

Strong Foundations



Strong Foundations at Family Matters York aims to support any committed couple considering marriage, civil partnership or long-term commitment, and wishing to build a strong and lasting relationship. It offers couples the opportunity to meet with an experienced volunteer Support Couple to work through The Pre-Marriage Sessions, a four-session marriage preparation course from national charity Care for the Family. The course seeks to equip couples with tools to build deep foundations for a lifetime together.

The four sessions cover the following topics:

- Embark – planning your future together
- Engage – choosing to communicate well
- Exchange – handling conflict positively
- Endeavour – sticking together, come what may

The course also offers an additional bolt-on session exploring remarriage and blended families.

Practical arrangements

If we agree after the initial assessment that our service is a good fit for you, I will match you with a Support Couple and they will get in touch to arrange your first session. In the first session there will be a short time at the beginning to get to know each other a little before starting on the session material. There are four sessions in total with an optional bolt-on session as mentioned above.

The sessions should last no longer than 2 hours and be held in a quiet, private space, free from interruption. Most couples meet in the home of their Support Couple.

Some of the material may evoke an emotional response. If this applies to you, please take care of yourself. If necessary, you can take a short break during the session, however please be aware that the time available is limited.

If for any reason your Support Couple is unable to continue, FMY will place you with another Support Couple as soon as possible.

At the end of your final session your Support Couple will ask you to complete a questionnaire. Your responses will be anonymous and will be returned to the Relationship Support Lead for evaluation purposes. Six months after that, we will arrange to meet you both to complete our final questionnaire. Please do complete all our evaluation questionnaires. We need your feedback to ensure the quality of our service and to help us apply for more funding.

Donations

We do not ask for payment for our services because we want our support to be accessible to all. However, we rely on external funding and donations to sustain our work and are grateful for any contributions, large or small!

£30 donation would pay for one session of Pre-Marriage Support.

£120 donation would meet the cost of the full Pre-Marriage Course.

You can donate via the QR code or by visiting: <https://fmy.org.uk/donate/>



Limitations of our service

Please be aware that relationship support is not suitable for couples where there is any form of domestic abuse. Please seek support from IDAS (tel. 0300 110 110), or the National Domestic Violence helpline (open 24 hours every day; tel. 0808 2000 247). Relationship support is also not suitable for people who may be at risk of harm to themselves, or others, or who are currently receiving treatment or therapy for a severe mental health condition. Details of counselling organisations can be found on our website here: <https://fmy.org.uk/resources/other-services-referrals/>

We will also refuse to provide services to anyone attending sessions under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Data, Confidentiality and Safeguarding

To support you through our Strong Foundations course we process some personal data about you. More information about what we keep, why and how we store it can be found in our Data Privacy Notice at the foot of our Home Page on our website here: <https://fmy.org.uk/>

Please ask if you would like a copy of this.

You can choose what you disclose to your Support Couple; they will respect your confidentiality. Likewise, please keep confidential anything your Support Couple shares with you about their relationship.

Your Support Couple may make brief notes after sessions, which are kept securely and destroyed at the end of your sessions. Notes remain the property of FMY but can be viewed by request.

The Support Couple may discuss aspects of your case, anonymously, during their own supervision sessions to ensure you receive the best support possible.

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for the Support Couple to break confidentiality. For example, we may need to take action and/or share information if we felt you were in danger, or if you were a danger to yourself and others, or if we became aware of children being at risk of harm. Wherever possible in such cases, we would seek to inform you first. Equally, if you have any concerns about your experiences with the Support Couple, please contact the Relationship Support Lead (see Contacts).

Our expectations of you

Commitment to the course and to your relationship.

Both partners need to be willing to engage with the course and with each other. You will need to be comfortable discussing different elements of your future together, facilitated by a Support Couple.

Value your Support Couple's time

The Strong Foundations course is run by committed volunteer Support Couples who spend time preparing for your sessions and possess great skill and empathy. We value their time greatly and we would appreciate if you would do the same.

Engage with the discussion questions and activities

Our Support Couple will ask you questions and will facilitate discussion between you. Try to be open and honest with your partner. You only need share to the level you feel comfortable and your Support Couple are there to encourage and support, not judge you.

Homework

Your Support Couple may give you small pieces of 'homework' to complete between the sessions or things to reflect on in relation to the material covered. Please make sure you are both committed to prioritising time for this.

Cancellations

Please prioritise your time with your Support Couple and make every effort to attend each session. We understand there may be times when you need to rearrange a date because of unforeseen circumstances like illness, bereavement or unexpected difficulties. If you need to rearrange, please try to give at least 24 hours' notice to your Support Couple and reschedule as soon as possible. We aim for you to complete your Strong Foundations course within 8-10 weeks. If a session is missed without good reason or warning, we may need to consider withdrawing further sessions. While we want to support you and do what we can to meet your needs, we also want to ensure that the time and effort invested by our volunteer Support Couples is valued.

Childcare

If you have children, please arrange appropriate childcare for your sessions so that you can focus on the time with your Support Couple without distraction.

Contacts



If you have any questions or concerns please do get in touch.

Emma Marshall
Relationship Support Lead
emmamarshall@fmy.org.uk
07491 910239

Kath Weston
Charity Manager
kathweston@fmy.org.uk

OTHER SERVICES & REFERRALS



TOUCAN TOGETHER

Toucan Together is a relationships app that helps you learn about each other and work towards relationship goals.



The Pre-Marriage Course is a pre marriage course available online and in person, designed by Holy Trinity Brompton Church, London. It is run over five sessions and is for any couple considering marriage, whether they are engaged or not.

familylife

Family Life is a charity that supports couples with events, talks and blogs about relationships.



Care for the Family offer a range of courses, events, podcasts and articles on couple relationships.

