficult for a minority of individuals. Why? Because it reveals potential “caution flags.” For example, it may be that one of them is struggling with an eating disorder or depression. For this reason, it's imperative that you review this page (along with all others) before you distribute them. Use your intuitive judgment and err on the side of caution.

If a person has a caution flag that may be a surprise to their partner, be sure to meet with them privately to cover this sensitive topic before distributing the page within a group setting.

Some SYMBIS Facilitators actually elect to not use the Wellbeing page in their group sessions. Instead they meet with each couple privately to not only get to know them more personally but to cover the Wellbeing page within this private context. You may want to do the same thing.

ABOUT DRS. LES & LESLIE PARROTT



Married in 1984, the Parrotts have had an ongoing passion for helping engaged couples successfully launch lifelong love. Their personal passion is a driving force behind the development of the SYMBIS pre-marriage assessment.

As a psychologist (Les) and a marriage and family therapist (Leslie), the Parrotts have conducted research on dating and married couples, they've taught university classes on marriage, counseled countless couples, and written some of the best-selling marriage books of the past two decades.

Les and Leslie speak in over 40 cities annually – from churches to military bases, and from large arenas to Fortune 500 company boardrooms. The Governor of Oklahoma appointed Drs. Les and Leslie as the first ever state-wide Marriage Ambassadors.

In 1991, the Parrotts launched the Marriage Mentor Academy and have trained more than a quarter million couples through this innovative online program.

As #1 New York Times best-selling authors, their numerous books include *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, *Love Talk*, *Trading Places*, *The Good Fight*, *Making Happy*, and the Gold-medallion winner, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*.

Les and Leslie's many media appearances include *CNN*, *Good Morning America*, the *Today Show*, *The View*, and *Oprah*.

The Parrotts are committed to the highest standards of academic excellence along with an easy accessibility of "what works" and it is out of this mix of practice and research that the SYMBIS Assessment was developed.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

You undoubtedly have questions as you begin this process and we want to answer every one of them in time. But here at the start, allow us to answer several that we hear most often from people just like you.

IS THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT BASED ON RESEARCH?

Absolutely. This is critical. Every aspect of this assessment is grounded in multiple studies to ensure that the tool is both reliable and valid. As you go through your training to be certified as a SYMBIS Facilitator, you'll be exposed to a myriad of studies that are the underpinnings of the SYMBIS Assessment. And a quick perusal of the reference list attached to this training manual will prove helpful in this regard as well.

FROM A COUNSELING PERSPECTIVE, WHAT DOES THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT DO?

In short, the SYMBIS Assessment does two things for couples: 1) flags and lowers their risk factors, and 2) optimizes their combined strengths as a couple. It does this by assessing everything from psychological wellbeing to revealing how their combined personalities can be leveraged for optimal success. The SYMBIS Assessment is robust, personalized, and powerful.

WHAT DOES THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT DO FOR A FACILITATOR?

It ensures that your work is highly effective – for you and for the couples in your care. It helps you structure your time and your sessions for optimal success. It helps you draw couples out because the SYMBIS Report, in addition to being a diagnostic tool, is an incredible discussion starter. As a certified SYMBIS Facilitator you also have access to your own online SYMBIS Facilitator dashboard for organizing your work with couples. You'll find this to be highly intuitive and effective.

WHO CAN BECOME A SYMBIS FACILITATOR?

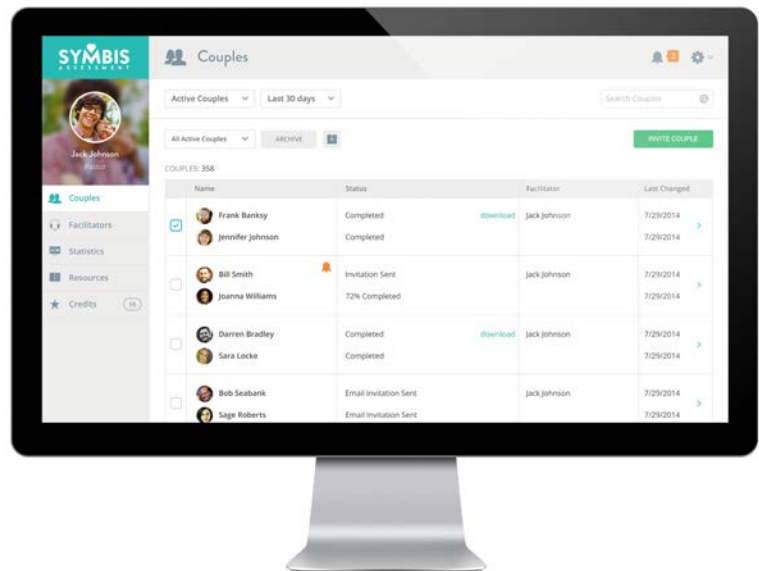
Anyone who is working with or ministering to couples on the front end of marriage will benefit from becoming certified as a SYMBIS Facilitator. This includes counselors and therapists as well as ministers and mentors.

WHAT'S ON MY SYMBIS FACILITATOR DASHBOARD?

Whether you use the SYMBIS Assessment with a couple every few months or you use it with couples every week, your online dashboard will become extremely helpful to you. It makes inviting couples to take the assessment extremely easy in addition to allowing you to review couple's reports as soon as they each complete them (and track their progress along the way). In addition, you can search for, sort and archive couples in your care. Your Facilitator Dashboard also enables you to purchase assessment credits at a discounted price when purchased in bulk.

WHAT'S INVOLVED IN BECOMING A SYMBIS FACILITATOR?

The training is done online – at a time and place of your choosing. It takes approximately three hours and the pace is whatever you choose. You can do it all at once or spread it out. As you progress by watching each training session online you will have the opportunity to answer a few questions along the way for proof of knowledge. We also provide you with a code as part of your training so that you may take the assessment yourself. Once complete, you'll receive a certificate as a SYMBIS Facilitator suitable for framing. You can then begin using the SYMBIS Assessment with couples immediately.



IF WORKING AS A COUPLE, DO BOTH BECOME A SYMBIS FACILITATOR?

Yes. If you are working as a husband-and-wife team, either as co-counselors or marriage mentors, you'll both need to complete the training to become certified as SYMBIS Facilitators. However, we provide discounts online for married couples that are both becoming trained.

CAN ONLY SYMBIS FACILITATORS USE THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT?

Yes. To maintain quality of care with the couples that receive SYMBIS Reports, they must be done in relationship with a certified SYMBIS Facilitator. And everyone who uses the SYMBIS Assessment as a facilitator must receive training.

WHAT COUPLES ARE PRIME FOR USING THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT?

A couple that is about to be engaged, already engaged, or within the first few years of marriage is in a prime place for the SYMBIS Assessment. They may be previously married and blending a family or they may both be marrying for the first time. They may be young or older. Faith-based or not. They may be from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. They may be cohabiting. Whatever a couple's circumstance, the SYMBIS Assessment will "know" who they are as they answer preliminary questions and it will customize the report accordingly.

CAN THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT BE USED IN A GROUP OR CLASS?

Of course. While it certainly works well with one couple in counseling or coaching sessions, it's also designed to work great with groups of couples. You'll find a special section in this Guide especially for this.

HOW MANY SESSIONS ARE NEEDED WITH THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT?

That is up to you. While we will make suggestions you may find helpful in this regard later in this Guide, we do not prescribe a precise number of sessions. In short, the typical number of pre-marriage sessions for most counselors, ministers, chaplains, or mentors who use the SYMBIS Assessment is between 5 to 8 sessions, some prefer to use the SYMBIS Assessment in an intensive single session and some prefer to use it over the course of 10 sessions or more. In addition to being used in a traditional office setting or classroom with a group, it can be used in a retreat or seminar setting as well.

WHO PAYS FOR THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT?

You can have couples pay directly for the SYMBIS Assessment online or you can purchase credits in advance to provide to couples as you work with them. That way you can build the cost of the SYMBIS Assessment into your work with them. Either way works. It's up to you.

CAN I CHARGE FOR MY TIME USING THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT?

What you charge - and whether you charge - is entirely up to you. Here are the various models we see:

ZERO COST MODEL

The cost of the assessment is underwritten so that it is completely complimentary to a couple, along with the sessions. In this case, SYMBIS Facilitators typically purchase couple credits in bulk through their dashboard.

FEE BASED: CHURCHES

Churches: It's not uncommon for churches to charge \$50-\$250 for a couple to go through their pre-marriage program (whether they are being seen as an individual couple or in a group or class of couples together). The program generally includes the cost of the assessment and often the *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* or *Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts* books and/or his/her workbooks. However, this can run the gamut with some churches charging up to \$500 but also including the wedding venue and wedding planner. Most churches that have a fee for their pre-marriage program charge an excess of what the materials cost so they have the flexibility to sponsor couples who truly can not afford the program with the proceeds.

FEE BASED: MARRIAGE MENTORS

Some lay couples with training and experience in marriage mentoring will charge a minimal fee and include the SYMBIS resources for the couple within that (e.g., \$50 per session). For more information Marriage Mentor training, visit our online Marriage Mentoring Academy at MarriageMentoring.com.

FEE BASED: COUNSELORS

Most counselors charge for their time. The average per-session cost is roughly \$100 and they will wrap the cost of the assessment into the hourly fee.

Fees are truly all over the map. For example, some Facilitators include refreshments or even a meal for group gatherings. Some Facilitators mix a certain number of group sessions with a few individual sessions (with a pastor or a marriage mentor couple). All of these factors, as well as your geographical location, can impact the cost you charge couples for their SYMBIS experience. For this reason, if you have not been in the habit of charging couples for pre-marriage work, it can be helpful to see what others in your community are charging for their services.

WHAT DOES THE SYMBIS ASSESSMENT DO FOR A COUPLE?

Every couple who receives and reviews their own SYMBIS Report with a certified facilitator will enjoy a highly personalized experience that opens up dozens of compelling insights and countless conversations to help them grow as individuals and as a couple.

WHAT IF SOMEONE DISAGREES WITH THE PARAGRAPHS DESCRIBING THEIR PERSONALITY?

While the overwhelming majority of people will resonate with how their personality is described on the SYMBIS Report, don't be surprised if you occasionally encounter someone who does not. Less than 1 percent of individuals will take issue with how their personality is described. And they may have a good reason. So, first of all, we highly recommend that you do not attempt to defend the results and convince them that the results are right. Rather, listen to them with understanding and move into processing the results with them. Dig deeper into where it's "right" or "wrong" for them and generate a clarifying conversation that helps you and their partner understand why they do not see the results as accurate. On occasion, you may discover something under the surface that needs to be explored (some identity issues or some extreme stress and transition in their life). And there's always the possibility that they didn't understand the directions for a particular section of the questions properly. More likely than not, however, the typical reason for a person not agreeing with their descriptive paragraphs is the result of overthinking their answers. When they agonize over their answers – wavering back and forth – and take more time than is typical to answer questions this generally produces results that do not ring true. Keep in mind that less than 1% of people say their profile does not describe them at all.

You may also try some of the below exercises to dig deeper and generate a valuable conversation:

1. Invite the person to mark each sentence in their description with these notes:

T for True

F for False

E for Edit

For the phrases marked "E", ask how they would clarify the statement. Invite them to get specific and give real world examples.

2. Ask them to read the statement aloud and replace "you" with "I." Then invite their partner to respond to statement, even using a simple thumbs up or thumbs down to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statement.

By the way, it's not unusual for some of this small percentage to be counselors. Why? Because they may read more into an item than the typical person or they may over-analyze some items with particular qualifiers in mind. Additionally, it's possible that a person could have been wounded by a personality assessment in the past and their wound causes them

to disagree with the assessment process, not necessarily their results. Again, this is very rare but it can happen.

The bottom line of this whole process is to generate a helpful and engaging discussion that sheds light on their personalities and their relationship. Even if they don't agree with how the report describes their personality, this doesn't have to stand in the way of it generating a helpful and clarifying discussion. So always keep the big picture in mind as you process their results.

WHAT IF AN INDIVIDUAL'S PERSONALITY RESULTS ARE CONTRADICTIONARY?

In generating the information for an individual's SYMBIS report on pages 8 and 9 (as well as some of the pages that follow them), we take into consideration the person's raw scores on a scale that we don't integrate into the report itself but which generate the results you're seeing on the page. We do this to ensure accurate results. This is particularly important when a person's results seem to present opposing information (e.g., fun loving and serious).

You may think that this means the results are inaccurate but that's generally not the case. It's simply a direct conflict where two opposing personality constructs are both high (e.g., like planned spontaneity). We refer to this as a "me-me" conflict. In that, they want to have fun, for example, but it needs to be serious fun (which may not seem like fun to their spouse at all). Or you might think of it this way - one foot on the gas another on the brake (we have all ridden with folks like that). For example, a person may see spring cleaning in their home as "fun" - but their partner is thinking, "Are you serious?" Or maybe a person is really into the fine details of planning a "fun" experience and it's "too planned" for their partner. Or a person may be very romantic but also recognize that romantic ideals lead to unrealistic expectations (these don't usually go together, but they can). That's why the report may say something contradictory like this person is fun-loving but also calculating. Their personality is complex. It's layered.

These examples may be different from the ones that pertain to a person who is presenting contradictory results, but the principle still applies. You're dealing with an internal contradiction - not inaccurate results. And keep in mind that the person may be one way on the home front where he is more relaxed than he is on his job. Or he may be a bit different with his buddies than he is with wife, his family, or his colleagues. You'll need to tease the particulars out as you debrief the results with the couple.

So here's our suggestion: Share the results with the couple and ask them what they think of the results. Have read their own paragraphs out loud to you. Pay attention to their face as they read - it can reveal much about how they feel. Give them plenty of room to process it. Ask them "why" questions. Let them disagree with it (this will be inevitable) - but explain why they disagree and what it should have said. The results for the person will likely be a "head scratcher" at first. "How could this say two different things?" But as you process it, the information (at a high level) will likely begin to make more sense. Help them to not get hung up on the specific examples from the report that describing him (e.g., being on time or not) but instead, help them consider how the push-and-pull of his personality may be coming through. Drive conversation around this conflict and ask them how it is has impacted their relationship. Then have each of them underline what they agree with most in their own paragraphs.

HOW DO I CONTACT YOU?

We'd love to hear from you for any reason. The most expedient way to connect is at info@SYMBIS.com.

SAVING YOUR MARRIAGE BEFORE IT STARTS DVD KIT

We've got everything you need for an effective, fun and engaging group or class of couples. This newly updated resources not only allows you to let you couples experience the acclaimed SYMBIS seminar but it brings incredible real-life couple interviews into the mix as well. We suggest that each participating couple have their own workbooks and book to get the most from the group.



Kit Includes:

- SYMBIS DVD (7 sessions)
- Leader's Guide
- Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts
- Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts Workbook for Men
- Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts Workbook for Women



SAVING YOUR SECOND MARRIAGE BEFORE IT STARTS DVD KIT

For the first time, we're providing you with a dedicated kit exclusively for remarriage - including help on blending a family. You'll love the lively seminar and the couple interviews on video. Not to mention the customized workbook exercises that provide helpful homework assignments for your couples.



Kit Includes:

- SYMBIS DVD (9 sessions)
- Leader's Guide
- Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts
- Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts Workbook for Men
- Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts Workbook for Women



NOTES

¹ http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/2006-06-21-pre-marriage-education_x.htm

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