

Pastoral Round Table Discussion

Royal Oaks Country Club, Vancouver, WA (Feb 3, 2011)

Correlation of the MarriageTeam Program to Identified Issues and Barriers

Issue	MarriageTeam Provides:
Question 2: What are the characteristics of a great resource that you would use?	
Gets below the surface – some training and materials to help couples get to the root problems	Eight chapters of the workbook with exercises that build skills, create individual awareness, and move couples to agreements on the issues they face
Has to be reproducible; As pastors we are called to equip the people	24 hours of coach training and the materials a coach couple needs to be successful
A team of people who are called to do marriage ministry and a team of support for them	MarriageTeam provides on-going support and encouragement to coaches; staff available to coach the coaches; expansion of continuing education is planned
Built on biblical truths with skill development – the issue is how to get couples to want to use these resources	Workbook is filled with biblical references; coaches primary function is to train skills and help the couple apply the skills to get the results they want; coaches share their faith
Modeling for good relationships. This is often missing – people don't know how.	Coaches do model good communication skills and application
Needs to help people know who they are. Has to focus on the individual first so they are healthy and know who they are	ENRICH inventory has a personality component that provides both individual and couple insight; some will require individual counseling and we provide referrals as required
Needs to be real	Testimonials demonstrate the coaching results are real
Must be tailored to get the right couples into the right forum (counseling, coaching, classes, etc.)	Intake process screens for addictions (drug, alcohol, sexual), abuse, mental health issues, and depression. If these are the presenting issues, couples are referred for professional help.
Attracts people to the program – it is cool; people want to participate.	Everyone understanding that teams have coaches and coaches improve performance. It is cool to have a personal life or executive coach.

Issue	MarriageTeam Provides
Takes healthy marriages and makes them stronger really means I need help in my marriage	It may mean that, but even professional athletes have personal coaches so they can continue to improve their performance. Taking a care in for a tune-up does not mean it is a wreck.
Needs to be confidential. Shame is involved that people can't make life work; therefore, they don't come until the situation is desperate	Coaching is confidential and that is spelled out in the agreement that each couple signs; if pastor referred, pastor is told of attendance and general progress, not specifics. Couples know this.
Easy access easy so couples can go directly to get help without having to go through the church	Couples can call MarriageTeam directly.
About half of the represented churches help pay for couples to get help	Cost is \$160 for 8 to 12 2+ hour sessions, the ENRICH inventory, and two workbooks; money back guarantee: if a couple believes they did not get their money's worth from their coaching experience and they put it in writing.
Need to know the counselors view on encouraging divorce	MarriageTeam never encourages divorce.
Check on fee reductions	Couples will not be denied services for financial reasons and are often waived. Fees are very low, less than \$10/hour.
Question 3: What are the barriers to equipping lay couples who want to strengthen and save marriages?	
Time is a huge barrier (pastors and couples)	The 24 hours of coach training, intake and placement services, follow-up with the coaches, evaluation of the results for each couple who completes coaching
Finding couples who are willing to take this on	There are couples in every congregation that want to help other couples but don't know how. If you let people know that there is free training that will equip them, they will self-identify and come forward.

Issue	MarriageTeam Provides
Finding the right couples who will be a good fit	The training process and the ENRICH inventory are tools we use to screen couples. Average couples can be excellent coaches; it does not take a ‘perfect’ marriage to help another couple.
Fear of getting trapped into someone else’s problems	Coach training addresses this and provides exit strategies when they are required. MarriageTeam works with couples to ensure they are not “trapped.”
People feel they are not ‘qualified’ to help others	People are equipped and qualified to help when they complete coach training. Coaches do NOT give advice; they facilitate a process of discovery for the couple and help couples create agreements for change
Fear of liability for representatives from the church doing or saying something that gets the church in trouble	There is not requirement to be licensed to help another couple. MarriageTeam is very upfront about the coaches’ status. Coaches are acting as Good Samaritans and are protected in that regard. Coaches do not give advice, so there is little for which they could be held responsible.
Money, budget to train, trainees finances if they have to pay	Coach training is free. MarriageTeam asks for a free will offering at the end. Ideally, once you trust the process, the church would allocate some of its ‘counseling funds’ to support the ministry
Fear of failure – what will it do to the couple who is trying to help but can’t	Couples are trained not to take a couple’s decisions personally. Coaches volunteer their time, come along side, pray for a couple, and facilitate skill development and application. There is virtually nothing a coach couple can do to make a relationship worse.
Fear of negative publicity if the help fails	Some will decide to divorce, but the successes make up for it. Even professional counselors ‘fail’ occasionally.

Issue	MarriageTeam Provides
Fear that the helping couple will be hurt by the experience	Couples are trained not to take a couple's decisions personally. It is never about the coach couple; it is always about the couples seeking help.
Stigma that "strengthening marriages" really means 'I need help in my marriage'	Even top professional athletes have coaches to help them improve their performance. Why not do the same for your marriage?
Screening of helping couples	The training process and ENRICH inventory are used for screening couples. Furthermore, each couple being coached is asked to evaluate their coaching experience.
On-going support for the helping couples	Telephone support or meeting with coaches is available if the coach requests it.
Couples know how to do spiritual warfare	Coaches are encouraged to pray for their couple being coached and actually invite Jesus into each coaching session to sit at the table with them.
Prayer support for coach couples	MarriageTeam prays for the coaches and the couples being coached.
Question 4: Concerns in partnering with an affordable community, faith-based ministry	
Make sure the values line up and that there aren't any deal breakers	Workbooks are available for a pastor's review. Safety of the family always comes first, sometimes separation may be needed.
Having a common definition of marriage	MarriageTeam works with traditional marriages and couples
Concern the process might be too rigid	Once the couple placement is made with a coach couple, the coaches have latitude to use other resources that have worked for them. MarriageTeam is available for consultation; the one consistent factor is coaches DO NOT give advice, but facilitate the coaching process

Issue	MarriageTeam Provides
Where can the coaches go to get help	Call MarriageTeam. Talking with the pastor about specifics could impact the confidentiality agreement depending upon the understanding with the couple.
Pastor's faith in the referral; relationships are key	Relationships are key; we welcome the opportunity to meet with pastors to answer all questions and address concerns. We have a long list of testimonials.
Not having enough coaches to meet the need	At times, there has been a short waiting list, but that is not normally the case (less than 10% of the time). A waiting list means we need to recruit more coaches, which we do continually.
Afraid the organization isn't good enough	On average, couples rate their coaching experience at 9.1 on a scale of 1 to 10. Couples really like their coaches. Distressed couples who complete the coaching program report an average 180% improvement in their relationship.
Understanding the ministry's approach and how they work with the pastor	Placing a couple with a coach couple in a pastor's congregation if the pastor requests it; confidentiality extended for pastor referred couples to letting the pastor know the couple is attending and degree of progress.

The pastor's round table had 16 participating pastors from Portland and Vancouver that addressed the four questions identified here. If you have any questions or would like further clarification, please call 360 450-4131 or email al@marriageteam.org/