

Speaker Notes

Principles for Healthy Relationships and Marriages

Page 1 – Title Slide

None

Page 2 – Objectives

None

Page 3 – Agenda

None

Page 4 – Origins of Our Attitudes Toward Relationships

- Example 1: If you observed your parents as being “two lovebirds” who never had any disagreements, then you might expect you should never have conflicts with your partner. This is not realistic but it is definitely a part of your history and expectations for a relationship.
- Example 2: Another person may have witnessed his parent’s physically attacking one another. His expectation may be that relationships can be out of control and violent. Because of this, he may avoid intimate relationships.

Page 5 – What Makes a Healthy Marriage?

- Mutual respect and acceptance of each other despite differences.
- Trust: Believe the other person and his or her trustworthiness and truthfulness. Don’t allow trust issues from past relationships to interfere with current relationship.
- Fairness/Equality: Practice give and take. Allow your partner to have equal say and participation in decisions and responsibilities.
- Separate identities: Have separate interests and habits. Don’t give up yourself and who you are in order to be in a relationship. Practice self-care in addition to care of the other person. Take time for yourself.
- Good communication: Practice active listening; reflect back to the other person what you hear them say. Be attentive to what is said. Clarify understanding. Listen for feelings being communicated. Notice body language. Avoid mental rehearsal of your response while the other person is talking. Use “I” messages when you do respond.
- Understanding conflict is normal: Don’t expect that you will never have conflict. There is conflict in a healthy marriage. The key is in how you handle the conflict.
- Positive self-esteem: We will discuss the importance of positive self-esteem in the following slides.

Page 6 – The Importance of Positive Self-Esteem

- It is much easier to be in a relationship when you feel good about yourself.
- People who have a low self esteem tend to have a harder time seeing their relationships clearly.
- Enhances communication skills and decreases resentment: When one spouse's self-esteem is damaged, that person can begin to internalize and personalize issues. Over time, resentment builds for the other spouse. This is due largely to not being comfortable communicating about these issues. When partners stop talking to each other and one begins personalizing problems, both spouses can often develop a lingering resentment for the other person.

- Helps maintain identity: Too often people lose their identities when they get involved with someone. Being in a close and strong relationship means recognizing separateness and having time to pursue interests that make up your own identity and to maintain friendships outside the relationship.
- Decreases likelihood of conflicts and enhances problem solving skills: You'll be more likely to find positive solutions to problems. Self-esteem helps to enter negotiations/conflicts from a more objective point of view rather than a defensive one.

Page 7 – Stages of Marriage

- Romantic Love: At no other time in your relationship is your feeling of well-being and physical desire for each other as intense as it is during this romantic period. The newness and excitement of the relationship stimulates the production of chemicals in your bodies that increase energy and positive attitudes while heightening sexuality and sensuality.
- Disillusionment: Reality sets in; the little things start to bother you. You realize that your spouse has stinky breath in the morning, spends way too long on the toilet, leaves magazines and letters strewn on the kitchen counter, never wraps food properly before it's put in the refrigerator, and—to top things off—snores.
- The power struggle: In this stage of marriage, most people believe that there are two ways of looking at things—your spouse's way and your way (also known as the Right Way). Rather than brainstorm creative solutions, couples often battle to get their partners to admit they are wrong.
- Acceptance and Cooperation: In this stage, we finally come to terms with the fact that we are never going to see eye to eye with our partners about everything, and we have to figure out what we must do to live more peaceably. We slowly accept that no amount of reasoning, begging, nagging, yelling, or threatening changes our partner's mind.
- Transformation: During times of conflict, we may look to others for suggestions (seek religious counsel, talk to close friends and family, read self-help books, or take a relationship seminar). Those who are more private look inward and seek solutions there.

Page 8 – Writing a Love Letter

- Words express things that are sometimes hard to verbalize. Some people find it awkward to state what they feel. A letter or note can express what you can't say. It also gives your partner something tangible they can look at again and again as a reminder of your love and affection.
- You don't have to write a long letter; a simple "I love you." can speak volumes. You can even write your note on a Post-It note and stick it on the bathroom mirror or on the rearview mirror.
- Share the things you have in common and how your relationship has added meaning to your life.
- Be expressive and use details to tell this person what makes him or her so special.
- Explain how you miss this person when you are apart.
- You may want to include a quote from a famous person or from someone this person loves. Include a poem if that appeals to you.
- You may want to include a sprinkling of foil hearts, a little glitter, or the scent of cologne or fragrance—whatever you think your partner may enjoy and appreciate.
- Deliver your letter or note in person or leave it for the person to find unexpectedly.

Page 9 – Dating Each Other

- Why dating is helpful:
 - One reason to make a date with you spouse is because it's fun! Everyone deserves to have fun and take a break from routines.
 - Doing enjoyable things together gives you energy to tackle your responsibilities.
 - Every time you do something fun with your spouse, you strengthen your relationship.
- Set a weekly date night: This gets you into a routine of taking time for yourselves. When you make a consistent time commitment, you are sending a message to your partner that you are invested in reigniting the intimacy and passion and making the marriage work
- Plan ahead: It's best to have a plan so that you don't spend your date night figuring out what to do. Think in terms of planning as you did on the first few dates.
- Arrange for childcare: If you have children, find a reliable babysitter or childcare center, or exchange babysitting duties with another couple or several couples. If you don't have childcare, rent a movie after the kids go to bed, or have a special dinner or dessert with candlelight.
- Pay attention to your appearance: Appearances do count. Being well groomed and wearing something nice that you feel good in shows that you care about your partner.

Page 10 – Tools for a Healthy Relationship

- Practice good communication:
 - Take the time to genuinely listen
 - Use active listening; reflect back to the other person what you hear them say.
 - Use "I" statements [NOTE: Give an example.]
 - Listen with your heart and speak from your heart
 - Ask questions
 - Share information with each other
 - Negotiate a time to talk about it
 - Stick to the topic—only one topic at a time
 - Deal with conflict at a non-conflict time
- Own your messages: Take responsibility for your statements and behaviors – don't blame your partner for your reactions.
- Deal with conflict at a non-conflict time: When there is a strong conflict and heated discussion, you will have a much more productive discussion if you take time to cool off and approach the subject when both of you are calm.
- Keep expectations realistic. No one can be everything we might want him or her to be. Accept people as they are; don't try to change them.

Page 11 – Summary

None

Page 12 – Questions

None

Page 13 – Thank You

None