

CES Marriage & Couples Educational Resource Package

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United States Department of Agriculture
Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Extension Educator:

Marriage and couples' education is a family issue that is gaining greater attention by family studies professionals, state and Federal policymakers, and the media. At the same time marriage and couples' education is being recognized as a national issue, increasing numbers of Cooperative Extension System (CES) educators are being asked to provide workshops and help youth and adults improve their relationship skills.

For the past 18 months, five CES staff and I have been working together to determine ways CES might be involved in this effort to strengthen families. This National Extension Marriage and Couples' Education Work Group is composed of Madge Alberts, University of Minnesota; Judy Branch, University of Vermont; Dr. Rosemarie Hoffman, Texas A&M University; Dr. Charlotte Shoup Olsen, Kansas State University; Dr. Ben Silliman, University of Wyoming; and myself. They have shared their expertise, creativity, and sensitivity as we have thoughtfully examined possible CES outreach. I commend them for their dedication and hard work.

The enclosed Marriage and Couples' Education Resource Packet is an outgrowth of that work. We are pleased to share it with you. We hope it will support the work you are doing to strengthen families. A special "thank you" goes to Charlotte Olsen and Nancy Peterson and their colleagues at Kansas State University. Without their commitment to this project, we could not have produced these resources.

The work group has many other exciting efforts underway. Later this year, we will produce a national satellite broadcast for Extension educators, secondary level family consumer science teachers, and CES community partners. The satellite program will highlight current trends and developments in marriage and couples' education; research, practice, and policy issues; and actual CES programming that is underway in a number of states. We are pleased to have the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences and the National Extension Association for Family and Consumer Sciences as sponsors for the broadcast.

We are eager to receive your feedback about this Marriage and Couples' Education Resource Packet. A feedback form is provided in the packet. Please complete it and return it to the address provided. If you have questions/comments or would like to share what you are doing in this area, you may also share those directly with me at 202-720-2920 or <akobbe@reeusda.gov>.

Sincerely,

ANNA MAE KOBBE, Ph.D., CFCS
National Program Leader
Family Life & Human Development
USDA/CSREES

cc: State Family Life Specialist
Enclosures

Extension's Response to the Growing National Marriage and Couples' Education Movement

Written by:
Madeleine (Madge) Alberts, M.A.
University of Minnesota

Background

The Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service has been a major community-based family education organization since the Smith-Lever Act was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1914. Early Extension study groups were the first formal parenting education groups in the nation. Extension educators with background in family and youth development continue to provide education for parents and communities on the healthy development of children, youth, and families. Parenting education assumes a relationship between a child's parents.

Emerging research reveals that the quality of the relationship between the parents, married or not, has a direct and significant impact on the child(ren)'s development. Much attention is also being given to the impact of divorce on children as well as the economic and social cost to society. These research findings reveal a need for individual, community and policy support for marriage and other long-term committed couple relationships. Furthermore, education is needed to help youth understand the importance of healthy relationships and how to develop skills known to foster such relationships.

Why Pay Attention to Marriage and Couples' Education as a Community Priority?

Dr. William Doherty, University of Minnesota faculty member in family social science, cites the following reasons for communities to embrace the idea of marriage and couples' education as a community priority:

- Poor social relationships can be as damaging to physical health as cigarette smoking.
- For adults, a stable, happy marriage can be the best protector against illness and premature death; for children, such a marriage is the best source of emotional stability and physical health.
- Marital distress can be an important health hazard for adults and children.
- Divorce can be a major health risk for U.S. adults and children.
- Marriage and couples' education is effective in promoting marital quality and stability.
(<http://www.smartmarriages.com/hpmarr.html>)

Is Marriage and Couples' Education Too Exclusive?

It is true that a focus on marriage and couples' education appears to leave out singles, and may appear to be culturally insensitive in some situations. Therefore, it is important that the following principles be embraced as a part of this work in Extension:

- Affirming marriage does not imply a disregard or disrespect for individuals

- who are not married.
- Affirming marriage does not imply support for persons remaining in abusive relationships.
- Effective educational programs are targeted to specific needs and audiences; thus this work is targeted to helping couples build satisfying and sustaining relationships, regardless of their marital status.
- Singleness is a positive lifestyle choice.
- Relationship education must be appropriate to the culture in which it occurs.

Suggested roles for CSREES in Marriage and Couples' Education

Extension educators may want to be aware of and review existing marriage and couples' education curricula and the research base on which they are written. There are many potential roles which may be appropriate for Extension educators in addressing marriage and couples' educational needs in their communities. Some of them include the following:

Direct education

- Train community groups in marriage and couples' education.
- Partner with existing organizations that focus on family development.
- Initiate train-the-trainer programs for increasing the number of marriage and couples' relationship educators.
- Teach marriage and couples' education as part of parenting or financial management education programs.
- Train "marriage mentors."
- Develop and train persons involved in youth development programs so that they might be more able to help others build skills that will contribute to successful relationships.

Community catalyst

- Convene and facilitate community groups to address marriage and couples' needs.
- Build civic capacity around marriage and couples' education.
- Provide public policy education regarding marriage and couples' education.
- Organize and host conferences on marriage and couples' education.
- Work with faith communities to address marital needs in a multidisciplinary way.
- Serve as a liaison connecting community needs and resources.

Public awareness

- Write news columns on marriage and couple issues.
- Conduct media campaigns.
- Provide exhibits at conferences and community events.
- Develop newsletters, news releases, PSA's, and web sites related to marriage and couple issues.

Part I

News Releases and Public Service Announcements

The following set of news releases and public service announcements has been prepared for Extension professionals to use within their individual community settings. Some of this information also could be useful for addressing basic relationship skills needed at work, with other family members, in different family structures, and in numerous other situations. Suggested ways to utilize the news releases and public services announcements are:

- Create a column in a monthly Extension newsletter.
- Publish as a series in local newspaper articles.
- Prepare PSA audio tapes for local radio stations.
- Prepare a set of 12 flyers to hand out at meetings and public events.
- Create your own idea on how to use this resource.

(The text of this resource packet can be electronically retrieved from
<http://www.cyfernet.org>)

Note: Given the sensitivity of these issues and given the fact that states throughout the nation are addressing marriage and couple relationships in differing ways, Extension staff are advised to check with their state program leader/director before using these news releases and public service announcements.

A note to editors: The attached news release is the **first** in a twelve-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For more information on this or other articles in the how-to series, contact: **fill in preferred contact**.

Do Homework Before Making Commitment

Insert DATELINE - “Identifying potential problems before committing to a relationship can reduce conflicts that can later be detrimental,” said Madge Alberts, University of Minnesota Extension Service children, youth and family program leader.

“Couples can get caught up in the romance of the moment and may not take the time to think through their expectations for the relationship,” said Alberts.

Overlooking the practical aspects of living can put pressure on a relationship. It is important to discuss issues such as, should we live in his apartment, her apartment, or choose a new place? How will we coordinate two work schedules? How will we divide routine tasks like cooking and cleaning?

“Decisions that affect day-to-day living-like money and kids, for example- can become sore subjects,” she said.

Alberts advises couples to take the time to 1) fully discuss their expectations for their relationship and where those expectations came from; and 2) identify and discuss potential problem areas.

“There are occasions when a couple has a whirlwind courtship, decides to make a long-term commitment to each other, and lives happily ever after. We’d all like to think that we possess the qualities that will guarantee a successful relationship, but the reality is that almost all of us can improve our relationships if we are willing to work on them,” said Alberts, who credits a pre-marriage inventory with helping her and her husband identify-and work through-a few potential problems before marriage.

Interactive activities, which often are included in pre-marital counseling or marriage-education classes, can avert conflict; they also can help a couple strengthen their relationship. These types of educational classes give structure for working on tough issues. Couples usually are happier with decisions they make together, even if the decisions result from a compromise.

“Couples need to be practical. Our parents’ generation usually based their marriages on economic security and the desire to raise a family together. They married for life and evidence of their commitment-photos of couples celebrating their 40, 50 or 60th anniversaries-can be seen in most Sunday papers,” she said.

People who are choosing to pair off today are more independent; each partner may have his or her own business or career plans and be fully capable of financial independence. Many couples also are choosing not to have children. Such changes can lessen a couple’s dependence on each other; they also can weaken the strength of their commitment to each other. When a couple hits a low spot in their relationship, they

may choose to bail out rather than work through problems that are inevitable in any long-term relationship.

Divorce or separation has become common, but may not always be necessary.

“Making an effort to do some homework before making a long-term commitment can’t guarantee that a couple’s relationship won’t end, but it can increase the chance that the relationship will be a lasting one. That’s important to the couple, but it’s also important to the health of society itself; people who are satisfied with their personal life and relationships function more effectively in other aspects of their lives. If a couple has chosen to have a family, their children also are likely to benefit from the emotional and economic stability of their parents’ relationship,” Alberts said.

For more information on building a successful relationship, contact the...**insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

-30-

Nancy B. Peterson, Communications Specialist	USDA Marriage and Couples Project
K-State Research and Extension	Alberts can be reached at 612-625-7899
Kansas State University	University of Minnesota

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Communicate Before Committing

Before couples get married or make a long-term commitment, it's important that mates think through their expectations for the relationship. Experts suggest that couples fully discuss their expectations, identify and discuss potential problem areas, and talk about issues like living arrangements, work schedules, and routine tasks. This message is brought to you by ...**insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

A note to editors: The attached news release is the **second** in a 12-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For more information on this or other articles in the how-to series, please contact: **fill in preferred contact**.

Consider Expectations Before Marriage

Insert DATELINE - “Any marriage is the blending of two families, not just two individuals,” said Ben Silliman, family life extension specialist, University of Wyoming. A partner brings along a set of expectations for marriage that often reflect family background and what that person has observed from watching other family members and friends. A marriage is a merger of the traditions and expectations from the two families.

“What is important, then, is for partners to become aware of each other’s expectations before going to the altar. Defining each partner’s expectations is essential to the success of any marriage or couple relationship because matching behavior and expectations can be important for cooperation and satisfaction,” said Silliman.

Couples who have conflicting expectations usually experience more problems in their relationship. For example, should one partner put his or her career on the back burner to stay home with the children? How will a couple share parenting responsibilities, housework, and managing their money? How important is sex? And, should a couple use vacation time to visit relatives, or head for a popular vacation spot? Answers to some of these questions may be based on how their parents dealt with these issues.

Having a good understanding of a partner’s expectations can strengthen a couple’s relationship. It also can help a couple to understand each other’s family legacy and to not simply repeat the successes or failures of the previous generation. Effective couples manage to identify and utilize the strengths of each family-of-origin, heal the wounds, and grow from the limits of each.

“Expectations will, however, change over time—for example, when a family expands, the desire for a roomier home may replace the wish for a newer car or expensive vacation,” Silliman said.

“Expectations also may vary with a couple’s commitment to each other. Couples who choose to live together without a formal commitment to each other often have a relationship that falls short of their expectations. Without a commitment, one or both members of a couple sometimes consider their life together as a temporary or convenient arrangement, rather than a long-term promise. Without a commitment, partners may not know what to expect next,” he said.

In any relationship, making assumptions can be risky, Silliman said. Thinking, “She’ll/he’ll change” or “It won’t matter after we get married” can set a partner up for disappointment. Ignoring warning signs of could-be-bothersome behaviors or conflictive lifestyles also can be problematic. As an example, one partner may prefer to get up and at ‘em on a Saturday morning while the other prefers to sleep in. Eventually,

the up-and-at 'em partner may accuse his or her partner of being lazy or the sleep-in may see an energetic mate as obsessive, the family life specialist said.

Couples need to be able to separate romance from reality. Thinking that 'my parents were happy, I'll be happy, too,' can be a mistake. Successful relationships don't just happen; they take everyday effort and enjoyment in the relationship, Silliman said. Couples can more easily thrive when they build on their strengths and grow from working on their weaknesses.

"One should never expect another person to make them happy. It's essential to learn to be happy with yourself before trying to share your life with another; it's also unrealistic to think that a relationship is going to be great all the time," he said.

A willingness to be adaptable can be important to the success of a relationship because circumstances can-and will-change. A long-term commitment based on realistic expectations provides a balance point through individual, couple and societal change. Being an optimist also helps.

Want to energize your relationship?

Put the other person first. When dating, a couple often defers to each other; once they are in a committed relationship, however, they may be less likely to do so. Yet, when you ask a longtime couple why their relationship has succeeded, they often report that what they gave-rather than what they expected-brought satisfaction and growth. They go with the flow. Their expectations usually have evolved through the years, but working through the changes has strengthened their relationship, they say.

For more information on building a successful relationship, visit Silliman's website (<http://www.uwyo.edu/ag/ces/dream.htm>) or contact ...**insert Extension office name and contact info and/or program information.**

Sidebar 1: If my parents had a happy marriage, am I more likely to have one?

"The answer is yes, if a couple can work out realistic and shared expectations and focus on making their partnership a little better each day," said Ben Silliman, family life extension specialist, University of Wyoming.

When their parents' marriage appears happy and successful, children may take the relationship for granted. Assuming that their own new relationship will be happy can be unrealistic; relationships have a better chance of succeeding when a couple is well acquainted with each other; comfortable with their partner's expectations, values and goals; and sincere in their commitment to each other and their relationship, the family life specialist said.

Sidebar 2: Considering a long-term relationship? Ask yourself these questions:

- Have we taken the time to get to know each other?
- Do we have similar goals, values and expectations?
- Have I identified concerns about abuse/violence; sexuality; finances; or other red flags?
- Can we communicate with each other? Can we listen as well as talk?
- Are we willing to work toward a common goal? Willing to sacrifice for

- each other?
- Can we be flexible? Adaptable?
- Are we both optimists?

“Questions such as these should not be considered a be-all or end-all, but they can signal areas of concern that may prompt a couple to slow down and re-think their direction,” said Ben Silliman, family life specialist, University of Wyoming.

For more information on building a successful relationship, contact the ...**insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

-30-

Nancy B. Peterson, Communications Specialist	USDA Marriage and Couples Project
K-State Research and Extension	Silliman can be reached at 307-766-5689
Kansas State University	University of Wyoming

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Discuss Expectations Before Marriage

Getting married soon? Take time to ask yourself these questions:

- Have we taken the time to get to know each other?
- Do we have similar goals, values and expectations?
- Have I identified concerns about abuse/violence; sexuality; finances; or other red flags?
- Can we communicate with each other? Can we *listen* as well as talk?
- Are we willing to work toward a common goal? Willing to sacrifice for each other?
- Can we be flexible? Adaptable?
- Are we both optimists?

Questions such as these may prompt a couple to slow down and share their expectations with each other before going to the altar. This message is brought to you by ...**insert Extension Office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

A note to editors: The attached news release is the **third** in a 12-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For more information on this or other articles in the how-to series, please contact: **fill in preferred contact**.

Family and Community Influence Relationships

Insert DATELINE - Family life does not occur in a vacuum. Values, activities and lifestyles often reflect a history of personal and cultural experiences. Some family experiences may soon be forgotten. Others, such as the annual family summer vacation, may be well remembered. Such memories, as well as some that may not be as pleasant, are likely to influence future behavior of family members. For example, perceptions of conflict between parents may produce subsequent conflict between children and their spouses or others, said Ben Silliman, family life extension specialist, University of Wyoming.

Focusing on the negative--repeating cycles of violence, infidelity, divorce or inequity--need not, however, be a family's only inheritance. Families usually have strengths as well. Their appreciation for each other and times together; shared coping and communications skills, or faith also are legacies. They, too, may be remembered and copied by future generations, he said.

"Parents' successful marriage is a legacy for children and grandchildren. Subsequent generations can build on that legacy, especially if they take the time to do their homework before they make a commitment to each other and a relationship. By the same token, couples whose parents have not had successful marriages are not doomed to failure. *All* couples can increase their chances for a successful relationship if they take the time to get to know their potential partner and his or her family; share their expectations, values and goals realistically; and are sincere in their commitment to each other," Silliman said.

"Having a good understanding of your family *and* your partner's family--knowing the customs and traditions that are part of their life and their hopes and beliefs--is essential in order to strengthen new or existing relationships. Children can learn from--and alter--familial dysfunctions, especially if they are determined to make their marriage work," he said.

Family influence is ongoing. Couples generally remain connected to their extended families, so their lives can be influenced by family health issues, shared holidays and celebrations, family finance, a shared inheritance or division of assets.

Family support, which includes accountability as well as encouragement, also can play a key role in adult children's relationships, especially during their early years of marriage. While in-laws can become too involved, not allowing a couple room for self-reliance, they often are less involved than is needed. Being willing to ask for--and accept--help during difficult times, which are an inevitable part of life, is important for couples.

Few couples can go through life without challenges. Not only family, but friends, co-workers, and members of clubs and religious groups can offer critical support for couple relationships. It takes a sensitivity to know when and what ways someone in the

community can help a couple. For example, a parent who has many evenings alone with the baby while a spouse is working might welcome a friendly phone call and an offer to play with the child, giving the parent a much-needed break.

“When family and community members recognize the need of one partner and respond in ways that are helpful, they ultimately are contributing to the well-being of the couple relationship. Even persons in a committed couple relationship have struggles in the individualistic culture in which we live,” said Silliman.

For more information on building successful family relationships, ...**insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

-30-

Nancy B. Peterson, Communications Specialist	USDA Marriage and Couples Project
K-State Research and Extension	Silliman can be reached at 307-766-5689
Kansas State University	University of Wyoming

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Family and Community Influence Relationships

Family life doesn't happen in a vacuum. Values, activities and lifestyles often reflect a history of our personal and cultural experiences. That's why, according to relationship specialists, it's important to understand your spouse, or potential spouse's background. All couples can increase their chances for a successful relationship if they take the time to get to know their partner and his or her family. This message is brought to you by **...insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

A note to editors: The attached news release is the **fourth** in a 12-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For more information on this or other articles in the how-to series, contact: ***fill in preferred contact.***

Want to Improve Your Relationship?

Insert DATELINE - A renewed focus on marriage and couple relationships is spreading throughout the United States. “One message that rings clear--couples can take steps to improve their chance of success,” said Rosemarie Hoffman, individual & family development extension specialist, Texas A&M University.

Couples who enter a relationship before they develop a secure sense of self are shortchanging themselves. It’s important to remember, however, that a sense of self is not the same as being selfish. A sense of self means knowing who you are and what you want. It does not mean focusing only on yourself and always getting your way, she said.

With a secure sense of self, an individual is likely to be more willing-and able -to give to another. That can improve his or her chance of building a long-term relationship, said Hoffman, who answered these frequently asked questions about what it takes to make a relationship successful:

How does one develop a sense of self?

Give yourself time to explore who you are: What will you choose as a career path? How will you achieve your goal? How do you like to spend your free time? What are your interests or hobbies? Is it important to have a high-dollar car? Or buy a less expensive model and invest the difference? Are family and friends a priority? How do you nurture these and other relationships?

“Taking the time to get to know yourself allows you to bring more to a relationship,” Hoffman said.

Is it possible to develop a sense of self without being selfish?

Working on your sense of self does not mean ignoring all that surrounds you.

How long should I allow to get to know myself?

People mature and grow at different rates. It’s possible that someone may feel comfortable with who he or she is at 22, while others might not feel well acquainted with themselves until their late 20s. Remember, too, that knowing who you are doesn’t mean that you stop growing. Personal growth is on-going. One mistake that couples often make is thinking that they need to do everything together. They may not realize that too much togetherness can make even the best relationship sour.

“Think of personal time as an opportunity to charge your battery. Couples who spend time apart usually look forward to re-connecting and sharing. Their time apart allows them to balance their life as a couple with each partner’s sense of self. Doing so can strengthen their commitment to each other and re-charge their relationship,” she said.

If I have a secure sense of self, am I ready to make a commitment?

Partners can fear commitment, yet it's their commitment to each other that can serve as a strong foundation for a successful long-term relationship, Hoffman said.

Why do people shy away from commitment?

"Potential partners may not fully understand the ways in which a commitment to each other can strengthen their relationship. For example, with a commitment, trust can grow. Partners can share their innermost feelings, trusting that the other person will not hurt them. As trust builds, so does a couple's loyalty, dedication and follow-through. Their commitment to each other offers the long-term promise of caring, sharing, and a sincere desire to foster their partner's well-being as well as their own," she said.

Shying away from commitment can reflect a lack of security within oneself; fear of failure; or the fear of sacrificing too much of oneself, Hoffman said.

Does making a commitment to someone else mean that you have to sacrifice yourself?

A commitment requires sacrifice, but does not necessarily mean sacrificing yourself. In any relationship, there are likely to be times when one partner may be more needy than the other. For example, a job loss, illness or death within a family all will require extra TLC. Being secure with oneself allows one partner to give to the other. In time, the giving will be passed back and forth between partners, she said.

When I make a commitment, can I expect a happy-ever-after?

Relationships rarely remain constant; couples usually experience peaks and valleys. With a secure sense of self and a commitment to each other, a couple should be more able to weather inevitable ups and downs and still keep their relationship strong, she said.

Will having children change a couple's relationship?

"Few couples realize how much parenthood will change their lives. Couples who fare the best try to balance their new lives as parents with their sense of self and commitment to each other as a couple. When a couple loses sight of themselves and their relationship, they jeopardize their relationship and their family. If their relationship isn't on solid ground, the family also will flounder. Couples should not consider taking time for themselves selfish; it's essential for their success," Hoffman said.

For more information on building successful family relationships, ...**insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Make Your Relationship Last

To build a strong personal relationship, experts suggest that each partner should have a strong sense of self-that's not the same as being selfish. Taking the time to get to know yourself allows you to bring more to a relationship. With a secure sense of self, each partner is likely to be more willing-and able-to give to one another. This message is brought to you by ...**insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

A note to editors: The attached news release is the ***fifth*** in a 12-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For more information on this or other articles in the how-to series, contact: ***fill in preferred contact.***

Money Woes Not Limited to Poor

Insert DATELINE - Money matters. In fact, it has been identified as the biggest single source of disagreement in marriage and couple relationships. While that may not be surprising, what is surprising is the fact that couples at all income levels seem to be affected, said Rosemarie Hoffman, individual & family development extension specialist, Texas A&M University.

Two-income couples or families are likely to have more resources, but they are not immune from having difficulty agreeing how to spend-or save-their money. They may have difficulty differentiating between wants and needs (buying a pricey sport utility vehicle instead of saving for their children's education or their retirement, for example) or think that spending is lopsided. Single-income couples or families often have limited resources. Some on the lower end become adept at stretching their dollars, while others live from paycheck to paycheck.

Neither one- nor two-income families usually are well prepared if their paychecks suddenly stop. An unexpected job change or loss, death of a spouse, or divorce can create serious financial problems, Hoffman said.

The financial consequences of separation or divorce almost always are more severe for women. One year after a divorce, single mothers who serve as heads of their households report that they have 67 percent or less of their previous income, while men are reported to still have 90 percent of their pre-divorce income. Divorced women are five times more likely to live in poverty and many of the children whose parents separate or divorce eventually need to rely on welfare or other public assistance.

"A stable marriage or relationship can't insulate a couple or family from money problems; it can, however, enable them to face financial challenges more successfully," Hoffman said.

To help couples stabilize their relationships, many state and local program providers are strengthening educational systems to provide learning opportunities that include basic living skills, child development and care, interpersonal communication skills and personal financial management. States are reviewing marriage licensing procedures and requiring pre-marital counseling that may prompt couples to evaluate their long-term goals and commitment to each other. States also are offering covenant marriage or a marriage contract that encourage-or require-a couple to seek counseling during problem times that are inevitable in most relationships, rather than opting for a hasty divorce that they may later regret.

Many states also are reviewing divorce laws, child support awards, and payment enforcement policies. Government sponsored work-training programs are being expanded and offered as a means to help dependent families develop financial independence and the self esteem it takes to build a new life, Hoffman said.

For more information on building a successful relationship or managing family finance, contact ...**insert Extension office contact and/or program information.**

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Nancy B. Peterson, Communications Specialist	USDA Marriage and Couples Project
K-State Research and Extension	Hoffman can be reached at 409-845-1877
Kansas State University	Texas A&M University, College Station,
TX	

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Money and Marriage

You can't live on love. That saying holds true in today's world and is especially true for today's couples. In fact, money has been identified as the biggest source of disagreement in marriage and couple relationships. That's why it's important, according to marriage experts, that couples discuss their finances in an open and supportive environment. This message is brought to you by **...insert Extension Office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

A note to editors: The attached news release is the **sixth** in a 12-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For more information on this or other articles in the how-to series, contact: ***fill in preferred contact.***

Living Happily-Ever-After

Insert DATELINE - Couples often get caught up in the romance of the moment and may not realize that dating alone isn't likely to prepare them for a successful, long-term relationship. Dating can prompt people to be on their best behavior; they may defer to each other or temper their preferences initially, said Charlotte Shoup Olsen, Kansas State University Research and Extension family systems specialist.

"Conflict is inevitable. If there is more than one person, there is bound to be more than one opinion. For example, assume that each partner has a job: Should a couple pool their income? Or keep their bank accounts separate? Either way, how can they organize their spending? Who will control the checkbook? And, how much can-or should-one partner be able spend without consulting the other?" Olsen said.

Money is a frequent source of conflict for couples, but it's not the only one: expectations about sex, child care and discipline, and even housework are cited as sources of disagreement. In second marriages, stepchildren and extended families can be issues. Annoying habits, like not rinsing dishes after snacking or leaving socks on the bathroom floor, also can fuel disagreements, said Olsen, who answered these frequently asked questions to help couples work through potential problems:

How can socks become a major issue?

"Irritations can pile up and prompt criticism or a sarcastic comment. It's best not to harp on a sore subject, but equally as important not to let things simmer until they reach the boiling point," she said.

What can a couple do to resolve inevitable issues and conflicts?

- Talk to each other. Make time each day to talk to each other about the day; celebrate successes and accomplishments, but be willing to share thoughts and ideas about what might have worked better. Be brief; be factual; work together on a solution before an irritation turns into an issue.
- Share responsibility. For example, a couple can decide to do laundry or clean their home together on Friday night to free up time for something they both enjoy during weekend hours that would otherwise be devoted to necessary chores.

If one partner has put his or her career on the back burner to devote more time to caring for their children, the partner who is still in the job force needs to not lose sight of the fact that the other partner also is working. Both partners need downtime to refresh themselves. Doing so also allows them to bring more to their relationship with each other, she said.

- Be willing to compromise. For example, if both partners work, who will be responsible for the evening meal? One couple may decide to each eat a larger lunch and lighten up an evening meal with easy-to-fix fruit or

vegetable plates. Another couple may agree that the first person home prepares the evening meal; the other partner promises to clean up the kitchen after the meal.

- Respect each other.

Losing your temper rarely is effective-name-calling or making hurtful remarks, like “You’re too fat!” or “How could you be so stupid?” can erode self respect, self esteem and also damage a relationship. “Hurtful language can cause conflicts to escalate,” Olsen said.

Keep emotions in check; talk about issues matter-of-factly. If one or both partners are angry, allow time to cool down and think through an issue before continuing the discussion. Time outs work well for children; they can work well in adult relationships, too.

- Protect time together.

Juggling life’s demands, which may include one or more jobs, a family, home care, and community responsibilities, can be difficult, but planning time together is essential. It allows couples to re-charge their batteries and their relationships, Olsen said.

For more information on building a successful relationship as a couple, contact the **...insert Extension office name and telephone number and/or class information.**

Sidebar: Dating too expensive?

For couples who find it difficult to stretch the budget to include an occasional date, Charlotte Shoup Olsen, Kansas State University Research and Extension family systems specialist, offers these tips:

- Consider a lunch date, which may be less expensive than a dinner date.
- Trade child care with friends or relatives.
- Choose special-occasion foods and prepare them at home. Eat somewhere besides the kitchen, perhaps in the living room by candlelight.
- Scout out free concerts and other low-cost community events.
- Think about what you enjoyed when getting to know each other: Inexpensive activities, like a date to the library or an impromptu picnic, can still make any day a special one.

...insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Living Happily-Ever-After

There is no such thing as a perfect couple. In any relationship, conflict and arguments are inevitable. But keeping communication open is often the key to minimizing larger problems. According to relationship experts, it's important that couples do the following: talk to each other openly, share household responsibilities, be willing to compromise and respect one another. This message is brought to you by **...insert Extension Office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

A note to editors: The attached news release is the **seventh** in a 12-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For more information on this and other articles in the how-to series, contact: **fill in preferred contact**.

10 Tips to Improve Your Relationship

Insert DATELINE - Learning to be a more effective communicator doesn't cost much, but the benefits can be valuable. Effective communication can make or break a million-dollar deal; it can be just as important when talking with your partner or children, said Charlotte Shoup Olsen, Kansas State University Research and Extension family systems specialist.

Learning to communicate effectively can make any day a better day, said Olsen, who offered these tips for improving your communication skills:

- Be an active listener. Limit distractions. Focus on the person who is speaking you; make eye contact and be attentive. Try not to interrupt; ask to check signals or paraphrase what is being said-that's not the same as interrupting. It can, in fact, keep a conversation on track. For example, sum up the conversation: "What I hear you saying is..." The speaker may respond with "Exactly!" and continue; if the speaker says "That's not what I was saying at all," he or she may want to re-define a point.
- Be willing to trade places. Listen intently before responding. Try to be fair and objective. Sharing an appropriate, easy-to-understand message can be more important-and more effective-than having the last word.
- Choose an "I" rather than "You" message. Saying "I'm sorry that you were called back to work Saturday" is less inflammatory than saying: "You've spoiled everything-we can't go to the concert!" "Choosing an "I" message over a "You" message shares the responsibility. It can diffuse anger and help keep conflicts from escalating," Olsen said.
- Try not to get stuck on one issue. If a topic is heated, borrow from child development experts who suggest a time-out. Set a time to discuss the issue, but be sure to allow enough time before the discussion to cool off and think through the issue.
- Try not to table tough issues indefinitely. "Putting an issue on hold for too long can cause it to fester and grow. Do your homework; focus on the facts; be willing to listen intently to the other person's point of view; and be willing to compromise. Compromise can make everyone feel like a winner," Olsen said.
- Try not to nag; recurring issues need resolution, not constant reminders.
- Use humor, but use it carefully. Humor can illustrate a point, ease tension or bring a group together. Remember, there is a difference between being light-hearted and making a joke that may hurt or offend another person.
- Curb negative thinking and self-talk.
- "Think negatively and the result is likely to be negative. Think positive and the outcome is likely to be more positive," Olsen said.
- Be kind, always.
- Be thankful. Thoughtful comments, like "Thanks for getting the bills paid." or "You did a great job cleaning up the car." carry a message of appreciation.

A compliment can be like money in the bank, but sincerity is a must.

Learning to be a more effective communicator isn't costly. It just takes practice. It can, however, make life easier for you and for those around you, too, she said.

For more tips on how to improve your communications skills, contact the **...insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

-30-

Nancy B. Peterson, Communications Specialist	USDA Marriage and Couples Project
K-State Research and Extension	Olsen is at 785-532-5773
Kansas State University	Kansas State University

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Improving Relationships

Learning to be an effective communicator doesn't cost much, but the benefits can be invaluable-especially in your personal relationships. According to experts there are several tips to help improve your communication skills. First, be an active listener-repeat what the person has said. Second, be willing to trade places-be fair and objective. Finally, use humor but use it carefully so as not to offend. This message is brought to you by **...insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

A note to editors: The attached news release is the **eighth** in a twelve-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For more information on this or other articles in the how-to series, contact: **fill in preferred contact**.

Marriage Can Be Good For Health

Insert DATELINE - Married men usually are healthier than men who are single either by choice or by chance. Researchers who measure both mental and physical health report that married women rank second; they are followed by single women and then single men, said Bill Doherty, professor of family social science, University of Minnesota.

The health-and-happiness benefits attributed to marriage shouldn't come as a surprise-marriage confers benefits that go beyond what partners bring into the marriage. It's not just that healthier or more responsible people marry and, therefore, married people are healthier and more responsible. It's that being married changes people for the better. For example, couples can benefit from strong social support. Knowing that there will be someone in your corner who will be interested in the details of your life can lessen stress levels substantially. Couples also can benefit from bouncing ideas off each other or talking through issues and concerns. They have a support system, ready and waiting, he said.

In a marriage, each partner has a stake in the relationship and its success. It matters if a partner neglects his or her health, suffers through turmoil at work or struggles with a career change. Encouragement extends beyond the 'nag factor'-couples are less likely to smoke or drink to excess. They also are more likely to schedule regular check-ups and follow through on exercise or other recommendations that will improve their life or health. They may do so as a team or simply provide each other the reminder what's needed to see that the follow-through occurs.

Couples enjoy economic benefits, too. The possibility of two incomes can buffer job and other stresses and make a more comfortable lifestyle a reality. Nationally, only 11 percent of married couples fall below the poverty line; 50 percent of single-parent households fall into this category, Doherty said.

Undertaking family life as a couple can contribute to a couple's sense of well being and benefit the family. Children who are raised in a two-parent home where parenting responsibilities are shared usually fare better in life. The couple and their family also can benefit from a larger social circle. Couples usually have friends as individuals and as partners; each partner will have a family of origin and extended family. Their circle of family and friends is wider, so their opportunities are likely to increase, he said.

Since a successful marriage can foster mental and physical health, researchers believe that it also can contribute to a longer, healthier life. To learn more about building a successful relationship, contact the **...insert Extension office contact information and/or program information**.

Nancy B. Peterson, Communications Specialist USDA Marriage and Couples Project
K-State Research and Extension Doherty can be reached at 612-625-7899
Kansas State University University of Minnesota

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Marriage Good for Health

Married men and women are usually healthier than their single counterparts. The health-and-happiness benefits come from the fact that marriage often changes people for the better. For example, couples can benefit from strong social support. Knowing that there will be someone in your corner who will be interested in the details of your life can lessen stress levels substantially. This message is brought to you by **...insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

A note to editors: The attached news release is the **ninth** in a 12-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For more information on this or other articles in the how-to series, please contact: **fill in contact information**.

Throw-Away Society Impacting Marriage, Families

Insert DATELINE - The U. S. has one of the highest divorce rates in the world, yet nearly half of all the couples who divorce-46 percent-later say they wish they had worked harder on their relationships. In Minnesota, the percentage has been reported to be as high as 66 percent, said Bill Doherty, professor of family social science, University of Minnesota.

Divorce is a painful experience, said Doherty, who noted that the high divorce rate may in part result from the success of our capitalistic society, which has fostered a culture in which consumers can choose what pleases them most and discard what no longer pleases or is useful to them.

Such hyper individualism-the prevalence of the "What's-in-it-for-me-attitude?"-may mean that marriage and family relationships are being added to a growing list of disposables. In some states, couples can divorce in a week or less; if they have children, the process may take slightly longer, perhaps a month. The impact of the divorce is, however, likely to affect the rest of their lives. It also affects their children, family, friends, and even society itself, he said.

Consider this: Not long ago, couples promised to love, honor and cherish each other until death did them part. Today, many couples promise to stay together as long as they both shall love. The change in their pledge represents a significant difference in the level of commitment partners bring to the marriage.

"Love is a feeling, but it also is a commitment. Couples who overlook the importance of making-and honoring-their commitment to each other can cheat themselves out of some of the enduring benefits marriage can offer, including loyalty and a built-in support system.

"It can be easy to maintain a relationship when things are going well, but few people can expect their lives to run on 'high' forever. Tough times-an illness, job loss or change, death of a parent or difficult time in a child's life-can test the strength of a couple's commitment to each other," he said.

When a couple honors their commitment to each other and works through problems or down times together, they can strengthen their relationship. Ending a marriage without making an effort to resolve a troublesome issue can set one or both partners up for future disappointments-failure to resolve a problem in one relationship can mean that the same or similar problems will occur in subsequent relationships, Doherty said.

Couples who experience inevitable problems sometimes balk at counseling. Yet, when a couple is unable to work through problems, they often can benefit from

counseling with a therapist who is supportive of both partners and committed to helping them achieve a happy, successful marriage, he said.

“Given the high percentage of people who later regret that they didn’t work harder to save their marriages, couples may want to consider choosing a marriage contract that is being offered as an option in some states. The contracts call for premarital education, marriage counseling in times of trouble, and a waiting period between separation and divorce,” Doherty said.

Couples who opt for a marriage contract are more likely to make a success of their marriages. One study found a 50 percent reduction in the divorce rate during a five-year period among couples who had participated in premarital counseling. In a recent poll in New Jersey, spouses who participated in premarital counseling were four times less likely to consider divorce than couples who married without the benefit of counseling.

In many states, child support awards and payment processes also are being reviewed.

“Children stand to benefit from changes that are expected to help stabilize marriage and family relationships. So do couples: A stable relationship that nourishes both partners also nourishes the family and community,” he said.

For more information on building a successful relationship, ...**insert Extension office contact or program information.**

Sidebar:

The “What’s-in-it-for-me?” attitude that is influencing marriage also is impacting parent-child relationships: Children are being viewed as consumers of parental services, said Bill Doherty, professor of family social science, University of Minnesota.

In an effort to satisfy their children’s wants, parents may, however, be overlooking their needs.

For example, parents may encourage their children to express themselves, yet fail to discipline disrespect. They may encourage participation in school and community activities, yet fail to limit the number of activities to maintain a healthy balance within the family, he said.

“Children need love and limits. Without limits, they can grow towards adulthood without a clear understanding of responsibility and citizenship within their family or community. Children usually fare the best when they are contributing to the common good, rather than focusing only on themselves,” Doherty said.

For more information on managing family relationships successfully, ...**insert Extension office contact, program information and/or pitch program information.**

Nancy B. Peterson, Communications Specialist USDA Marriage and Couples Project
K-State Research and Extension Doherty can be reached at 612-625-7899
Kansas State University University of Minnesota

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Divorce

The U.S. has one of the highest divorce rates in the world, yet nearly half of all couples who divorce later say they wish they had worked harder on their relationships. Divorce is a painful experience. That's why, according to relationship experts, it's important that couples work through problems or down times together to strengthen their relationship. This message is brought to you by **...insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

A note to editors: The attached news release is the **tenth** in a 12-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For **t**.

Children Bring more information on this or other articles in the how-to series, contact: **fill in preferred contac** **Changes to A Relationship**

Insert DATELINE - Few people realize how much having children will change their lives. Prospective parents can read about children's needs, health, schedules and dozens of other topics, but still be perplexed when they realize how much time caring for children can take, said Dorothy James, family life extension specialist, Texas A&M University.

As an example, James said that she recently overheard a conversation between two young fathers: one had a five-month old; the other had a three-year old and a seven-month old. Each was distressed about trying to manage a demanding job, loving relationship with his wife, and young family. One might have expected such a conversation from two young mothers, but I was heartened to see that fathers, too, are experiencing concern, she said.

Feeling overwhelmed is not an unusual feeling for new parents; it's a feeling that may not abate as soon as new parents would like, either. That doesn't mean that people who truly want to be parents should give up the idea of having children. It does, however, mean that they may be able to benefit from re-thinking some of their priorities, said James, who offered these thoughts for parents:

- Is your relationship on solid ground? Are you each ready to accept the changes adding a new person to the relationship will bring?
- How will you care for a child? Will one parent become a stay-at-home caregiver? Have you re-worked expenses, either to accommodate the loss or reduction of a second salary, or expense of day care? Is high-quality day care available? And, have you thought about how you will feel when a stranger witnesses your child's firsts, rather than you?

"When a couple has utilized a second salary for luxuries-an expensive vacation and high-dollar clothes or entertainment-they often find that cutting back on such expenses allows them to enjoy a less stressful lifestyle and their children. When two salaries are needed to meet basic expenses, some couples are opting for job sharing, shift work or at-home businesses," James said.

Stay-at-home parents can miss interaction with other adults; in time, however, most develop a network with others who are making the same choice; they often trade child care to spell each other or job share.

"Most parents truly do want what's best for their children. If arranging child care is a must, parents can benefit from visiting several prospective sites; talking with child care providers; observing other children; talking with other parents, and communicating regularly with the child-care provider," she said.

Parents who have compatible work ethics usually have smoother sailing; if one partner is a workaholic, their relationship and family are likely to suffer. The same is true for spending. If a couple as parents can agree on spending priorities, they may feel more secure in their life together as parents and partners.

Good communication with children also can help maintain a sense of family. Trying to resolve conflicts and issues as they occur can help smooth family life.

Parents also need to take time for themselves. Nurturing their own relationship is essential because their strong bond will provide a more secure foundation for their relationship and their family. Intimacy can change: a touch; a glance; a walk; a weekend away; or simply reserving a few minutes of adult visiting time every evening can help couples maintain balance in their relationship with each other as partners and parents.

A couple's commitment to each other can make their job of parenting easier; couples sometimes allow normal life changes in their relationship to frustrate them. Such couples may opt for a divorce, when all they really need is to re-think their priorities, refresh their commitment to each other and, perhaps, take a vacation, James said.

"The best gift a couple can give their children is their love for each other," the family life specialist said.

For more information on building a successful relationship as a couple and family, contact the **...insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Dorothy James, Ph.D.,
Texas A&M University
Phone: (409) 845 6468

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Children and Relationships

Feeling overwhelmed is not an unusual feeling for new parents; it's a feeling that may not subside as soon as new parents would like, either. According to relationship experts, it's important then that future parents rethink their priorities. This includes, ensuring that their couple relationship is on solid ground. It's also important for parents to discuss plans for the care of the new child. This message is brought to you by **...insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

A note to editors: The attached news release is the **eleventh** in a 12-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For more information on this or other articles in the how-to series, contact: **fill in preferred contact**.

Parents' Divorce Changes Children's Lives, Too

Insert DATELINE - When couples divorce, partners often experience a sense of freedom. Their children are not likely to experience the same feelings. In fact, most children of divorced parents soon realize that their parents' divorce has made their own lives infinitely more complicated. Living arrangements and shared holidays often need negotiating; social and economic consequences also are likely to affect their lives, said Judy Branch, family and youth extension specialist at the University of Vermont.

Divorce is a major life change. Long-term consequences affect everyone, but can be particularly devastating for children, who usually view their parents' divorce as a loss. They are likely to experience divided loyalties; be more fearful of the future; and assume the grown-up role of being responsible for their parents' well-being. They may, for example, become the "messenger" between battling parents, trying to protect a parent by withholding information on one hand, or reluctantly giving information to satisfy a jealous parent on the other hand.

The U.S. currently has one of the highest divorce rates in the world. About one-third of the divorces that occur are an attempt to resolve high-conflict marriages that may involve physical or emotional abuse. The remaining two-thirds of today's divorces are thought to terminate low conflict marriages, which, if a couple is willing to build on their strengths and work through problems that come with daily living, can be salvaged, she said.

"Many people give up too soon; they think that ending a relationship will end their problems, but it rarely does. In fact, divorce is likely to add social and economic stresses. If money is an issue in the marriage, it is likely to be an even larger issue after a separation and divorce. Few people have the money needed to support two families, Branch said.

Successful marriages don't just happen; they require a commitment, but offer a number of social, economic, and health benefits that couples might not enjoy after a divorce. When couples can work together to resolve their differences, they also give their families a valuable gift: children who see their parents honor a long-term commitment are likely to have a more realistic concept of what it takes to make their own marriage successful.

"We have been described as a throw-away society, but we can't afford to throw away relationships that serve as the basis of society itself; the new century offers a good time to re-think the value of long-term relationships and work together as a community to support and nourish them," she said.

When divorce is the only option, is there a way to minimize the effects?

Some states now are requiring spouses who choose to divorce to attend parent education classes that will help them better understand how their behavior affects their children. When parents can't honor their long-term commitment, the next best gift they can give their children is protection from their adult conflict and courteous, respectful behavior to each other and their children.

"Government involvement is relatively new, but society does have a stake in what happens to families. Children of divorced parents often end up on welfare; they also may be less able to cope with societal and peer pressures that can lead to trouble. Child support enforcement and visitation rights for parents and grandparents also are drawing governmental interest and support," she said.

Grandparents' rights are an issue because grandparents can provide continuity and a sense of security within the family. Many also contribute financially, despite the fact that they may live on a fixed income. Their efforts can be beneficial, especially when they can refrain from criticizing either of the children's parents in front of the children, she said.

For more information on managing marriage and family relationships successfully, contact **...insert local Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Sidebar: Divorce Affects Next Generation

Nearly half of the young adults in their 20s and 30s have experienced the divorce of their parents. Their definition of marriage and family may be different than that of their parents and grandparents. They are waiting until a later age to marry and many are choosing not to marry at all. Their response as a generation of children of divorce may change society as we know it, said Judy Branch, family and youth specialist at the University of Vermont.

For more information on building a successful relationship, contact the **...insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

Branch can be reached at 802-223-2389
University of Vermont

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Children and Divorce

When couples divorce, children's lives are infinitely more complicated. According to relationship experts, many people give up too soon and believe that ending the relationship will end their problems when it rarely does. Successful marriages require a commitment. Children who see parents honor a long-term commitment often have a more realistic concept of what it takes to make a marriage work. This message is brought to you by **...insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

A note to editors: The attached news release is the **twelfth** in a 12-part series on marriage and couple relationships. For more information on this or other news releases in the how-to series, contact: **fill in preferred contact**.

Family Issues Appear on Public Agenda

Insert DATELINE - People may be surprised to see family issues listed among the top public policy debates, said Anna Mae Kobbe, USDA national program leader for family life and human development. Today, marriage, divorce, and topics such as grandparents' rights make newspaper headlines, she said.

If you glance at any print or electronic media message, you will find many family issues such as a patient's Bill of Rights for health care, expanded Medicare coverage for prescription drugs, removal of the marriage tax penalty, and Covenant Marriage legislation being discussed on the state and national levels. Other topics receiving attention are fatherhood programs, mandated divorce and parent education, grandparents raising grandchildren, children's health insurance, youth violence, and long-term care for the elderly, says Kobbe.

Legislation crafted to address these issues impacts families. The impact can be both positive and negative. Often, if needed policy changes don't occur, families can be left without important supports that nurture strong families, and communities may suffer from lack of infrastructure to provide liveable communities for families.

It is important for family members to be aware of proposed policy changes that may occur at all levels of government. What can you do to understand policy issues?

- Keep current on proposed policy changes. News media and web sites can provide information.
- Ask to be placed on the mailing list for free newsletters that most elected state and national officials provide.
- Join community groups that monitor policy issues or attend public meetings that focus on topical areas of interest to you.
- Participate in a public policy education workshop.

Policy discussions around marriage, divorce, mandated parenting programs for high-risk families and those divorcing have become more common recently. These are all family issues but because they also impact society, they become issues that will be addressed on the public agenda.

Currently, much discussion is taking place around the need for liveable communities and what are the basic elements of liveable communities. Family researchers and community-based educators believe that "strong families make strong communities."

Cooperative Extension programs have provided programs to help individuals and families improve their quality of life and strengthen their family. Today, such programs address parenting/co-parenting, financial management-including saving and debt reduction-stress management and coping in times of crisis, and diet and health to name a few. "Now, we see more programs emerging related to marriage and couples' education," says Kobbe.

Relationship skill-building is recognized as vital for all persons; youth, singles, couples, stepfamilies, and the elderly. It is an ongoing process where the skills need to be continually polished and new ones mastered to be able to function in the 21st Century, said Kobbe....**insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

-30-

Nancy B. Peterson, Communications Specialist	USDA Marriage and Couples Project
K-State Research and Extension	Kobbe can be reached at 202-720-2920
Kansas State University	USDA

Public Service Announcement

:30 - Family Issues Appear on Public Agenda

Family issues are important to our country. It is not uncommon to see such topics as marriage, divorce, and grandparents' rights and legislation related to these issues in the newspaper headlines. Legislative actions can impact families in their everyday lives. Therefore, stay aware of proposed policy changes and take advantage of public policy education workshops within your community that address an issue from all perspectives. This message is brought to you by **...insert Extension office contact info and/or program information.**

Caroline Tetschner, Assistant Radio Producer
K-State Research and Extension
Kansas State University

Part 2

Other Resources

Finding a marriage or couples' education class

Persons interested in marriage or couples' education within their communities may need to contact several different organizations or groups to find an educational resource that works for them. Mental health centers, religious organizations, Cooperative Extension Services, and private counselors/therapists may offer educational instruction within the community. The news media may carry information on upcoming classes or seminars conducted by a community group or agency. When making inquiries about the education offered, a person should learn about the training and experience of the instructors, the type of instruction, and the time and fees involved. Ask to look at the training manual. A person should choose someone who answers questions in a way that seems satisfactory to him or her. Links to the majority of nationally known marriage and couples education programs can be found on a commercial website for the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education (http://www.smartmarriages.com/directory_browse.html). However, Extension cannot verify the research base for each of the programs listed.

Finding Extension resources to strengthen marriage and couple relationships

The Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network (<http://www.cyfernet.org>) has links to numerous Extension resources throughout the country. One link is to the marriage education web site developed by Ben Silliman, extension specialist at the University of Wyoming. Its address is: http://www.uwyo.edu/ag/ces/FAMILY/Opening_Pages/Couple_Relationship.htm.

CoupleTalk: Enhancing Your Relationship, an Extension resource developed by Charlotte Shoup Olsen, Marsha Weaver, and Trudy Rice at Kansas State University, is available in a home study format, either in hard copy or through a distance education course. It can be accessed at: <http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/ctalk>. Other Extension bulletins have been developed by Stephen Duncan, Montana State University, Katherine Beckham, formerly of The Ohio State University, and the late Herb Lindgren from the University of Nebraska. There may be additional Extension resources throughout the nation that have not been identified. If so, please contact any one of the work group listed on the front page to be included future resource lists.

Finding additional materials

Many self-help books are available to give couples information on how to strengthen their relationship. The following list is not exhaustive, but does represent research-based resources. Contact your local library or bookstore to locate these books.

"The Intentional Family," by William Doherty (published by Avon).

"The Seven Principles for Making Marriages Work," by John M. Gottman (published by Crown Publishers).

“Becoming Parents: How to Strengthen Your Marriage as Your Family Grows,” by Pamela Jordan, Scott Stanley, & Howard Markman (published by Jossey-Bass).

“Fighting for Your Marriage,” by Howard Markman, Scott Stanley, & Susan Blumberg (published by Jossey-Bass).

“Building Relationships: Developing Skills for Life,” by David H. Olson, John DeFrain, & Amy K. Olson (published by Life Innovations).

“The Heart of Commitment,” by Scott M. Stanley (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers).

“ Strengthening Family Resilience,” by Froma Walsh (published by Guilford Press).

Part 3

Selected Bibliography

Compiled by:
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University of Wyoming

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Part 4

Feedback Form

Marriage & Couples' Educational Packet

1. Describe how you will use the information in the packet? If you have already used something from the packet, please describe how you used the information and clientele reaction.

2. Rate the usefulness of the materials in the packet.
o 1 = not useful o 2 = somewhat useful o 3 = useful o 4 = very useful

Suggestions for improving the resource packet:

2. Describe your plan or programming you have conducted for youth and or adult audiences related to relationship skill building / marriage and couples' education.

3. What additional training or resources do you need to assist you to provide programming on this topic?

5. Describe the level of clientele interest in strengthening couple relationship skills.

- o 1 = little or no interest
- o 2 = some interest

- o 3 = a growing interest
- o 4 = high interest

Name _____

Title _____

Affiliation _____

City / State / Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ Fax (_____) _____

E-mail _____

Return to:

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