

Despite facilitators' challenges with managing group self-disclosure, minority participants value the sharing and self-disclosure from other participants.

Brief provided by Texas Tech University and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

Participants and group facilitators in Texas marital education programs share their experiences.

Summary

Researchers conducted interviews and focus groups with participants and group facilitators of a variety of Marriage and Relationship Education (MRE) venues throughout the state of Texas. All groups used the *Within My Reach* or *Within Our Reach (PREP)* programs. Findings from the interviews are presented below.

- Participants reported that the MRE facilitators played a key role in both disseminating the information and creating a fun environment conducive to learning.
- Creating both a fun and interactive learning environment was paramount to the success of the group.
- Participants reported learning specific skills that they could identify by name (i.e., speaker-listener technique).
- Strong praise came from both participants and the educators for the PREP-based programs who indicated that the curriculum was “strong, particularly in enhancing communication, listening, and problem solving skills.”
- Some educators reported feeling challenged and even uncomfortable in managing the level of sharing and self-disclosure among the couples. However, both African-American and Hispanic participants

reported that the high level of sharing and self-disclosure from other participants contributed to them feeling more comfortable and accepted within the group.

- The open sharing by the participants fostered a level of camaraderie that created an “existing community” out of individuals who did not previously know each other.



The majority of the participants reported being committed to the success of their relationships prior to attending the program. They also indicated that the program met their expectations for strengthening their relationships. These particular curricula seem well suited for couples who are committed to their relationship but are seeking to enhance the quality of the relationship.

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