

Couple: Suzanne and Robert Normal  
Assessment made by: Nicole Scott and Susan George  
Date: March 6, 2015

### **Personal History**

Robert and Suzanne are a Caucasian married couple with two children. They discovered the HOPE Couples Project through a flyer at their church. Robert and Suzanne are co-owners of their business. Their plan is to phase Robert out of the business over the next several months so that he may pursue his career interests. They sought couple's counseling to address the stress in their relationship and to better understand each other. The couple identifies as spiritual and would like to integrate their Christian faith into therapy.

### **Relationship History**

Robert and Suzanne were in the same band class in high school. After graduation, they both attended the University of State. Robert and Suzanne had the same circle of friends. After two of their mutual friends started dating, Suzanne learned that Robert had feelings for her. Their dating relationship began. Two years later, Suzanne moved to Texas to begin school. Several years later, Robert relocated to NewCity for an internship. During these years, they were dating "on and off" as the distance was difficult for them. Finally, Robert joined Suzanne. A year later they were married.

**Overall Dyadic Adjustment  
(RDAS):**  
Suzanne = 46, Some concerns  
Robert = 44, some concerns

### **Relationship Concerns**

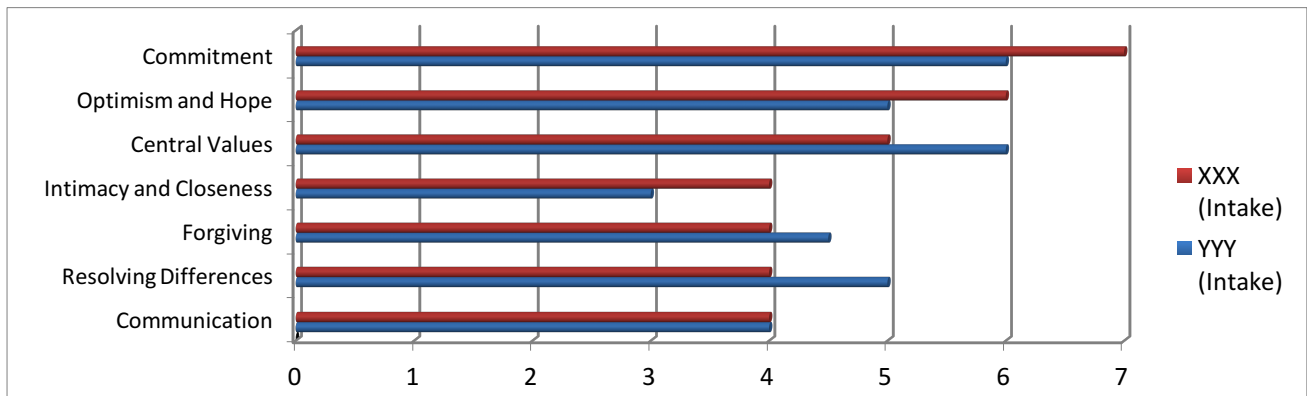
You expressed a mutual desire to improve communication and understanding of each other as well as to improve your intimacy. You both noticed that when life becomes stressful, especially in the area of finances or parenting, there is greater tension and frustration, which is evidenced by a significant increase in verbal arguments. You shared that you enjoy each other's company, have fun, and relish time with each other. However, when life becomes hectic or strained, the amount of quality time you spend with each other diminishes.

Robert is particularly worried about the course of your relationship. He witnessed his father's infidelity and how it affected his parent's marriage. Furthermore, he is concerned about your relationship becoming stagnant and taking the same route. Robert and Suzanne reported that your marriage is in "survival mode" at the present time. You hope counseling at this time would be a preventative measure to strengthen your relationship and to build a healthy, vibrant marriage.

You both expressed concerns over your families of origin. Suzanne's father has very rigid beliefs and values, which often conflict with your family vision. Robert's family lives close by and occasionally oversteps boundaries. In addition, although you both were raised in Christian homes, you were raised with many differences. Your diverse upbringing affects your parenting styles especially, which conflicts at times.

### Your Relationship Assessment

The Hope assessment tools also look at 7 major areas of relationships to see where the main concerns are in your relationship. This is what your tests were indicating overall:



Overall your relationship is fairly similar to other couples that seek couples counseling. You are happy with your relationship often, and see areas of strength. The main concern appears to be in the area of intimacy. The scores in this area were the lowest for both of you. Cultivating intimacy can be addressed in therapy as well as provide you with tools to engender closeness in your relationship.

In addition, Robert and Suzanne, you expressed a desire to grow in the area of communication. Regarding communication, you sometimes have difficulty in taking each other's perspective and conveying your thoughts as well as taking the time to carefully listen to your partner. This area is particularly exacerbated with discussions that surround the business, especially finances. Understanding each other's perspective and finding ways to express your thoughts that creates mutual respect and trust can also be addressed in therapy.

### Relationship Strengths

Robert and Suzanne, your relationship has many strengths including commitment, optimism and hope, showing compassion, and being aware and attuned to each other. Moreover, despite all of

the stressors and demands on your time and energy in this phase of your life, there is a strong, deep love between you. You should be proud of this! You are committed to your relationship and to building a strong foundation for your future. You both recognize that it is important to work on improving communication and intimacy. Your willingness to enter into therapy is a very positive sign that you have hope for your future and that you are ready to grow in closeness together.

Therapy is a place where you are free and safe to verbalize and explain your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in order to see your relationship grow. If you show humility and insight into your own behavior as well as into your interactions, you will be on your way to developing a full “toolbox” of ways to handle conflicts, improve communication, and maintain happiness throughout your lifetimes.

**Pathways to Change: Faith, Work and Love**

The good news is that your relationship can change. There are 3 pathways to change your relationship that we will work on through various exercises and skills.

	<b>Love: being willing to value and refusing to devalue each other</b>
	<b>Faith: trust in each other and in your ability to resolve differences in mutually satisfying ways</b>
	<b>Work: putting energy into maintaining and improving your relationship</b>

The communication, intimacy, and conflict resolution issues can improve with new experiences, skills, and insights. These things can be learned and used in your relationship when difficult situations arise. We will be working on developing and maintaining healthy patterns so that your relationship will continue to grow in your love for each other.

**The Work:** Robert and Suzanne, we ask that you focus *one work week* (**about 40 hours**) on your relationship while participating in this program in the next 8-10 weeks. That will be about 12-15 hours of counseling (90 minute sessions) and another 25-30 hours of spending positive “homework” time together focused on growing and improving your relationship.

**Your Goals:** You have identified some goals for resolving your marriage difficulties. When asked how you would know if the marriage improved, you agreed that your marriage would be better if you could better understand and relate to one another. You both identified conflict resolution, as well as communication as areas you would like to strengthen as well. The Hope program will focus on helping you find direction for your marriage and ways to invest deeper in



*Faith Work Love* your relationship. All of the experiences and skills shared in counseling can strengthen your relationship and take it to the next level in meaning and intimacy.

**Summary**

Robert and Suzanne, it seems like you are both willing to work to improve your relationship. You have several strengths including your commitment, hope, and a strong love for each other. Although there are some areas of improvement in your marriage, they can be improved upon and restored if you are willing to work on your relationship. We believe you both ultimately want a happier marriage and sense that you are equally willing to make that happen.

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**Hope Therapists:    Nicole Scott                      Susan George                      Date**

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**Jennifer S. Ripley, Ph.D., Director of the Hope Project                      Date**



*Faith Work Love*

**Tentative Treatment Plan for Robert and Suzanne**

This is a tentative plan for couples counseling. It may change due to your needs as a couple, or if obstacles are faced which require more time.

03/06/15	Intake	Intake and Assessment
03/20/15	Session 1	Feedback and Time Out and Cool Down Contract
03/27/15	Session 2	Our Communication Rules
04/03/15	Session 3	Preventing Hurts Through Soft Start-Up
04/10/15	Session 4	Grace
04/17/15	Session 5	Increasing Positive Emotions Through Gratitude
04/24/15	Session 6	Seven Tips for a Good Apology
05/01/15	Session 7	Narrative of a Better Future
05/15/15	Session 8	Termination & Joshua Memorial

Note: Hope Project will be closed 05/04/15 to 05/08/15 due to Semester Break.

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**Nicole Scott, Hope Therapist** **Date**

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**Susan George, Hope Therapist** **Date**

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**Jennifer S. Ripley, Ph.D., Supervisor** **Date**

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**Robert** **Date**

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**Suzanne** **Date**



*Faith Work Love*  
The Supervision Communication Sheet for Hope Intakes- FOR CLINICIANS AND SUPERVISORS ONLY. **DO NOT GIVE THIS TO THE COUPLE**

Overall RDAS Scores: Male \_\_\_44\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_46\_\_\_ (48 clinical cut off)

**Please write a description of any concerns or ideas about what is going on with this case, any reasoning for your treatment plan, any red flags, etc.**

Robert and Suzanne's primary concerns are communication and intimacy. They reported having a difficult winter from November to January. They were experiencing a significant increase in stress in regard to their business and finances. As a result, it appears they had more intense arguments that occurred more frequently. At times, one of them would leave the home. Sometimes the topic would be brought back up and resolved, but many times it was not. Robert and Suzanne have two young children and reported not wanting to expose their children to their arguing.

Robert, especially, feels as though the stress and time consuming nature of the business will continue and wonders if they will ever get out of survival mode if they do not make changes. During his individual intake, Robert reported struggling with resentment. He seems to desire for Suzanne to make their relationship and family more of a priority over the business and to have stronger boundaries in that regard. Robert decided to step away from the business while participating in individual counseling from June to November 2013. He would like to find something that is fulfilling and purposeful for him as an individual. During her individual intake, Suzanne reported a tendency to be dominating. She described having a fear that she will not get the opportunity to say what she needs to say, so how she approaches difficult topics is perceived as manipulating by Robert.