



# Enhancing Marital Connection

Craig Jackson, JD, MSW, Victoria Jackson, Ed.D, LCSW

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# Introduction of Presenters: Craig & Victoria

- ▶ Craig is the Dean of the School of Allied Health Professions at Loma Linda University
- ▶ Victoria is an Assistant Professor in the School of Behavioral Health at Loma Linda University in the Department of Social Work & Social Ecology.
- ▶ Craig and Victoria have been married 45 years and have three adult children: Courtney, and Trey, and Trey's wife, Tippy.
- ▶ They enjoy traveling, singing, and giving back through church activities (i.e. Hospitality Ministry and Music Ministry, Craig teaches Sabbath School)

# Agenda for Today's Presentation

- ▶ Relevant Statistics
- ▶ Rationale for Focus on Marriage and Family Relationships
- ▶ Suggestions for enhancing Marital Connection
- ▶ Three ways to foster such connection
- ▶ Gottman's 7 principles for improving marital connection
- ▶ Opportunity for Questions and Discussion



# Recent Statistics on Marriage

- ▶ People are getting married later in life. The median age of those married for the first time is currently 28.3 for men and 25.8 for women (*National Health Statistics Report*, 2012). Compare this to the numbers from 1960, when the median age was 23 for men and 20 for women (*The State of Our Unions 1999*, 10).



# Why are these statistics important?

- ▶ Marrying later hopefully may suggest that there has been more careful thought to making such a critical life choice as a marriage partner.
- ▶ It may reflect the benefits of fostered good relationships and open communication, which models a positive way of interacting *for the children in the family*. This benefits the couple as well as the children, as it provides security for children who see that their parents' can disagree and resolve conflicts.
- ▶ Marrying at a later age, may also reflect the possibility that young adults experience time on their own as professionals, coping with daily challenges of work, transportation, finances, and relationships. These are all everyday behaviors that cause conflicts, arguments, resentments and are bound to arise in normal couple interactions.

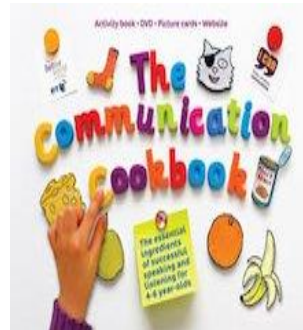
# Marriage Challenges

- ▶ When parents are in constant conflict, children are caught in between parents and are confused about loyalties to both, but positive resolution of various conflicts it provides an opportunity for role modeling more appropriate ways for conflict resolution.
- ▶ Conflict in relationships will occur, so the challenge is to figure out ways to manage conflict that doesn't negatively impact relations between couples, as the other option may be that couples could be caught in a high-conflict marriage, which has the risk of contributing to insecurity in children, who observe the ongoing conflict.



# Communication

- ▶ It is Important when unsure of what spouse is communicating to you (in verbal and nonverbal actions) to ask for clarification. Example: “It appears that you are upset, disappointed, very sad, etc.” Are you OK? Anything you wish to share right now, I thought (say what you saw or noticed, without accusation or blame) then, share “is this a good time to tell me what concerns you, You seemed .\_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank) Say how you feel, but check in with partner’s feelings about as well.
- ▶ Clarifying is important, as a long-time, unexpressed, misunderstanding can grow into resentment.
- ▶ Be willing to risk in situations where you must share your disagreement, disappointment, but sandwich any negative content between a positive comment about an area of the relationship that is going well.



# Compromise

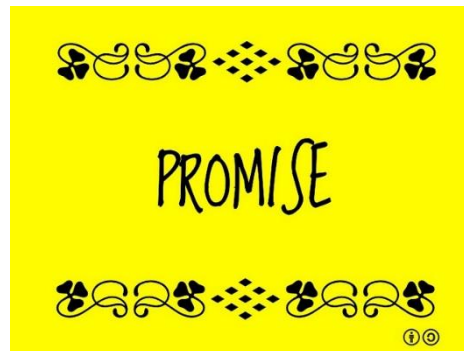


- ▶ Benefits of compromise in a marriage
  - ▶ It is often a Win-Win Situation, because both partners are able to get what they want.
  - ▶ Compromise promotes good role modeling for conflict resolution for children and other family members.
  - ▶ Working toward compromise, shows your partner you respect and love them



# Commitment

- ▶ *Definition of commitment:* a promise to do or give something; a promise to be loyal to someone or something, the attitude of someone who works very hard to do or support something.
- ▶ In marriage, commitment is a promise to fulfill the vows of marriage made during the wedding ceremony. It is intended for a lifetime.
- ▶ Commitment implies the promise made and the vows that are taken are intended for a lifetime, in good and bad times, and that you're invested to work hard if that's what it takes, knowing there will be great times and not so great times throughout the marriage.



# What makes marriage work?

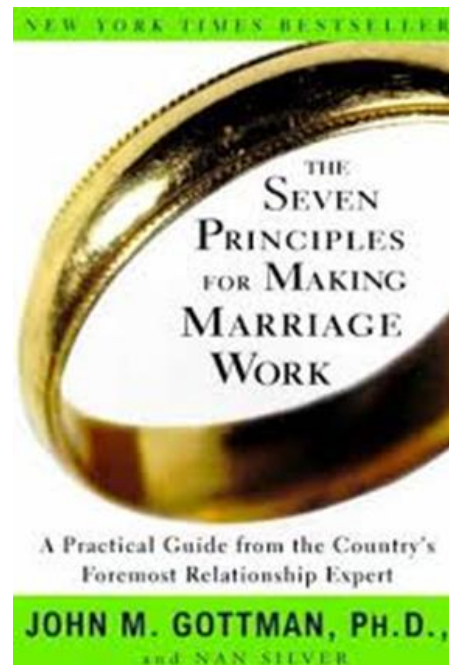
- ▶ According to Gottman, a marriage specialist who has done many years of research on behaviors found the improve marriage relationships. He states there are seven qualities needed They are as follows:
- ▶ Gottman's principles are research-based. He and his colleagues have studied hundreds of couples (including newlyweds and long-term couples); interviewed couples and videotaped their interactions; even measured their stress levels by checking their heart rate, sweat flow, blood pressure and immune function; and followed couples annually to see how their relationships have fared.

The seven qualities are

- “Enhance your love maps.” ...
- “Nurture your fondness and admiration.” ...
- “Turn toward each other instead of away.” ...
- “Let your partner influence you.” ...
- “Solve your solvable problems.” ...
- “Overcome gridlock.” ...
- “Create shared meaning.”

# Gottman's Seven Principles for Improving Marital Relationships

- 1. “Enhance your love maps.” .
- 2. “Nurture your fondness and admiration.” ...
- 3. “Turn toward each other instead of away.” ...
- 4. “Let your partner influence you.” ...
- 5. “Solve your solvable problems.” ...
- 6. “Overcome gridlock.”
- 7. “Create shared meaning.”



# Questions, Comments, Observations, Rebuttals?

Contact:

Craig and Victoria Jackson, Facilitators

Email: [vjackson@llu.edu](mailto:vjackson@llu.edu)

Phone: (909)379-7582 (work)

Cell: (909)362-0405