



FOCCUS Factsheet

Information on Pre-Marriage Education

Every couple hopes they'll live
happily ever after.

Only **one** in **four** will.

What makes the difference?



What is the FOCCUS Pre-Marriage Education (PME) Program?

FOCCUS is an acronym for "Facilitated Open Couple Communication Understanding and Study" and is a Pre-Marriage Education program designed to give couples contemplating marriage the skills, insights and understanding into how they can manage their relationship as it develops and grows.

The comprehensive nature of the FOCCUS Pre-Marriage Education (PME) program allows couples to consider their relationship in terms of strengths and potential issues regarding topics such as:

- Lifestyle Expectations;
- Friends and Interests;
- Personality Match;
- Personal Issues;
- Communication;
- Problem Solving;
- Spirituality;
- Parenting;
- Extended Family;
- Sexuality;
- Finances; and
- Readiness.



FOCCUS is a private and confidential program involving just the couple and a facilitator. The facilitator aims for a non-judgemental approach that encourages the couple to take a closer look at their relationship in a comfortable and non-threatening environment.

The program respects the couple's decisions about what areas they want to give more or less focus. In other words, as a couple you have control over how much attention is given to any particular area throughout the session.

The Research on Marriage and Divorce in Australia

The significant increase in life expectancy can mean that marriage vows are now referring to a 60 year commitment to one person, rather than the 30-40 years of the past.

Although the divorce rate has been running at 40% to 50% for the last three decades, research does not suggest that young couples are less committed to marriage as a life-long commitment. There is a body of research to suggest that at least half of young couples embarking on marriage indicate the desire for a life-long commitment as their primary reason for marrying.



In previous times, getting married was largely a matter of social expectation (getting married at a young age, around twenty years old, was simply 'the done thing'). Contemporary couples, however, are most commonly getting married in their late twenties. The reasons they cite for marrying at this later age are connected with waiting for the right time or the right partner.

Although couples generally are directing much effort towards planning their wedding, many do not plan for the marriage itself. The main goal of FOCCUS is to raise awareness of what is entailed in life after marriage and how to maintain healthy long-term relationships.

Co-habiting couples often feel that they know 'what to expect', but nonetheless the divorce rates suggest that they are not any better prepared for the changes and stresses of married and family life.





What are the Benefits of Pre-Marriage Education?

PME has been demonstrated to raise awareness of the strengths and potential issues in marriage. The learning continues after marriage, of course, but pre-marriage preparation provides the opportunity to talk intimately about many different aspects.

Couples completing the program very frequently report that their thinking about some aspect of their relationship has significantly changed for the better.

Couples often find out more about each other and the session facilitator encourages this exploration, especially from the perspective of how it matters to the relationship. The learning often involves gaining insight into how to maintain a healthy, long-term, loving relationship. 'Facilitators' are trained and aware that each couple is unique, and the program is completely open to the many different ways that couples relate well to each other.

Couples completing PME programs report that they are more likely to seek help if issues arise in the course of their marriage.

For many couples, the benefit of the PME experience is described in terms of a heightened awareness of the needs of the relationship going forward into a long-term commitment.

The PME facilitator's knowledge of the research on healthy, long-term relationships often allows a more informed discussion of how the couple's relationship can be developed.



Where can I attend FOCCUS?

You can book and learn more about the FOCCUS program by contacting:

Centacare Rockhampton

10 Bolsover Street
Rockhampton Q 4700

Phone: 07 49 376200 Email: rockhampton@centacare.net Website: www.centacare.net





How much does it cost?

Cost is \$180 per couple for two sessions.

The first session is a questionnaire and the follow up is an analysis and discussion. Each session takes approximately two hours and can be divided over different days or held on the same day.

There are also five special Saturday sessions each year dedicated to the program where you can complete the session in one day.



What have other people said?

We highly recommend Pre-Marriage Education for every couple about to be married. Both of us were a little hesitant at first but by the end of it all we walked out knowing it was all worthwhile. We were amazed to see how much we knew, but also what we didn't know about each other. It gave us a chance to find out what our goals were for life and marriage. Our facilitator Rebecca was awesome she guided us through every question. We had different opinions on some topics but she helped us understand each other's views. She made the experience enjoyable and the environment relaxing. I would not ask for a more professional, honest and caring person to see us on our first steps towards married life. Thank you Centacare and Rebecca for conducting this course it has change our attitude towards each other's needs and what it takes too have a successful and long marriage.

Anonymous, Rockhampton

We were sceptical of the session, as a lot of couples would be, thinking that it would be about all the bad things that can go wrong, and about what the church expects of us - it wasn't. It was enlightening, and a refreshing look into what we thought of each other, and what our perceptions of each other's actions and feelings were. As a young, modern couple, we would recommend giving this a go to every engaged couple. It's not a session about wrongs and rights, more so an insightful memorable experience that is a great precursor to marriage. Thank you so much for sharing it with us.

Anonymous, Rockhampton



The feedback we have received from couples who have completed the PME program at Centacare has consistently been highly positive.

Couples have described their experience of the program as: ‘amazing’, ‘awesome’, ‘enjoyable’, ‘invaluable’, ‘extremely supportive and enriching’, ‘insightful’, ‘memorable’, ‘strengthening’, ‘worthwhile’ and ‘highly recommended’.

Couples also report that the PME experience “really opens your eyes”, “has given us a valuable tool”, “has changed our attitude towards each other’s needs”, and “left us feeling better equipped”.

Some specific benefits couples describe include:

- skills gained in communicating;
- problem solving and managing conflict;
- active listening;
- discovering new ways to regularly ‘connect’;
- learning about specific issues;
- gaining valuable insights into each other as a person; and
- recognising strengths and areas to work on.



The aim of the facilitator is to guide the couple through the program encouraging their love, respect and commitment to one another.

