

Running head: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENDERS IN MARRIAGE

Differences Between Gender Traits that Could Impact Happiness in Marriage

By

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Abstract

Many people quickly find that being married and keeping love going is hard work (Johnson, 2010). The rise in divorce rates over the last four decades, gender equality, and the changing expectations of the 21st century, are influencing the roles in marriage. The intent of this paper is to increase knowledge regarding the changes in marriage, emotional support, and gender trait differences. An application and lesson plan are provided for a psycho-educational group to practice emotional support and learn about gender traits and the expectations of marriage.

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Differences Between Genders Traits that Could Impact Happiness in Marriage

Marriage is the legal union of a man and woman as husband and wife, and in some jurisdictions, between two persons of the same sex, usually entailing legal obligations of each person to the other (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2014). This is the current definition, but is being disputed by some states (Sweeney, 2014) because of the inclusion of, “two persons of the same sex”. Most religions include a spiritual component to marriage for example, the Christian faith’s use of Matthew 19:4-6 (King James version) as a definition stating, “For this cause (marriage) shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.” However, 1 Kings 11:2 states that King Solomon had 700 wives deviating from the two person component of the definition. The essential factor is not who is in the union but what the union does and how it is sustained. Most of the current information that is available on gender in marriage is based on a man and a woman, but gender traits do not have to be specific to physical gender (Aylor & Dainton, 2004).

Trait Theory, each individual adopts gender role attitudes from enduring schemas and roles that are taught and modeled in childhood, then developed as life experience affirms or denies the belief (Lucier-Greer, Adler-Baeder, Ketring & Smith, 2011). So what are the gender roles or traits that are being taught and modeled? Defining masculine and feminine traits is difficult. Even though books like *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (Gray, 1992) and *You Just Don’t Understand* (Tannen, 1990) make claims of distinct gender specific traits, yet there does not appear to be research to validate them (Schoenfeld, Bredow, & Huston, 2012). The stereotypical view is that masculine traits are assertiveness, competitiveness, independence, dominance, and group-oriented, whereas the feminine traits are kindness, communality, emotionally expressiveness, romanticism, and selflessness (Schoenfeld, Bredow, & Huston,

2012). The fact that research does not back the stereotypical gender traits, promotes the thought that there is confusion in this area of understanding. It also forces us to look outside the box to find what is known about gender traits and their role in marriage.

The consensus is that both genders want the same thing from a relationship: love, respect, and value (MacGeorge, Gillihan, Samter, & Clark, 2003), but there is a possibility that males and females do not have the same interest in forming committed relationships. (Needs to write out entire reference for MacGeorge—first time cited) It has been posited that there is an evolutionary advantage for men to have multiple partners (Buss, 2007). Each additional partner increases the chance that genes will be passed down to future generations. While this theory might make sense to some, it is not validated through history. According to Buss (2007), most cultures view people that are promiscuous as morally corrupt, even in today's society. There is a humanistic desire to be loved, which surpasses the Aristotelian idea that humans are social animals, that is why we marry or cohabit (Djikic & Oatley, 2004). In modern western society, getting married is a confirmation of love. Many of the fairy tales end with marriage and the couple living happily ever after. Many people choose to be married and something happens that stops the happily ever after. What prevents two people from getting what they originally wanted and results instead in a decision to divorce? Research suggests communication deficits are a large contributing factor (Burlison et al., 2009). Both partners may express love and a desire to be together, but the hurt created from misunderstanding each other creates an emptiness that stresses the relationship (Chapman, 2004).

Additionally, western societies' concept of marriage has fluctuated over time. Historically the purpose of marriage was based on an institutional model that sought to integrate sex, parenthood, economic cooperation, and emotional intimacy in a permanent union. Marriage

has changed to being a couple-centered vehicle for personal growth, emotional intimacy, and shared consumption that depends on happiness of both spouses to survive (The American Marriage Institute, 2010).

Gender roles, or the public image of being a male or female that a person presents to others (The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary, n.d.), have also been changing in marriage (Coontz, 2006). The growing participation of women in the labor force and liberalized social values of equality have pulled them out of the home and empowered women to increase their expectations in the marriages. The current shift in gender roles and expectations with the uncertainty of what marriage is, has complicated communication (Koppelman, 2002). Individuals have different ideas of what marriage is and drastic social change has not given time for common expectations to be adjusted.

Marriage has been on the decline in the industrialized world and cohabitation is on the rise (Garrison, 2007). The percentage of the United States population reporting as married in 1970 was 70.6 percent versus 48.7 percent in 2012. Cohabitation was not specifically recorded but unmarried households increased from 29.4 percent in 1970 to 51.3 percent in 2012. Unmarried households were broken down into 3 categories, other nonrelative households, women and men living alone, and other family households without spouses (Vespa, Lewis & Kreider, 2013). This has created instability in the families of the world due to the fact that over half of all cohabiting relationships dissolve within eighteen months (Vespa, Lewis & Kreider, 2013). This results in a higher potential for a child of cohabitation to experience their parents' separation. Cohabitation lacks the social blueprint that marriage still contains as stated in the marriage vows, for the rest of my life (Garrison, 2007). Healthy relationship skills are less likely to be modeled for and passed on to children who then lack skills for their future relationships.

Current marriage statistics show that in the United States married couples are more financially successful and thus provide a more secure environment for children (The American Marriage Institute, 2010), have healthier children with longer life spans than unmarried couples (Gallagher, 2001), and are happier than non-married couples (White & Gallagher, 2000). Fifty percent of all first marriages end in divorce in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2012). These statistics are not only for first marriages; the United States Census (2012) shows that second marriages end in divorce 67 percent of the time and third marriages have an even higher rate of divorce at 73 percent. This drop in marriage success rates does not appear to have changed youth's values of the relationship. During a survey by Stage of Life.com (2014), 92 percent of the 330 teens surveyed responded yes to the question "do you want to get married".

Marriage happiness or well-being has been researched in three ways: global satisfaction with questions like, "taking all things together, how satisfied are you with your marriage?"; momentary well-being referring to happiness for the day or moment; and marital quality, which focuses on marital strain, support provided, depression, and other negative factors of a marriage (Carr, Freedman, Cornman, & Schwarz, 2014). Koppleman (2002) reports that happiness is correlated to expectations. If a relationship is meeting or exceeding the individual's expectations then it is more likely that happiness is reported. Marriage can be made easier by understanding what your partner expects (Koppleman, 2002). Gender traits are unique to each individual and without appropriate communication skills, couple dynamics may be negatively affected. Lack of common expectations leads to misunderstandings. The goal is to help couples recognize potential reasons behind their misunderstandings that can open communication without applying blame. Doing this allows couples to focus the communication on the problem and not the frustration of not being heard or understood (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

Changes in the Institution of Marriage

Marriage in western society used to be for acquiring influential in-laws, business dealings, improving social status or expanding the family labor force (Coontz, 2006). Love and emotions were a benefit, but not expected. Gender roles were fairly well defined with the male holding the power of divorce. Males may have changed wives for reasons such as the prospect of a male heir, or because the husband's parents did not like the choice of his spouse. According to Coontz (2006) over the last 200 years the institution of marriage has changed, and is now based on love and emotions. The drive for equality between the sexes further impacted the institution and women became able to request a divorce as easily as a man. These historical change factors combined in 1981 to produce the highest rates of divorce to date (50 percent) in the United States (Coontz, 2006). Women's equal rights have opened the avenue to provide balance in marital fairness, but it has also changed the expectations of marriage as a whole (Koppelman, 2002). The norm is no longer that the wife takes care of the home and the children and the husband works.

Current economics have also contributed to changes in marriage. Most couples earn their living separately, rather than from a jointly run farm or business. This provides more independence and an easier transition into living separate lives if things get difficult (Coontz, 2006). It also impacts the expectations of marriage. The male may now be needed in the home more because he is no longer the only person working. Chores and child rearing are no longer only female responsibilities. Today household responsibilities are more equal with no real defining lines on what is the male or female expectation, causing more gender role confusion. Furthermore, it has been found that women have become less satisfied over all with marriage and suffer less than males in happiness post-divorce (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2007). Dykstra and Fokkema's (2007) study included 2,223 people between the ages of 30 and 76. Twenty-three

percent of the participants were in their first marriage (252 men and 268 women), 40 percent were remarried (419 men and 465 women), and 37 percent were divorced living without a partner (274 men and 545 women). Men were found to be more partner centered and had smaller support networks than their female counterparts. Males also suffered more from loneliness in general. This shift in power from males holding dominance in a marriage to at least equality or possible slight female control makes a woman's needs more important than ever before.

Women state that emotional support is the key to happiness (Erickson, 1993). Emotional support has been defined by both genders and across cultures as: expressions of care, concern, love, and interest (Burleson et al., 2009). In the past, male gender roles did not focus on cultivating emotional support, nor with the male dominance of marriage was it needed or expected. It could be argued that today's marriage focuses more on a woman's happiness and love as compared to in the past when it was dominated by men's desires (Coontz, 2006). This focus on love and happiness has increased the importance of women's wants and needs.

Theoretical Foundation

A trait is currently defined as a distinguishing characteristic or quality of one's personal nature (Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). Gordon Allport (Good Therapy.Org, 2013, p. 1) based his Trait Theory on conscious motivations and thoughts, determining that every person possessed hundreds of traits that he separated into three categories:

Cardinal traits, the dominant traits that mold a person's identity, emotions, and behavior.

Central Traits, core traits that are inherent in most people and lay the foundation of personalities and actions.

Secondary traits, privately held traits that are often only revealed in confidence or under certain conditions.

(Good Therapy.Org, 2013, 1.)

Others have refined Gordon Allport's Trait Theory into reliable measurement tools because of its easy application to statistical or objective data (Heffner, 2002). If one person finds happiness in marriage then it is reasonable that others that have the same traits may also do well in marriage. The lack of researched defined male and female traits leaves only stereotypes to address emotional support and other positive marriage skills. For this reason the inclusion of Adlerian Theory (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1978) has been used to expand the basis of this paper.

Albert Adler was the first to suggest that marriage is not merely an action taken by two people, but involves a connection of two families including the past and future generations (Sauerheber & Bitter, 2013). The purpose of marriage was to enable two people to have a better life together than they were capable of having as individuals. This was only possible if both partners had a cooperative attitude that could enrich the life of the other. Another Adlerian tenet is that people move from inferiority and insecurity toward adaptation attempting to build security (Stoltz & Kern, 2007). A spectrum is found where each individual exhibits both masculine and feminine traits in accordance to which trait appeared more valued in their past experiences (MacGeorge, Gillihan, Samter, & Clark, 2003). This means that a person is capable of adapting to new behavior by learning from their past. As children we learn from our experiences to better acquire what we want. The more experience that demonstrates the desired expectation, the more secure an individual feels with their behavior. In this way people are able to learn new behaviors that can help them adapt to the new demands that successful marriages appear to require. This theory describes the advantages of marriage, the importance of cooperation, and how communication would be influenced by an individual's experiences.

Society instills gender expectations that influence individual expression. These traits are affected by each person's historical adaptation, but even with these variants the average male or female fits into patterns that are very specific in romantic relationships (Feldhahn, 2004). Furthermore, society expects men to suppress emotions with the thought that by suppressing their emotions they can find a logical solution to a problem without the emotional influence. Society expects women's emotion to influence their decisions (Weisfeld & Stack, 2002). The different gender social expectations create a rift in the way genders communicate with one another and provide emotional support (Feldhahn & Feldhahn, 2006). The masculine traits of competition, enduring hardships, and logic help in striving for mastery and power, which enhances and protects the differentiation of the individual; this is known as agency. This is very different than the female traits of compassion, delicacy, and emotions that help in striving for intimacy, connectedness, and solidarity in the social environment; this is known as communion (Suh, Moskowitz, Fournier, & Zuroff, 2004). These differences might cause the following situation. A man hears a problem from his wife and leaps to the socially learned conclusion, that a solution is needed. By providing a solution, he is demonstrating his masculine traits of competition and applying logic, but is this what his wife wants? Probably not, the wife very likely may be looking for emotional support with empathy or sympathy given (Feldhahn, 2004). Due to societal conditioning, the male has blocked his ability to empathize and sympathize, causing misunderstandings that compound into more misunderstandings. The man feels slighted and not good enough, because his answer was not appreciated by his spouse. On the other hand, the woman feels even less of a connection because she did not get any empathy or sympathy, now both members of the couple are feeling rejected. The lack of a simple application of emotional support has escalated into a rejection for both partners.

Introduction of Research Question

What makes marriage so difficult? The national Fatherhood Initiative conducted a survey in 2004 of 1,503 people to better understand marriage in America. They synthesized the responses into eight common reasons for divorce: Lack of commitment (73 percent), too much arguing (56 percent), infidelity (55 percent), marrying too young (46 percent), unrealistic expectations (46 percent), lack of equality (44 percent), lack of preparation (41 percent), Abuse – physical or verbal (29 percent) (Glenn, 2005).

Feelings of love and support, connected with the ability to communicate well, could help prevent some of these situations from happening. Understanding how emotional support helps both partners in a relationship deal with the challenges that they may face, may increase their ability to handle them (Burlison, 2003). Communication also may help people make better choices in a marriage partner by potentially reducing unrealistic expectations and providing the preparations for marriage. Lack of commitment, too much arguing, lack of equality, and abuse hurtful comments could result from gender role misunderstandings that create frustration which results in anger and giving up.

This project researched the question, “What are the differences between gender roles that could impact the happiness of a marriage?” The information covered in this paper was utilized to create a presentation for counselors to use with married couples to educate them regarding the evolution of gender roles and their significance in marriage.

Literature Review

This literature is dissected in to two parts, marriage and gender traits. Marriage includes the different types of romantic relationships with a comparison of the benefits of each. This provides a better understanding of the marriage relationship and the value that it still has in

western society today. Gender traits is an effort to take what literature there is on the subject and apply it to identify some justifications of gender roles in marriage and the stereotypes that have developed.

Marriage

The four romantic relationships discussed in the literature are: being single, dating but not cohabitating, cohabitation (defined as living under the same roof), and marriage. The relationship that correlated highest with overall social well-being (happiness) was marriage, but all romantic relationships increased social well-being (Soons & Leifbroer, 2009). The social well-being of young adults who were never married or cohabiting decreased slowly over time independent of parenthood and employment.

According to the research by Soons and Leifbroer (2009), being in a romantic relationship provides more happiness than being without one, and happiness decreases unless the relationship advances. The stages of relationship advancement were: dating, to steady dating, to cohabitation, to marriage, and increases of happiness were reported at each stage. When a marriage was reached, couples continued happiness represented a u-shaped curve with a decline over the first few years that appeared to balance out and then increase after around 10 to 20 years (Soons & Leifbroer, 2009). Information on happiness during successive cohabitations was not available but in situations where individuals had multiple marriages, happiness was greatest in the first marriage with lower levels of happiness reported in each consecutive marriage. Soons and Leifbroer's research included 5,526 observations correlated using a multilevel regression analysis that included 1,749 people in the first wave in 1987. The third wave of research included 1,252 of the same people (the second wave interviews did not include the same questions about relationship, so was not applied to the analysis). The fourth wave included 936 of the same

people in 1995, with 830 people in wave five in 1999, and 759 people in wave six in 2005. The respondents were 18 to 26 years of age at the start of the study and there was no variation according to gender in the responses.

Remarriage has less economic advantages than first marriages with reports of occupations with fewer earnings and less prestige (Garrison, 2007). Ben-Zur and Michael's 2009 study of 196 participants (mean age of 45.94, with 54 percent women) reported that divorce is one of the greatest causes of unhappiness in life. Psychologist Nicholas Zill, Ph.D., president of Children's Trends, reports that high conflict marriages affect children more negatively than divorce or post-divorce conflict (DeAngelis, 2004). To make a leap into marriage without understanding the expectations of your partner can lead to one of the greatest causes of unhappiness.

Happiness is one benefit of marriage, but other benefits include the best economic future of all four romantic relationships, the best emotional support being provided, good health (Stack & Eshleman, 1998), a sense of meaning in life, higher self-esteem, and lower psychological distress (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2009). Children appear to be the most influential advocate for successful marriages. Children do best in school achievement, rates of juvenile delinquency, social interaction skills, and later marital happiness when raised in a relatively stable happy marriage (Koppelman, 2002). They also start sexual initiation at a later age, are less likely to have a teen birth, and are more likely to graduate from high school (Garrison, 2007). Maggie Gallagher (1998) states, "For most serious academics, the question of whether or not children are hurt by our high rates of divorce and illegitimacy has been answered (yes)" (p. 1). Children are the next generation of couples, so the better prepared children are the less difficulties they will have in relationships when they mature.

Gender Traits

Each gender often solves problems differently (Feldhahn & Feldhahn, 2006). A man, tends to solve problems and then discuss the issues. This way he has answers and solutions worked out before everyone else. Women often discuss the issue to find solutions to the problem. The discussion provides camaraderie, emotional support, and solutions; if someone else has the answers, she does not feel devalued because of the other needs that were satisfied in the process. This is often why a man needs time to himself before he wishes to discuss issues, and if solutions have not been found, he does not wish to discuss the issue at all. The problem has to be large for a man to risk the loss of face that can happen when asking for help. Asking for directions is an example. A man will not normally ask for directions, unless he feels unequal to the challenge of finding his destination. This could be because of a lack of self-esteem or that the consequences are too important if he fails. He would rather prove himself by finding his own way to a location even if it means getting lost along the way. When a woman challenges this, her spouse hears that she does not have faith in his abilities to overcome the challenge and thinks that he is not good enough (Feldhahn & Feldhahn, 2006).

Furthermore, socially learned gender trait stereotypes lead to misunderstandings in the marriage (Aylor & Dainton, 2004). For a male, the marriage day is the completion of the task. He can now concentrate on his next goal, providing the things his family will need, like the house, vacations, and security for prospective children. For a female, the emotional connection is the goal, which does not get completed during the marriage ceremony. The female expects the connection to become even stronger. The man, having achieved his goal and obtained his wife, now is proving his love by achieving his next goal. Showing his new wife that she made a good choice, which leaves little time for taking her out or spending romantic evenings talking about

the future. His focus is creating the future of which they dreamed. He views the situation as a sacrifice he is making to provide for the family they dreamed of and she thinks that he would rather be at work than spend time with her. She wants to feel loved, which requires spending time together making that emotional connection. This does not happen if her partner is spending all of his time at work trying to prove how much he values his wife by providing the future they dreamed about. She talks about how she does not feel loved so he starts to work even longer hours to prove his love. More time is spent away from the wife, meaning less time for her to feel connected and increasing complaints. The cycle ends in divorce or hopefully new understanding.

Differences in communication are even seen in the meaning of touch (Hertenstein & Keltner, 2011). In Hertenstein and Keltner's 2011 study, 212 college students ranging from age 18 to 40 tried to communicate designated emotions through touch alone. Each randomly assigned dyad could only touch their partner from the elbow to the end of the hand. The person decoding the emotion would put their arm through a curtain so that the least possible was known about the person that was trying to encode the emotion to them. Certain emotions are only communicated through touch depending on the gender of the two people touching each other. A male was required as part of the dyad for anger to be communicated through touch with more than a random chance of success. A female was required in the dyad for sympathy to be felt more often than random chance. Happiness is only communicated through touch if two women make up the physical connection. Another interesting discovery was that through touch alone two people are able to identify the gender of the opposite person with an accuracy of 79% for females identifying males and 96% of females identifying females. Male decoders were not as successful with 70% correctly identifying males and 81% correctly identifying females. This research indicates that even without spoken language there is a distinct difference between the genders

that can be identified strictly through touch. Furthermore, if people have developed a gender difference that can be identified through touch a difference in language must be present.

Another gender difference is that women appear to think more deeply about a message if the person delivering the message is providing emotional support within the message (Burlison et al., 2011). Burlison's first study included 72 men and 135 women. He had college students read scenarios and imagine that they were actually experiencing them. Then they had 2 minutes to write down what they were thinking. Afterward they completed a questionnaire assessing perceptions of the scenario. They found that women thought more about the message and were more critical of the presentation. Burlison's second study (2011), had 34 males and 69 females who had experienced a death loss in the previous 2 years. The participants were interviewed about the loss and evaluated on their extent of elaboration and reactions to grief management messages. Burlison found that women generated more thoughts about their loss and discriminated more sharply on the quality of the grief message. This led to the conclusion that women get more satisfaction from emotional support than males do, women also require a higher quality of support to get the same satisfaction (Burlison et al., 2011). This could provide the motivation that encourages a woman to advance her emotional support skills. This difference appears to be a focal point in the problem of communication. Men seem to gravitate toward problem solving possibly because they lack the skills to provide emotional support, they may view problem solving as providing emotional support, or possibly because hearing their partner's problem makes them feel inadequate as partners. Education could raise awareness of the issues as well as motivate males to build more favorable emotional support skills and introduce communication of gender differences.

Collins, Cramer, and Singleton-Jackson (2005) suggest that the suppression of natural masculine and feminine traits is linked with depression. The use of silence or not talking to each other is the cause of some of the unhappiness in marriage. A psychometric tool named Silencing the Self Scale, utilized a Likert-style inventory that measured depression related to maintenance of intimate relationships for women, was adapted to measure depression in men and women related to motivational achievement. The premise is that women self-silence for fear that their verbal self-expression is unacceptable to their male partner. Men self-silence to actively withhold their thoughts and feelings to maintain power or lack the emotional vocabulary required to communicate their needs (Collins et al., 2005). This raises the question that if Silence is related to depression does communication lead to increased happiness?

Both biological and social conditioning play a part in the gender differences (Weisfeld & Stack, 2002). Even though each individual fits within a spectrum of normal gender reactions, each partner exhibits gender patterns and typical problems that may be seen in marriage (Feldhahn & Feldhahn, 2006). By recognizing these patterns couples can be educated to stop and listen, beyond their instinctual response, to better provide the emotional support their partner needs. It also provides an opportunity to learn different meanings that a partner may have applied to words because of gender traits.

It appears males are less likely to provide the kind of support that their partner needs (Suh, Moskowitz, Fournier, & Zuroff, 2004). Dykstra and Fokkema (2007) found that men attach greater importance in having a partner than women do. Dykstra and Fokkema used data from the survey done in 1998 that included 2,223 participants. They found that men, on average, have a smaller support network and therefore divorced men are more apt to suffer from emotional loneliness without a romantic relationship (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2007). This could be a result of

changing gender roles. Social expectations may not have caught up with the different gender expectations in marriage. Women's increased power and equality in the marriage relationship (Dykstra & Fokkema) has changed what is required from the male role, and yet social training has not adjusted. Understanding and providing emotional support has become a key component for successful marriages (Djikic & Oatley, 2004). Yet women perform more emotional support in the marriage relationship than men (Aylor & Dainton, 2004).

Emotional support has been shown to have many beneficial effects in life, including psychological and relational health (MacGeorge et al., 2003). Listening, empathizing, legitimizing, and exploring feelings, as a couple, will enhance and strengthen each person's ability to deal with life challenges (Burlison et al., 2009). Effort does not always provide results, so for example, even though a husband may want to provide the emotional support that his partner needs, he may provide what he would want in the same kind of situation rather than what his partner needs (Chapman, 2004). Even though emotional support is generally viewed the same across cultures and genders (Burlison, 2003), the particular time of providing support is judged by the individual. As discussed previously, a male is more likely to be looking for solutions while a female is more likely to be looking for camaraderie (Feldhahn, & Feldhahn, 2006). This means that when a female is discussing her problem she will most likely get a statement of resolution from a man when she was looking for someone to empathize with her. Each is valid in their emotional support expectation, but as a result of a gender specific miscommunication the couple ends up unhappy.

Each gender also has different definitions for the same words (Feldhahn, 2004). For example, saying "I love you" to a man is enough, but many women have a little voice that says, "I heard you but is it really true?" (Feldhahn & Feldhahn, 2006, p. 17). For men, work is a way

to show his love and dedication by providing and meeting financial obligations, but women can see work as a challenger to the attention and time that she wants from her partner. These differences further confuse the situation, making a request for emotional support appear to be an unjust attack on a perceived default in the partner. The lack of support is then confused as a lack of concern affecting the motivation of a couple to continue to try to communicate. If this pattern continues, the relationship may become disconnected thus leading to divorce (Burlison et al., 2009). Through education, a couple can better identify their partner's needs and thus provide their partner with what they want versus what they themselves may want. Bridging this gap in communication leads to better understanding of how and when to provide emotional support leading to happier relationships (Feldhahn, 2006).

Application

Surveys have shown that people are interested in having a long and happy marriage (MacGeorge et al., 2003). The feeling of frustration and unhappiness that comes from a failing marriage motivates couples to find help. Unfortunately, many couples cannot afford services or are unwilling to trust others. The information gathered in this research was used to create an hour and a half lesson plan and PowerPoint designed to support a group of couples in a committed relationship. The objectives of the group are to provide education regarding the change of gender roles and the benefits and issues they could cause in marriage.

Anyone that is in a close relationship can benefit from this information; however, the target audience is couples that are married. The group environment will allow couples to participate as much as they want, and yet they will see how others are facing many of the same issues. This also may relieve some of the blame and hurt feelings that have been caused by gender role confusion or different marriage expectations.

This project is for counselors, so that they have the information to lead a group that can help couples that are having difficulties in their romantic relationship, but it could also be used by couples that want the information but are uncomfortable attending counseling group. By looking through the PowerPoint, reading the lesson plans, and this paper, couples can see the benefits that counseling can provide and use the examples to practice on their own.

Conclusion

Even though marriage is on the decline and cohabitation is on the rise, marriage still provides the best benefits of all romantic relationships. It is also seen by today's youth as a relationship that will provide more happiness in their lives (Stage of Life, 2014). The issue appears to be that society's expectations of marriage has changed over the last forty years and many people now do not have the skills to keep a marriage working. Gender roles and expectations have not adjusted as fast as the marital relationship itself. People today expect there to be equality in the marriage relationship, now that women more commonly work outside of the house. Women also have less emotional support to lose if the relationship is not to their liking. However, according to George Mason University sociology and law professor and author Lenore Weitzman (hickson, 2014), women are more likely to face damaging financial consequences and a diminished standard of living than men. Her studies found that after a divorce, a woman experiences a 73 percent reduction in standard of living while a man's standard of living is enhanced by 42 percent. However, these statistics are also dependent on number of children and stability of employment.

If utilized, the information in this paper may change people's lives. Understanding what your partner wants and expects, makes it easier to meet those expectations (Feldhahn & Feldhahn, 2006). Using the same definitions during discussions will help couples find common

ground. Having expectations that are in common has been found to be one of the greatest predictors of those expectations being accomplished (Garrison, 2007).

Changes in marriage expectations and gender roles can take some of the blame for problems in a marriage, relieving some of the frustrations that the lack of understanding and feelings of inadequacy are creating. The idea of marriage is for two people to share their life with each other, and the modern emphasis on love leads to believe that couples love the person that they want to spend their life with. Combine this with the expectation of happiness from marriage and motivation for change should happen.

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PowerPoint



CHANGES IN MARRIAGE

❖ Marriage has morphed from an institutional model that sought to integrate sex, parenthood, economic cooperation, and emotional intimacy in a permanent union. To primarily a couple-centered vehicle for personal growth, emotional intimacy, and shared consumption that depends on happiness of both spouses to survive (The American Marriage Institute, 2010).

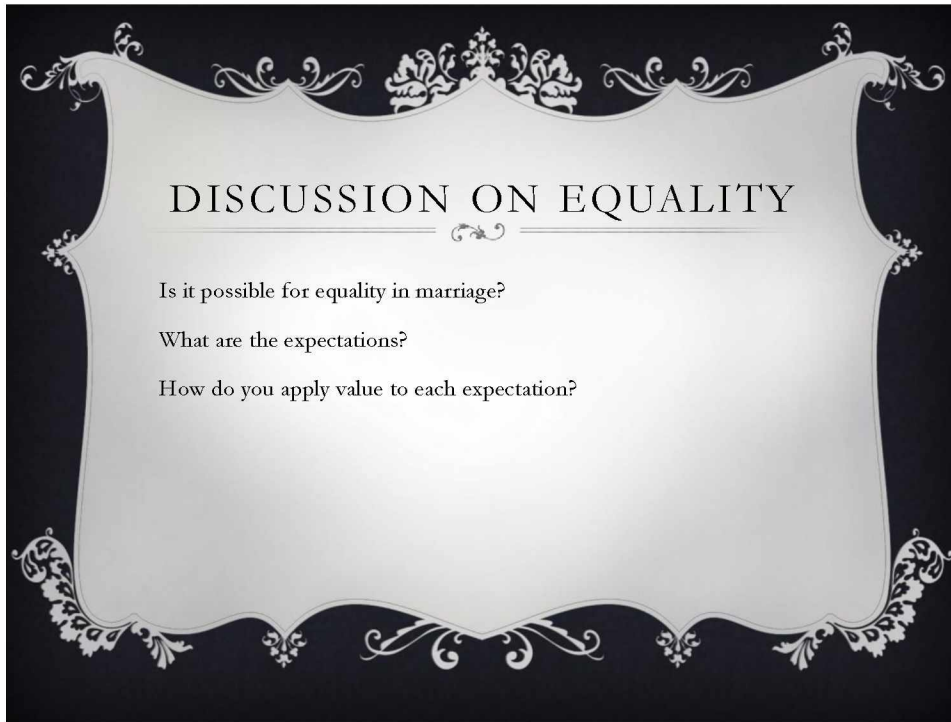
SOCIAL CHANGES

❖ Liberalized social values of equality have changed gender roles and expectations in Marriage

- Couples have to find a new balance between what is expected in their relationship

This requires common definitions and discussion

(Koppelman, 2002)



DISCUSSION ON EQUALITY

Is it possible for equality in marriage?

What are the expectations?

How do you apply value to each expectation?



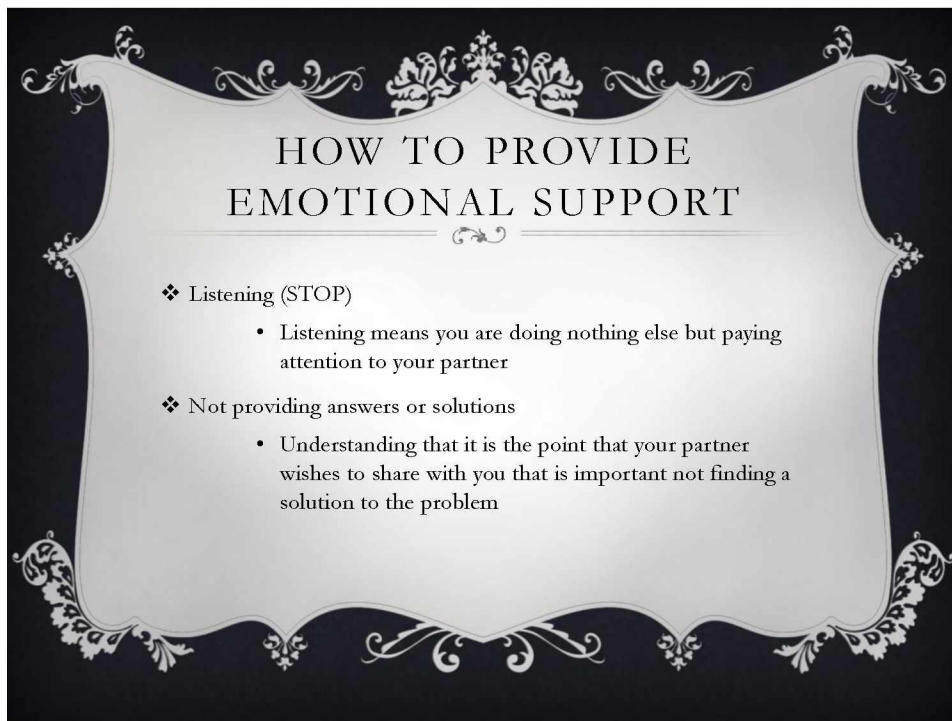
WOMEN'S VIEWPOINT

- ❖ Is equality possible
- ❖ Expectations
- ❖ Value to expectation



MEN'S VIEWPOINT

- ❖ Is equality possible
- ❖ Expectations
- ❖ Value to expectation



HOW TO PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- ❖ Listening (STOP)
 - Listening means you are doing nothing else but paying attention to your partner
- ❖ Not providing answers or solutions
 - Understanding that it is the point that your partner wishes to share with you that is important not finding a solution to the problem

PRACTICE

- ❖ Each couple please discuss the most important issue to you starting with the male. Pay attention to listening skills and emotional support, not finding answers!

FEMALE GENDER TRAITS

- ❖ Women:
 - Insecurities of does he really love me
 - Need for continued romance
 - Emotional security is more important then financial security
 - Listening not solving
 - Only solve a problem when asked
 - Love language
 - Find the easiest way to fill her love bucket
 - If a women doesn't want sex it does not mean she does not want her man
 - Let her know that you only have eyes for her
 - Feldhanhn & Feldhanhn, 2006)



MALE GENDER TRAITS.

- ❖ Man
 - Love does not happen without respect
 - Just because we look com doesn't mean we are
 - Look for the subtle clues before you ask
 - Checking out
 - Men need time to figure it out, it is not you
 - Providing is status and respect
 - Even if it is not needed help him feel he supports you
 - Being wanted sexually is the key
 - Men need to feel like they are wanted in bed
 - Appearance is important
 - You do not need to be a model, but you do need to show you care about how you look to him.

(Feldhahn, 2004)



WARNING

- ❖ Only try future discussion under supervision unless you feel that he have a good understanding of the skills practiced today.

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THANK YOU

- ❖ Practice and solutions can be found

Lesson Plans

Duration: Total Workshop: Minimum: 3 hrs. 30 min. Maximum: 4 hrs. (depending on group size and the amount of discussion). Include 30 to 60 extra min. for breaks to be applied as needed.

Slide One: Differences between Gender Traits that could Impact Happiness in Marriage

Purpose: To provide an introduction as the group members come into the room.

Lesson Plan: Please read through Differences Between Gender Traits that Could Impact Happiness in Marriage to understand the research and discussion about this application. Then practice the presentation so that there is an understanding of how each slide is to be used and how to direct the group to lead to the next part of the presentation.

Duration: Duration: 10-15 minutes

Slide Two: Introductions

Purpose: To provide instruction of how to introduce yourself to the members of the group.

Objective: To save time and provide comfort to the group members, if they forget the instructions before their turn.

Lesson Plan: Provide a short instruction of the above and let each member of the group answer these questions. Before introduction state the following disclosure. "This group may provoke some past frustration over unresolved problems in your relationship.

Please try to keep accusations and blame from the conversation so that we can find the misunderstanding of the problem.”

Duration: 10-15 minutes

Slide Three: Changes in Marriage

Purpose: To provide information about the changes in marriage.

Objective: To relieve personal blame and provide motivation for behavioral change.

Lesson Plan: Use the research of the project to provide answers to questions and provide validation to discussion.

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Slide Four: Social Changes

Purpose: Provide the opportunities for group participation.

Objective: To get a member of each gender to share a view of what this means to them.

Lesson Plan: Ask a group member, both male and female, to share one of the differences between their current relationship and their parents. Direct the conversation with questions if needed.

Goal: For the women and the men of the group to start to see that the gender roles that they were taught may need to change to meet new marriage expectations.

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Slide Five: Discussion on Equality

Purpose: To open up conversation and identify issues.

Objective: To redirect the couples in the group to specific questions that identify values and expectations.

Lesson Plan: Redirect the discussion to gender specific roles with the above question. This slide may not be needed if the group has already progressed in this direction during their discussion.

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Slide Six: Women's Viewpoint

Purpose: To clarify the women's viewpoint on equality.

Objective: To restate the women's viewpoint in simple statements so that they are easily remembered.

Lesson Plan: The above statements should be expanded to include other differences that the women may have provided. Try to use the language used by the client's if possible.

Duration: 20-30 minutes.

Slide Seven: Men's Viewpoint

Purpose: To clarify the men's viewpoint of equality.

Objective: To restate the men's viewpoint in simple statements so that they are easily remembered.

Lesson Plan: The above statements should be expanded to include other differences that the women may have provided. Try to use the language used by the client's if possible.

Duration: 20-30 minutes.

Slide Eight: How to Provide Emotional Support

Purpose: To instruct the couples in Emotional Support.

Objective: To provide an individual tool that can be used to increase communication skills used for emotional support.

Lesson Plan: Teach the above to improve communication skills. Use a couple that appears to have good skills and then provide a bad example with a member you feel comfortable with.

Goal: To teach that unless you listen you can not understand what is being said, nor can you provide emotional support. It is only assumption without listening.

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Slide Nine: Practice

Purpose: Skills Practice

Objective: For the counselor (and assistant if available) to identify listening and emotional support skills with each couple.

Goal: To provide each couple emotional support and a model for future discussions.

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Slide Ten: Female Gender Traits

Purpose: To provide definitions of typical gender expectations.

Objective: To give direction for further discussion on gender.

Lesson Plans: Review gender differences in a simple manor using the group's previous discussion if possible.

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Slide Eleven: Male Gender Traits

Purpose: To provide definitions of typical gender expectations.

Objective: To give direction for further discussion on gender.

Lesson Plans: Review gender differences in a simple manor using the group's previous discussion if possible.

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Slide Twelve: Warning

Purpose: To provide warning of dangers if skills are not sufficient.

Objective: To protect the couples that do not have the skills to address more issues.

Goal: Provide guidance to practice skills under supervision if needed.

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Slide Thirteen: References

Slide Fourteen: Thank You

Purpose: Provide closure

Objective: Provide motivation to develop listening and relationship skills.

Duration: 20-30 minutes