

Premarital Counseling– The Pros and Cons



By Laura Seldon for GalTime.com

You likely test-drove several vehicles before buying your last car, read every tech blog possible to see which smartphone was best for you and even texted a few dressing-room pics of yourself to a friend before buying that cute maxi dress. As an educated, modern woman, you know researching your options and getting a few opinions can be a good thing. So, why are we so afraid to get a little help when it comes to our relationships?!

Couples therapy, relationship coaching, premarital counseling – most people would agree these are all great ways to help

your relationship grow and thrive. And yet, no one is ever excited about going to see their therapist. Is this reluctance to premarital counseling due to a fear of admitting our lives aren't "perfect?" Or do we just think it's a waste of time? Read on to get the pros and cons of premarital counseling from therapists, counselors and family-law experts who outta know!

The Pros of Premarital Counseling

1. You Can Talk Out Problems... Before It's Too Late

Premarital counseling is a chance for couples to dig up any potential pitfalls that could hinder their marriage from lasting a lifetime. "It causes people to consider and discuss things that will increase the likelihood of a successful marriage," says Mark Baer, a family-law attorney.

Money issues, anger problems, jealous tendencies; premarital counseling can help you and your partner get any potential issues out in the open now so that you're not shocked by them nine months into your marriage.

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2. You Get an Outside Opinion

So, you're about to get married and you're pretty sure you and your mate have the best possible relationship you've ever come across – minus the passionately heated shouting match you had this morning over who was the last person to take out the trash. Going to premarital counseling can give you an outside perspective on your relationship, and how to make it last.

"Couples considering marriage would benefit from having a licensed marriage and family therapist's wise and trained eye to talk to them honestly," says Becky Whetstone, Ph.D., LMFT. "MFT's know to look into each person's beliefs and values concerning money, child-raising, spirituality, individuality,

partnership, marriage in general and more. If we see an emotionally immature or incompatible couple heading for a marital train wreck, we'll tell them."

3. It Can Strengthen Your Bond

New flash: many of us were not born with stellar communication skills. Do you ever get mad at your partner and then refrain from telling them you're angry – let alone explaining why you're angry? Healthy relationships are based on open and honest communication, and premarital counseling can help you learn those skills.

"People are not born with good communication skills and most people never learn such skills," says Baer. "Since most marriages fail due to communication issues, I would say that this is an excellent reason to participate in premarital counseling."

The Cons of Premarital Counseling

1. It Can Create Bigger Problems

What if your premarital counseling actually creates more problems between you and your mate than you had before you even stepped into your therapist's office?

"Premarital counseling has the potential of creating problems, in that it causes people to think about and discuss issues they may never have considered," says Baer. "While this can be viewed as a con, I would propose that it is also a pro because it forces the discussion before marriage, as opposed to after marriage. Why not be preventative and not reactive?"

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2. The Counseling May Not Be That Good

“As with anything, some marriage counselors are better than others,” advises Baer. “If a couple goes to a marriage counselor, who is not particularly skilled at conflict resolution, what happens if the couple argue over an issue raised in the counseling?”

Just like buying a car requires you to take a few different vehicles for a test drive, you have to do your research when it comes to finding a therapist, or you may wind up working with someone who hinders your relationship more than they help it! A skilled marriage counselor should be well aware of the issues that tend to cause divorce and should also be skilled at properly addressing those issues!

3. You May Wind Up Calling Off Your Wedding

If seeing a therapist brings up major issues for you and your partner, it could turn into an argument that ends with you calling off your engagement. While this is not ideal, it can also save you from marrying someone who is not right for you and it can also save you from the heartbreak of divorce.

While there are a few potential cons to premarital counseling, the positives far outweigh the negatives. Couples therapy is a great way for engaged couples to discuss major issues in their relationship before saying “I do” for a lifetime. Nothing can guarantee a successful marriage, but premarital counseling can help you figure out what it takes to ensure your marriage will thrive!