

**Couples Counseling Initial Intake Form**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Partner:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Relationship Status:** (check all that apply)

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married   | <input type="checkbox"/> Cohabiting      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Separated | <input type="checkbox"/> Living together |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced  | <input type="checkbox"/> Living apart    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dating    |  |

**Length of time in current relationship:** \_\_\_\_\_

**As you think about the primary reason that brings you here, how would you rate its frequency and your overall level of concern at this point in time?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b><i>Concern</i></b>                         | <b><i>Frequency</i></b>                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No concern           | <input type="checkbox"/> No occurrence        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Little concern       | <input type="checkbox"/> Occurs rarely        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern     | <input type="checkbox"/> Occurs sometimes     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serious concern      | <input type="checkbox"/> Occurs frequently    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very serious concern | <input type="checkbox"/> Occurs nearly always |

**What do you hope to accomplish through counseling?**

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**What have you already done to deal with the difficulties?**

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**What are your biggest strengths as a couple?**

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## ATTACHMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Research on attachment in couple relationships has shown that in order to build a secure bond in marriage, partners need to demonstrate accessibility and responsiveness that leads to engagement.

**Accessibility** can be simply defined as, 'I can find you, you are available to me.' Accessibility requires frequent physical proximity and emotional availability. Common, modern threats to accessibility include physical separation from a partner (work, church, kids, travel, hobbies) and a multitude of distractions (technology, screen time) that prevent emotional presence. In the case of the couple mentioned previously, they were often in the same house, but in separate rooms working on a laptop or watching TV or reading a book. Accessibility means I can find you and approach you. A lack of accessibility prevents connection. Problems related to accessibility can often be resolved by making concrete changes in our schedule and habits to be more present, physically and emotionally.

**Responsiveness** means when you approach me, I respond with emotional attentiveness. It means I look at you, hear you, feel you, and respond in loving and affirming ways. Again, one of the greatest threats to responsiveness is technology-based distractions. It is astounding to me how many students and even adult friends or colleagues are in the habit of not-responding, to phone calls, texts, e-mails and even face-to-face communication. It has become common to say, "I heard you" or "I got your message, but did not respond." In marriage, this is dangerous because it communicates to a partner, "you are not important," and, "I care about other things more than you." Non-responsiveness erodes trust and connection. Problems related to responsiveness can often be resolved by "unplugging" the distractions that prevent us from looking into our partner's eyes and reaching out to them.

**Engagement** means that when you are accessible and sincerely try to respond to my needs, we connect. This type of connection, built over time, forges a safe haven and secure base in marriage and brings a sweetness, peace, and strength which is unique and powerful among human relationships. Common threats to engagement, beyond a lack of accessibility and responsiveness, are often skill-based. For example, I can be accessible and sincerely responsive, but when my wife comes to me in tears about an insecurity or fear, I may give advice instead of validating and reassuring her worth and value. This

advice giving can block engagement. A consistent lack of engagement fosters isolation and disconnection. Problems related to engagement (when A. and R. are present) can often be resolved by simply learning new and more effective ways to communicate love and support to our spouse.

A quick A.R.E. tune up conversation can be prompted by the following brief 12 item questionnaire. I urge you to take a few minutes to answer the questions then discuss how you can improve as a couple. Remember, the peace, love and joy that come from experiencing a safe haven and secure base in marriage is worth the effort.

Please circle the number that best represents your experiences in your current relationship with your partner.

1= *Never True* 2- *Rarely True* 3= *Sometimes True* 4= *Usually True* 5- *A/ways True*

#### Accessibility

1. I am rarely available to my partner.

1 2 3 4 5

2. It is hard for my partner to get my attention.

1 2 3 4 5

#### Responsiveness

3. I listen when my partner shares her/his deepest feelings.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I am confident I reach out to my partner

1 2 3 4 5

#### Engagement

5. It is hard for me to confide in my partner.

1 2 3 4 5

6. I struggle to feel close and engaged in our relationship.

1 2 3 4 5

#### Partner's Accessibility

7. My partner is rarely available to me.

1 2 3 4 5

8. It is hard for me to get my partner's attention.

1 2 3 4 5

#### Partner's Responsiveness

9. My partner listens when I share my deepest feelings.

1 2 3 4 5

10. I am confident my partner reaches out to me.

1 2 3 4 5

## Partner's Engagement

11. It is hard for my partner to confide in me.

1   2   3   4   5

12. My partner struggles to feel close and engaged in our relationship.

1   2   3   4   5

For additional reading see

Sue Johnson. (2008). *Hold Me Tight: Seven conversations for a lifetime of love*. Little Brown Books: NY.

Sandberg\*, J. &, Busby\*, D.M., Johnson, S.M., & Yoshida, K. (In Press). The brief accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement (BARE) scale: A tool for measuring attachment behavior in couple relationships. In press, *Family Process* . \*equal authorship