

***Essentials of Premarital Counseling***

Sandra L. Ceren, PhD

Loving Healing Press (2008)

ISBN 9781932690668

Reviewed by Richard R. Blake for Reader Views (7/08)

“Essential Premarital Counseling” is the seventh book in the New Horizons in Therapy Series published by Loving Healing Press. Dr. Sandra L. Ceren presents a complete ten session premarital program with case studies for discussion, and suggested resolutions. The program uses a proactive group approach with opportunity for extended sessions for individual counseling when needed.

The material in the book includes material for an intake interview, thought-provoking and probing self-examination questions with follow-up discussion suggestions. Dr. Ceren also provides a tool for personality testing and a relationship quiz. Conflict resolution training is an essential part of the subject matter of the program and provides instructions for the practitioner.

Role playing is another important part of the program. Challenging situations and scenarios are given to the participants based on material covered in earlier sessions. These role plays are followed up with suggested conflict resolutions and provide insight for impending warning signs in a premarital relationship.

The case studies dealing with personality disorders and doomed relationships are especially significant in building a long-term relationship resulting in marriage. I particularly appreciated the case studies with illustrated key and lasting, inflexible personality basics that form patterns not easily broken.

These personality characteristics hold back social and career performance and need to be considered in decisions of the magnitude of marriage. Ceren also noted the importance of values, goals, interests, and hobbies in a relationship. The case studies include numerous unresolved conflicts with suggested solutions.

The premarital questionnaire provided in the appendix is an exceptional tool for the couple considering marriage and for use in evaluation and counseling by the therapist. The recommended resource list is comprehensive and includes books--both fiction and non-fiction, as well as suggested cinematherapy.

This hands-on guide is an excellent program resource for clinical practitioners, marriage and family therapists, premarital counselors, and trained lay counselors. “Essential Premarital Counseling” by Dr. Sandra L. Ceren has received high acclaim from leaders in the field of premarital counseling.