The Link between Healthy Couple Relationships, Parenting, and Child Abuse Prevention

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Objectives

- Define the elements of healthy couple relationships that professionals can teach in order to facilitate positive parenting and child well-being.

- Illustrate how these research-informed principles and skills align with the protective factors outlined by Strengthening Families Georgia.

- Share resources to support the healthy relationship education.
40% of female-headed households with children under the age of 18 lived in poverty compared to only 9% of married-couple families. Single-parent families have almost double the risk of child abuse. 36.3% of child abuse victims in GA had caregivers who were victims or perpetrators of domestic violence. Over 80% of child victims are abused by a parent alone or both parents together. Compared to children living with married biological parents, those whose single parent had a live-in partner had more than 8 times the rate of maltreatment, over 10 times the rate of abuse, and nearly 8 times the rate of neglect.
Why does the couple relationship matter?

Couple and co-parenting relationships impact children’s safety and well-being:

- Couple Functioning
- Parenting
- Child Outcomes
What is RME?

Teaching principles and skills to develop and sustain healthy couple relationships.
The National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Model

- Research-informed
- Theoretically-grounded
- Strengths-based
- Culturally appropriate
- Developmentally relevant
- Process oriented
- “Do no harm” approach
CARE FOR SELF

- Physical
- Emotional/Mental
- Spiritual
- Relational
- Sexual
What equipment is necessary when going on a rafting trip?
Make Your Relationship a Priority

If couples are not continually doing things to hold on to each other, they will naturally drift apart.
KNOW

INTIMACY: IN-TO-ME-YOU-SEE
The information you store about your partner’s dreams, joys, fears, likes, and dislikes, etc.

Happy couples know about each other’s worlds and they regularly seek updates about each other.
CARE
Maintain Positivity In Your Relationship

Make deposits into the love bank!

People that have lots of positives in their relationship handle the negative better.
CARE
Crabby Reaction OR Caring Action?

Crabby Reaction?

Loving Action

Crabby Reaction?
SHARE
Building Friendship

✓ Spend meaningful time together
✓ Build couple identity
✓ Nurture positive interactions
SHARE
It’s not only WHAT you say, but HOW you say it!

Dude!
SHARE
Filters get in the way of communicating...

Emotional states
Beliefs and expectations

Differences in style
Distractions
Unhelpful Messages

Turning Away
Ignoring your partner’s bid or continuing what you were doing.

Turning Against
“Can’t you see I’m busy right now?”
Our capacity to manage conflict is shaped by past and present experiences.
MANAGE
How We Respond to Threats

How would you respond?
MANAGE
Anger (Mis) Management

Physical/Verbal Anger

Passive Anger

Suppressed Anger
MANAGE
Find your calm, then carry on!
MANAGE
Apply the Brakes

Common Ground
“We can tackle this together.”
“I see what you mean.”
“I see your point.”
“We are both saying the same thing.”
“I know this isn’t your fault.”
“Let’s compromise.”

Apologize
“I didn’t mean that.”
“Can I take that back?”
“Let me try again.”
“I didn’t think of that.”
“Forgive me.”
CONNECT
Engage in a support network!
Promoting healthy couple relationships is consistent with the five research-based protective factors that build family strengths and a family environment that promotes optimal child and youth development:

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children
• Communicating research-based principles that matter to couple relationships.

• Selecting appropriate teaching curricula.

• Developing resources.

• Designing and implementing programs.

• [Website Link](www.nermen.org)
Resource
Professional Training

Original funded by the Administration on Children, Youth and Families Children’s Bureau.

Resources:
- 8 video training modules,
- 11 research briefs,
- 53 tip sheets and worksheets

Five trainings scheduled across GA in 2015!
Learn more at www.gamarriages.org
Resource
Couples Education Curriculum

Empower Yourself
Lay the Foundation
Enlighten
Value
Attach
Tame
Engage

Elevate
• UGA Extension will pilot the Couple and Relationship Education (CARE) for Foster Parents program Fall 2015!

Learn more at http://www.fcs.uga.edu/hdfs/care-lab
Resource
University of Georgia Extension

- Training
- Consultation
- Online resources
- Local programming

www.gamarriages.org