Weathering Relationships through the Economic Crisis
March 25, 2009  ❖  12:30 pm-2:00pm (EST)

Presenters:

William Bailey, University of Arkansas
Selena Webb Ebo, Center for Self-Sufficiency
Brent Orrell, ICF International
Patrick Patterson, National Healthy Marriage Resource Center
Learning objectives:

• To understand how severe economic stress affects couple relationships and children
• To learn strategies Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood educators can use to help couples cope with the stress that economic strains are placing on their relationships with their partners and with their children
• To learn how Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood program providers can coordinate with the Workforce Investment Act to offer their economically distressed clients job and other financial services support.
MARRIAGE AND FINANCIAL DISTRESS: A TEACHABLE MOMENT

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One Family Filling in Their Financial Brackets
One Perspective on Money and Family Dynamics

“To some people, money means power; to others, love. For some the topic is boorish; for others it’s more private than sex. Add family dynamics…and you have the subject from hell.”

• Karen Peterson, USA Today
Olson’s Law

“All problems either begin or end up in a family.”

David H. Olson
The Ultimate Teachable Moment

- We have the Perfect Storm in family life.
  - The worst economic recession since the Great Depression
  - Increased conflict over money and other family issues as a result of this crisis.
## Review of the Differences between 1930 and Today

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1930 Census</th>
<th>2000 Census</th>
<th>Difference</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Total Population</strong></td>
<td>122.8 Million</td>
<td>281.4 Million</td>
<td>+158.6 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban</strong></td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
<td>+27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural</strong></td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>-27.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population working in agricultural production</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>-19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life Expectancy</strong></td>
<td>59.7 Years</td>
<td>77.1 Years</td>
<td>+17.4 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Median Age</strong></td>
<td>26.5 Years</td>
<td>35.3 Years</td>
<td>+8.8 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of women in the labor force</strong></td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>61.0%</td>
<td>+37.0%</td>
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</table>
The Economics of the Great Depression

- Unemployment rates increased to more than 25%.
- Stock market lost 90% of its value
- Housing starts dropped 90%
- Total wages dropped by 60%.
- More than 33% of American farmers lost their land
- More than half of all Americans were living in poverty by 1932
Marriage, Divorce, and Birth Rate in the Great Depression

- Between the Crash of 1929 to 1933,
  - Marriage rate fell by 22 percent
  - Divorce rate fell by 25%
  - A 1940 survey revealed that 1.5 million married women had been abandoned during the 1930s
  - Birth rate fell by 15%

Is the Recession of 2008 Causing Couples and Families Distress?

- Depression, suicide, domestic abuse, and child abuse appear to be on the rise
- Abandonment and desertion are also increasing
- Increase in homelessness
  - Some counties in California report that 10% of their school children have no permanent address
Recession’s Effect on Divorce – Number of Divorce Cases

- American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers report a 38% decline in divorce cases.
- The Chicago courts reported that divorce and separation filings fell by 600—or roughly 5 percent—during the first nine months of the year of 2008.
- Similar reports from Oklahoma, California, Florida and other states.
- The current cost of a divorce that goes to court for a couple with one child can range from $53,000 to $188,000.
Other Effects of the Recession on Families

- Couples are working harder to stay together.
- Despite the cost of more than a $100 per session, therapists report a 25% increase in marriage therapy patients.
- Loss of housing values has resulted in an increase in separated but living together (SBLT) couples.
Some of the Reasons that Money Causes Family Conflict

- Money is a taboo topic
- Partners have different styles of spending and saving
- High levels of financial illiteracy among young adults
- Many individuals have debts when entering marriage
Money: The Number One Issue of Conflict Across a Couple’s Life Cycle

Table 3.
Percent Reporting Listed Problem Area When Asked About Number One Argument Starter: Group by Years Married (or Status as Engaged)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Engaged (n = 42)</th>
<th>1 to 8 Yrs (n = 164)</th>
<th>9 to 25 Yrs (n = 226)</th>
<th>26+ Yrs (n = 167)</th>
<th>All Subjects</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never-Divorced Subjects (n = 599, sub-sample sizes for groups in parentheses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>34.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>14.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chores</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-laws</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each Couple Must Develop a New Money Management System

- Individuals have different levels of financial education, attitudes, and values, about money.
- Normally, money management systems do NOT merge together without conflict.
- Money is one of the power and control issues.
- Different unspoken and unreasonable expectations about money.
Conflict Is Inevitable When Creating a New Money System
Family of Origin Financial System Must Evolve into the Circumplex Financial System©

Adapted from “Circumplex Model” of Family Systems by David Olsen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Money Rules</th>
<th>Emotions about Money</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rigid</td>
<td>Disengaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured</td>
<td>Separated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaotic</td>
<td>Enmeshed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Husband’s Family
Wife’s Family
What Can We Do to Respond?
Marriage Educators Can Learn Move about Personal and Family Finance

- Numerous web based financial education programs that are FREE and INDEPENDENT
  - AFCPE + FINRA Investor Education Foundation have partnered to offer Money 1to1, a free program for non-financial professional counselors.
  - Recommend www.money1to1.org

- American Institute of Certified Public Accountants
  - http://www.360financialliteracy.org/
  - Financial Planning for Generation X & Y Women
  - http://wiseupwomen.tamu.edu/
Learn to Use Simple but Powerful Tools with Couples

*Money Habitudes* cards help individuals and couples discover their financial habits and attitudes.

An article on how to use the cards in several marriage education programs is located at

Read Books about Money and Marriage

Applies the PREP program to financial management and couple conflict issues.

Fun stories and drawings

Now available as POD from www.prepinc.com
Helping Couples Build Financial Health in Hard Times

- This new approach integrates the fields of therapy, coaching, and financial planning.
- It invites educators and professionals from those fields to work collaboratively with clients, using a powerful combination of exterior and interior tools to help clients build financial health.
Changing Relationships with Money

- This book uses the Dickens’ story to change Ebenezer’s perspective on money by examining his past, present, and future attitudes about money.
- Potential great workshop material to use with individuals, couples and groups.
Think Creatively about Current Programs and How to Use Money as the Focus of Conflict

- Changes in both *Couple Communication I and II Programs* by Miller and Miller
- A new program has been developed called the “Collaborative Marriage”
- **THRIVE** – the online Collaborative Marriage *Inventory* – graphically displays a unique image of a relationship on one page.
  - Allows couples to see their strengths and issues, as well as areas for development.
- See www.thrivesphere.com
Is There Financial and Relationship Education Model that Works: YES!

**U.S. Military Model**

- Starting with teaching to singles—*How to Avoid Marrying a Jerk* (van Epps)
- Use of PREPARE and related programs in pre-marital counseling
- PREP and other similar couple communication programs available to Active Duty, Reserves, and National Guard families
- Supported by Family Service Personnel, Chaplain’s Corps, and Community Educators (e.g., Cooperative Extension)
Emerging Disciplines and Tools

- First Conference on Financial Therapy
  - Does it really exist?
  - What is it?
  - What type of training and certification process would be necessary for competence and ethical guidelines?
  - Who would be qualified to conduct the training?

- Financial Therapy and Financial Planning
  - Keep them separate?
  - Collaborative Practice Model (FT and FP)?
  - One person trained in both areas?
Web-Based Household Financial Sphere Being Evaluated by U.S. Navy Financial Counselors

1ST Question starts here - clockwise

Nodes represent individual questions

Sectors are groupings of related questions

Scale 1 to 9

Low

High

Income

Debts

Assets

Web-Based Household Financial Sphere Being Evaluated by U.S. Navy Financial Counselors

1ST Question starts here - clockwise

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Sectors are groupings of related questions

Scale 1 to 9

Low

High

Income

Debts

Assets
We Have an Optimal Teachable Moment

We have a great opportunity to help individuals and couples learn more about managing both conflict and money during difficult times – building healthier marriages for better times.
Financial Distress and Healthy Relationships

How Marriage Educators Can Help

Selena Webb-Ebo, Marriage/Relationship Educator
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Introduction

- Locally there has been an increase in financially distressed couples seeking help from marriage programs.
- Marriage educators can incorporate “key talking points,” as strategies that help couples fare in these uncertain times.
- Clients are reacting favorable to strategies and techniques introduced by Marriage Educators.
Marriage and The Recession

- Couples have identified the following needs:
  - Ways to strengthen relationships that were headed for trouble
  - Suggestions to deal with financial struggles they have never faced in their relationships
  - Ways to counteract communication problems that have intensified and been magnified since financial troubles started
  - Opportunities to be more connected in order to maintain stability and a satisfying couple experience
  - Feelings of hopelessness as some bad situations have become worse
Recession Affects on Relationships

- Couples have identified the following concerns:
  - Increased arguments about money
  - Failure to communicate effectively to create a plan that sustains the viability of their household
  - Increase in verbal and physical abuse
  - Spouse’s/significant other’s resistance to change and/or to modify behaviors
  - Delaying divorce or separation
  - Increased pressures/influence from extended family
STRATEGIES

- Using the examples that clients give during the session provide excellent opportunities or “teachable moments” for practical implementation of techniques.
STRATEGIES

- Although there are several areas that allow for specific integration of handling economic stress, the following areas allow educators to address sources of relationship distress:
  - The Introduction
  - Self-Awareness
  - Expectations
  - Communication
  - Forgiveness
  - Resources and Support
STRATEGY I - INTRODUCTION

- Provide a solid introduction to your program.
- Your introduction should:
  - Identify the state of relationships today:
    - Couples of all ethnic groups and financial backgrounds are struggling.
    - Financial concerns are closely connected to emotional issues. Money is the top argument starter in the majority of relationships.
    - Troubled relationships have consequences that affect children.
STRATEGY 1 - INTRODUCTION

During the introduction Educators can:

◦ Establish that all couples face financial difficulties. Reinforce the idea that they are not alone.
◦ Relationship Education is just one tool that can assist them. On going education is a must if a couple wants to have long-term relationship viability.
◦ Explain that although this program does not provide financial education it incorporates complementary strategies that improve couple stability.
STRATEGY 1 - INTRODUCTION

• Educators can also:
  ◦ Establish an understanding that relationship education helps to strengthen relationships by helping couples learn and apply skills, and giving couples tools that can protect them emotionally and financially during a financial crisis.
  ◦ Confirm an understanding that there are several barriers that couples face and making financial decisions continues to be a priority for everyone.
  ◦ Offer praise for they have taken the right first step for getting and staying on track.
STRATEGY 2 - SELF AWARENESS

- Assist clients with taking a realistic view of their role in guiding the course of their relationship. Incorporate the following talking points:
  - Understanding that existing communication patterns may prohibit open and honest exchanges about finances amongst other things
  - Understanding that family background affects a couple’s ability to problem solve and work effectively as a team
    - Spending habits learned from family (saving, spending, emergency funds, role of credit, overall view pessimistic versus optimistic)
  - Realizing that as individuals we bring hidden issues and insecurities that may threaten the success of a healthy relationship
STRATEGY 2-Self Awareness

- Assist clients with taking a realistic view of their role in guiding the course of their relationship. Incorporate the following:
  - Understanding that there may be safety concerns that prevent a partner from openly sharing their concerns
  - Understanding that determining a financial course of action requires understanding oneself first:
    - Communication styles
    - Personality type
    - Spending habits
    - Unexpressed Expectations
    - Hidden/Unaddressed Issues
STRATEGY3-EXPECTATIONS

• Assist the clients in understanding that unexpressed expectations undermine the success and outcome of a relationship
  ◦ The ability to discuss, review and revise pre-existing expectations about the following:
    • Understand that discussing expectations is an ongoing process
      • Both partners must resolve to an overall acceptance that life circumstances change due to things that are both within and outside of our control
STRATEGY3-EXPECTATIONS

- Educators can assist the clients in:
  - Developing a willingness to revisit roles and responsibilities that may have previously acceptable during good economic conditions
    - Traditional roles may have to be challenged for the relationship to be sustained
  - Budgeting and finances
    - Help couples by placing an emphasis on establishing a list of financial do’s and don’ts for their relationship
    - Understanding their financial compatibility by incorporating a financial compatibility quiz
STRATEGY3-EXPECTATIONS

• Budgeting and finances…
  • Emphasize the importance of planning, WMR incorporates the philosophy of “Sliding versus Deciding”
  • As couples should plan for the birth of a child, marriage or any other life changing event, they can also plan for possible changes in their financial futures
  • Emphasize the importance of teamwork and making decisions together
  • Encourage the concept of togetherness and not tackling difficult decisions alone. For any plan to work, both partners have to buy into it.
Marriage Educators should emphasize that couples may need additional help before expectations are discussed or strategies can be implemented.

Relationship and personal safety must be emphasized as the priority, before any future planning or problem solving can be successfully incorporated into the relationship.
STRATEGY 4: COMMUNICATION

- Educators can introduce the topic of “Avoidance” a common practice of couples when it comes to discussing finances, credit, credit history and child support.
- Educators can emphasize utilizing healthy communication techniques and establishing “ground rules,” introduced by the curriculum.
- Effective techniques include conflict-resolution strategies that ease the stress of talking about sensitive topics like money.
STRATEGY 4: COMMUNICATION

- Emphasize the use of the following tools:
  - Speaker Listening Techniques
  - XYZ statements
  - Praise
  - Time-Outs

- Help couples realize that self awareness and being aware of each other’s personality type and communication styles is important for progress
STRATEGY 4: COMMUNICATION

- Educators must stress that honest communication is the foundation of both healthy relationships and healthy finances.
- Express that couples must recognize that there will be differences in expectations in how to approach and make financial decisions.
- Express that couples should discuss how friends and family factor into their financial choices and/or options.
- Help couples realize that how the differences are handled is what is important.
STRATEGY 5 FORGIVENESS

- Educators can help clients reduce stress caused by finances by connecting the concept of forgiveness
  - Couples should be encouraged to talk over past financial mistakes
  - Avoid blaming by utilize skills (like XYZ statements)
  - The ability to forgive past mistakes allows couples to move forward
STRATEGY 6
RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

- Educators can use analogies and anecdotes as a means of emphasizing curriculum to directly providing support:
  - Examples should reemphasize concepts covered by the facilitator and can be found in newspaper articles, blogs, and from personal experiences
- Offer community resources where couples can go for additional support
STRATEGY 6
RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

• Incorporate Stress Reducing Techniques into the session:
  ◦ Music and/or Food that establish atmosphere
  ◦ Deep breathing, meditation or centering activities
  ◦ Invite special guests/activities to aid in stress relief

• Offer community linkages that offer couples additional support and education:
  ◦ Credit counselors
  ◦ Marriage and family therapists
  ◦ Parenting classes
CLIENT REACTIONS

- Participants are eager to implement skills and techniques introduced by Marriage Educators and sharing feedback with others.
- Participants appear realistic that there is no cookie cutter approach to couple disharmony and handling financial distress.
- Couples appear to appreciate having free or low cost education.
- Couples are looking for additional resources and opportunities to fellowship with others who are in similar situations.
SUMMARY

- Marriage Educators can be essential tools in assisting couples with building linkages between handling short-term financial difficulties, relationship viability and long-term financial health.
- Incorporate “key talking points,” and strategies that can help couples fare in these uncertain times.
SUMMARY

- Remind couples that there is no one solution that is right for every couple.
- Offering a consistent integration of financial themes throughout education can be an effective strategy towards helping couples establish long-term financial and emotional well being.
Financial Distress and Healthy Relationships
How Marriage Educators Can Help

Selena Webb-Ebo, Marriage/Relationship Educator
The Center For Self-Sufficiency, Milwaukee, WI
webbebo@wi.rr.com
Overview of and Workforce Investment Act/One-Stop Career Status and Operations

Brent Orrell, ICF International
What is a One-Stop Career Center?

- Funded through the $10 billion federal Workforce Investment Act System
- Over 3,000 Full-Service and Affiliate Centers Operated by State and Local Workforce Investment Act authorities
- Provide comprehensive employment, training and supportive services to workers and job seekers
One-Stop Career Center System

http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/onestop/onestopmap.cfm
One-Stop Services for Job Seekers

- **Assessing Job Marketability**
  - Skills identification and occupational matching
  - Job Matching
  - Career Resource Libraries

- **Career Exploration**
  - Career video resources
  - Customized profiles about occupations, industries, employment, education, and wages

- **Career Advancement**
  - Research local training options by occupation
  - Find required and optional certifications
  - Research licensing requirements
  - Explore other options at the Workforce Credentials Center
  - Track trends occupational fields, find professional associations and other resources in the Career Resource Library
One-Stop Services for Job Seekers

- Job Search Assistance
  - Find employers in the Employer Locator
  - Resume assistance
  - Job search strategies
  - Find job leads online through the Career Resource Library's job bank listings or through the Job Bank Portal

- Supportive Services
  - Referrals to social service programs
  - Child care
  - Transportation
One-Stop Career Center
Information

To Find a One-Stop Near You:

http://www.servicelocator.org/ or
http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/onestop/onestopmap.cfm

For More Information on the One-Stop System:

http://www.careeronestop.org/
Partnering With Your Local One-Stop

- Over the past several years, DOL has developed extensive guidance for One-Stops and Non-Profit organizations on how to create partnerships and referral relationships
- Guidance for Community Organizations
- “Project Reach Out” – SEEDCO
  - [http://www.seedco.org/pro_toolkit/project_reachout.pdf](http://www.seedco.org/pro_toolkit/project_reachout.pdf)
- Reports on successful practices in One-Stop and Non-Profit partnerships
- Model Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
## ETA Funding Outlook
(in millions)

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<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>PY08 Allocations</th>
<th>Stimulus</th>
<th>FY09 Omnibus</th>
<th>Above Base Spending</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>$861</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$861</td>
<td>$500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
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<td>$571</td>
<td>$170</td>
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Thank you for participating in our poll.

The National Healthy Marriage Resource Center is dedicated to helping your marriage education program succeed.

Please email us at info@healthymarriageinfo.org if there are other areas of research you would like the resource center to address in the future.

www.healthymarriageinfo.org
www.twoofus.org
A recording of today’s Webinar will be available on the NHMRC Website in 7 to 9 days.

Please visit the website at:

www.healthymarriageinfo.org
www.twoofus.org

Thank you and have a great afternoon!