

Relationship Education for Individuals: Intervening Early

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Traditional Relationship Education

- Provided to committed couples, often in healthy relationships
- Components:
 - Relationship assessment
 - Communication skills
 - Personality differences

Basic U.S. Relationship Statistics

- Divorce rate: 36-60%, depending on education level
- Children born to unmarried parents: 36.8%
- Median age at first marriage: 27.1 for men, 25.3 for women
- Median age at first birth: 24.6
- 60-75% of couples live together before marriage
- 40-50% of women have ever cohabited

Bumpass & Lu, 2000; CDC, 2002, 2006; Raley & Bumpass, 2003; Stanley et al., 2004; U.S. Census, 2003

Gaps in Relationship Education

- Services for:
 - Individuals (vs. couples)
 - Individuals not in relationships
 - Unhealthy or violent relationships
 - Populations with low income levels

Targets for Early Relationship Education

- What is a healthy relationship?
- Safety
- Planning for the future
- Making decisions about partners and relationships
- Communication skills
- Expectations for relationships
- Impact of adult relationships on child well-being
- Managing children and new relationships
- Barriers to marriage
- The positive role fathers can play
- Building social support

WITHIN
My Reach™

Within My Reach is PREP's new relationship skills and decision making program for helping *individuals* achieve their goals in relationships, family, and marriage.

WITHIN My Reach Background and Overview

Core Development Team

Authors:

- Marline Pearson
- Scott Stanley
- Galena Rhoades
- PREP content and strategies (conflict and communication skills, expectations)

Consultants:

- Kathy Edin
- Domestic violence experts including Anne Menard and Mike Johnson
- Domestic violence advocates
- Kristin Seefeldt
- George Young, Tony Russell, Scott Roby, TANF class instructors, and others of Oklahoma Marriage Initiative
- Women who had been through welfare programs
- Pilot classes



WITHIN My Reach Background and Overview

Overarching Goals

- Help those in viable relationships to cultivate, protect, and stabilize their unions, and to marry if desired.
- Help those in damaging relationships to leave safely, at some point.
- Help those desiring a romantic relationship and/or marriage in the future to choose future partners wisely.

WITHIN My Reach Background and Overview

Core Philosophy

"Our love lives aren't neutral."

"The decisions you make in romantic relationships will affect every other aspect of life—especially your child's well-being, your mental and physical health, and your work success."

WITHIN My Reach Background and Overview

Initial Target Population

- Women in welfare programs
 - Presence of children
 - High financial stress, chaos
 - Threats to personal safety (neighborhoods and partners)
- Now used with other populations
 - E.g., Men, prisons, college students, religious organizations
- Revised and expanded for American Air Force

Structure of Curriculum

15 hours of core material

Three major sections:

1. Understanding Healthy Relationships, Risks, and Making Decisions
 - Sliding vs. deciding
2. Building and Maintaining Healthy Relationships
 - Safety
 - Communication skills
3. Moving Forward toward Goals "Within My Reach"
 - Planning for the future
 - Managing children and relationships
 - Infidelity
 - Barriers to marriage

WITHIN My Reach Background and Overview

Instructor Materials



Participant Materials (Spanish versions available)



WITHIN My Reach Background and Overview

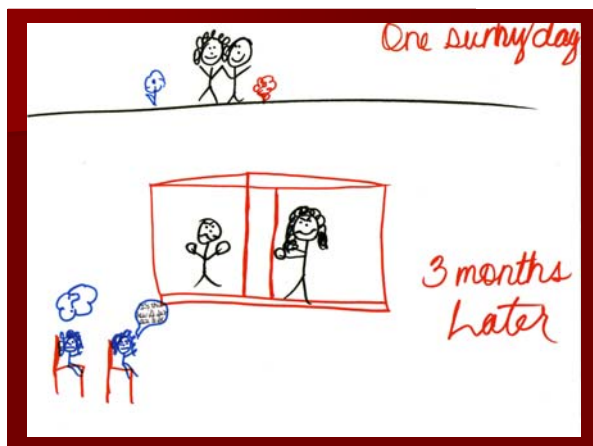
Safety

- Messages about safety throughout
 - Keeping workbooks safe
 - Leaving safely
 - Help for domestic violence
- Unit on domestic violence
 - Recognizing warning signs
 - Getting help and support

Structure of Units

- Lecture
- Discussion
- Group activity
- Workbook activity

"Relationships/marriages today are like..."



SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF *Smart Love*

1. Seek a Good Match.
2. Pay Attention to Values.
3. Choose a Real Partner, Not a "Make-over" Project.
4. Don't Try to Change Yourself to Be Somebody Else.
5. Expect Good Communication and Don't Run From Conflict.
6. Don't Play Games, Pressure, or Manipulate Someone.
7. Have a Bottom Line.

These principles, as presented here, are from the work of Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott. See Parrott, L. & Parrott, L. (1998). *Relationships*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Used with permission from The Zondervan Corporation.

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SHOULD WE LIVE *Together?*

Couples living together vs. couples who are married report:

- Less commitment
- Less satisfying relationships
- More cheating on each other
- More problems with alcohol and depression

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SHOULD WE LIVE *Together?*

Married couples who lived together before getting married vs. those who did not report:

- More problems with communication
- Less satisfying relationships
- More cheating on partner
- Lower levels of commitment (especially for men)
- More domestic violence
- Higher divorce rate

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SOME ADVICE ABOUT *Living Together*

If you are thinking about living together:

1. Make a decision about it.
2. Realize that it will probably be harder to break-up if you're living together than if you had separate places.
3. Ask *yourself* why you want to move in with your partner.
4. Communicate about moving in together:
 1. Ask *your partner* why he/she wants to live together.
 2. Ask *your partner* about what he/she thinks about the future of your relationship.
5. Don't move in together if you have any doubts about the safety in the relationship.

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SOME ADVICE ABOUT *Living Together*

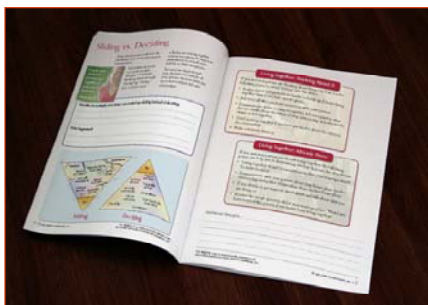
If you are living together:

1. It doesn't necessarily mean that your marriage would more troubled.
2. Communicate with your partner about your future plans for the relationship.
3. If you decide to get married, think about and talk about why you are doing so.
4. Answer this tough question about your marriage plans: *Would you have married this person if you hadn't been living together?*

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Participant Workbook Pages 6 - 7



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Supporting Research

Qualitative Research

Purpose (Sparks, 2008):

- 1) in-depth description of the program
 - 2) assess fit between the curriculum and the TANF clients' actual relationship situations and concerns
 - 3) assess degree to which participants utilize skills taught in the program
- Observed *Within My Reach* classes, interviewed 22 attendees
 - Follow-up interviews with 11 attendees

Sparks, A. (2008). Implementation of "Within My Reach": Providing a relationship awareness and communication skills program to TANF recipients in Oklahoma. *National Poverty Center Working Paper Series, #08-11*. Retrieved September 4, 2008, from http://npc.umich.edu/publications/working_papers/08-11.pdf

Qualitative Findings

- Good fit
 - Voice and content fit with participants' past experiences and future goals
- 9 of 11 identified WMR themes as useful
 - Sliding vs. deciding
 - Family background
 - Speaker Listener Technique
 - Hope

Sparks, A. (2008). Implementation of "Within My Reach": Providing a relationship awareness and communication skills program to TANF recipients in Oklahoma. *National Poverty Center Working Paper Series, #08-11*. Retrieved September 4, 2008, from http://npc.umich.edu/publications/working_papers/08-11.pdf

Benefits of Targeting Individuals

- Access
- Applicable to high risk and low income populations
- Education on violence
- Education on the transitions and decisions that come *before* a commitment to marry
- Education on children's well-being
- Communication skills apply to many relationships

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