

Healthy Marriages, Healthy Relationships



Friends for life

Keep your promise to each other

Strengthening Marriages and Relationships "Commitment" Heads the List of Important Ingredients

As legislators look to restructure welfare programs and support healthy child-rearing, some people have become more interested in what makes a healthy relationship or marriage. Child Trends, a nonprofit research center dedicated to improving the lives of children and their families, has released a new brief on healthy marriage and its ingredients. A review of this research is encouraging, in that it appears the components of a healthy marriage can be learned, either on one's own or through the assistance of others. Research has already shown that married couples tend to acquire more wealth and have better health. However, neither health nor wealth is necessarily present in a healthy relationship or marriage. What are the key ingredients?

Those wanting a positive relationship of any kind may be interested in hearing the importance of commitment. "Commitment entails taking a long-term perspective toward one's relationship, having an interest to persevere when difficulties arrive, and being committed to caring for the other person," says Kristin A. Moore, Ph.D., President and Senior Scholar at Child Trends. She explains, "It represents a focus on the couple and the partner – not on just the self." One researcher describes commitment as a sense of "we-ness" that sustains a couple through tough times and the long term.

More reassuring news is the fact that healthy relationships and marriages are not "either/or" but can be worked on over time. As their life changes, a couple may have different degrees and elements of strength in their relationship. In addition to mutual commitment, other aspects of a healthy marriage or relationship have been found to be:

- The ability to handle conflict
- Lack of domestic violence
- Fidelity
- Positive interaction and enjoyment of the time together
- Intimacy and emotional support
- Commitment to children (for couples who have children)
- Longer duration and the legal status of marriage
- positive communication
- individual satisfaction

Child Trends' full brief can be found online at

http://www.childtrends.org/Files/CT_HealthyMarriage.pdf . This research is funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Family and Child Well-Being Research Network. Information on ACF's Healthy Marriage Initiative can be found at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/index.html>