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-A Glimpse of Relationships During First Year of Parenthood:

- A "honeymoon" period often exists during pre-childbirth
- 96% of dads have some involvement in pregnancy phase
- In first six to seven months of child's life, 66% of moms unhappy...but dads don't know why, often feeling like "you wanted this!!"
- After first year of child's life, many dads are then unhappy, feeling like their "old" lives are gone
- Conflict increases eight times in first year of child's life (Gottman)
- 50% of women and 30% of men show signs of depression in first year of child's life (Field)
- Roles become more traditional – can have significant impact on household functioning & division of labor
- 67% of all parents report drop in relationship satisfaction in first year of child's life (Gottman)
- Fathers often withdraw
- Communication & intimacy both decline

-Circular Effects of Healthy Relationship (Gorman):

- Happy Relationship = Happy Children
- Happy Children = Happy Relationship

-Conflict most commonly occurs in "sevens" – i.e. every seven years

-We all make mistakes – key is to repair. Fortunately kids are usually able to "forgive and forget" quite easily.

-You can help your child to achieve following by focusing on quality of relationships within your family:

- Positive social relationships
- Maximized intellectual functioning
- Self-reliance/independence
- Self-regulation
- Ability to cope with stress

- Ability to understand cause & effect
- Ability to manage emotions

-Collective energy within family usually focused as follows:

- 50% on child
- 25% on "other"
- 15% on "me"
- 10% on spouse/partner (should come first!)

-Why is most of the energy focused on the child??

- Child seems the most important
- Fear of "missed opportunities"
- Fear of anger/rejection by child
- Feelings of guilt over limited time/availability
- Social norms & values

-"Children will have many friends in their life. They will only have one mother and one father. Parents need to step up and be that person."

-Oprah Winfrey

-Unhappy Relationships Lead To:

- Increased stress level
- Impulsiveness/poor decision making
- Anger/hostility
- Decreased creativity
- Difficulty problem solving
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Self-consciousness

-What Happens to Children When Parents Are Dissatisfied w/Their Relationship??:

- Parents' interactions with children less positive
- Cognitive delays
- Mental health problems including anxiety/depression
- Increased behavioral problems (Emery)
- Increased physical illness (Gottman)
- Children withdraw from fathers (Dickstein & Parke)
- Parents have more difficulty coordinating with their children

-What Happens to Children if Parents Do Not Coordinate Well??:

- Emotional climate full of hostility, depression, and alienation
- Parents have difficulty reading their child's cues; toddlers can be easily frustrated
- Children may withdraw themselves or become depressed
- Many significant social problems in our society can be traced back to negative emotional climates in families

-If Divorced, Children Do Well If Parents:

Use "emotion coaching"

- Don't put child in "middle"
- Recognize developmental level of child
- Keep friendship & parenting separate
- Consider finding child a support network

-“Masters”: Couples who stay together and are reasonably satisfied

-“Disasters”: Couples whose relationships end, and couples who are miserable but still stay together (for sake of the children)

-In couples married longer than three decades, the quality of friendship between partners is most frequent indicator of marital success

-Gottman could develop sense of couples' compatibility within only three minutes:

- #1 sign of contempt is eye rolling

- #1 indicator of divorce is contempt

-69% of relationship problems will not go away; these issues “come with the person, not with the relationship”

-31% of problems in relationship ARE solvable

-When Conflict Happens in Front of Child:

- Make up physically & verbally (children under age 8 need to see physical repair)
- Let children ask questions
- Use steps of conflict regulation/resolution
- Set up “problem-solving” meeting
- Make meals peaceful
- Timing is everything
- TAKE A BREAK!! (20 minutes is good, even 30 for men)

-Children express worry as early as three months of age (can see it on their forehead)

-Is Your Relationship in Trouble??

- If YES, get help early!
- Most couples wait six years to seek help for a struggling marriage (Gottman)
- “Hold back when you want to let off a zinger, it goes a long way” (Gottman)

-Most Common Conflict Areas (Not in Ranking Order):

- Money
- Kids
- Sex
- Others
- Time

-“The success of a relationship is how a couple handles inevitable disagreements.”

-Why Do Relationships Fail??

- Criticism (suggesting the problem is partner’s character defect)

- Defensiveness (denying responsibility for problem)
- Contempt (makes you sound superior to your partner)
- Stonewalling (listener withdraws from interaction)

#### -How to Make Your Relationship Last??

- Step 1 – Learn to “Turn Towards”:
- o Respond to bids for connection
- o Develop your “emotional bank account”!!
- o Ratio of positive to negative interactions must be 5 to 1
- o Gottman’s research – in happy couples, 83% turn towards each other, and in couples who divorce, this is only 30%
- o Respond to your children!
- Step 2 – Protect Your Friendship:
- o Get to “know one another” – make “love maps” with both your partner and children
- o Express fondness & admiration
- o Recognize positive aspects of your partner’s personality
- o Discover power of praise with your children
- o Create a culture of appreciation!!
- Step 3 – Learn to Recognize and Manage “Flooding”:
- o Be able to soothe yourself
- o During conflicts, take good breaks (again 30 minutes is ideal)
- o Cannot involve “rehearsing” problem
- o Must come back together at designated time for discussion

#### -How Can You Regulate Conflict With Your Kids??

- Understand your child’s normal development
- Develop appropriate expectations for child’s behavior

- Understand role of being “parent” vs “friend”
- Recognize child’s concept of time
- Allow emotional responses
- Give choices!!
- Tell child what TO do instead of what NOT to do!!

-Keys to Family Success:

- Develop family rituals
- Make love maps!!
- Create time and give permission for relaxation
- Schedule your communication
- Listen to one another!!
- Regulate your conflicts
- Find time/energy for intimacy
- Make time for “date nights”
- Create “shared meaning”

-Finding Balance:

- Find time for “calendar coordination” (such as on Sunday evening)
- Ensure “me” time goes on calendar!!
- Find things you enjoy doing/enjoyed doing before kids
- On 3x5 card, write three things you “really want to do” – no questions asked!!

-Questions/Exercises:

- 20 Years From Now:
  - o What are your wishes for your child??
  - o What do you hope your child will be doing??
  - o What do you hope they will tell their friends about their family??

o How will you measure your child's successes??

· Think of one word that describes your relationship with your partner, and one word that describes your relationship with your child