

WHY SHOULD MORE ATTENTION BE DEDICATED TO FAMILY?

Consequences of a Distressed Family for Couples and their Children

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INTRODUCTION

Internationally communities have been suffering from an increased crime rate and other social maladies. However, many of these communities' members, government agencies, private organizations and families have dedicated attention to the symptoms instead of trying to deal with the cause. We have even been trying to fight the wrong symptoms, with the wrong resources. Family, which is the foundation and nucleus of the community, has been overlooked as an important "stakeholder" or contributor to social problems for a prolong time. Consequently we use all our resources trying to fight symptoms of the problem, overlooking family as a major contributor. What we sow in our home will be reaped in the society or the community. If we are sowing "negligence" e.g., no time for family, no resources to support families and focusing our attention only on the financial crisis or other "important issues", then we will reap: augmentation of crime, augmentation of school drop-out, increase in divorce rate, increase in family problems, increase in misbehavior at school, increase in social problems, increase in financial problems, and the list goes on. Family problems may seem very harmless and innocent, but act in a mischievous and subtle way, causing a tsunami of social problems without being perceived. Untrained eyes will not perceive the problem and will continue contributing to it. Communities and government in many countries just like ours (Dutch Caribbean and Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire and the Netherlands) have been making the same mistake, cleaning the leaves that fall from the tree, instead of dealing with the tree. We invest time and tons of money hiring people to clean, instead of investing in families.



There is a Chinese analogy about a man who used to open or clean forests by cutting trees for a living. This man was old and retired. One day as he decided to walk close to one place where the company that he used to work for was working, he saw a strong young man working hard trying to throw down a tree. Based on his years of experience he tried to approach the young man, get his attention and share with him some techniques. The young man was reluctant to stop and not interested to listen. The young man didn't want to be interrupted and kept trying. He tried hard the whole day with the "blunt edge axe" and couldn't be successful in throwing down one tree. At the end the old man insisted and got his attention; he explained to the young man that he could try the whole day trying to throw down the trees and would be unsuccessful and would end up hurting himself. However if he sharpened the edge he would work more efficiently and get better results. Investing in other "symptoms", working hard instead of sharpening our axe, will give no or little results as we strive against social maladies and problems. It is time to invest in families and facilitate families with the proper tools and support. As we invest in families we will see the difference. Bill Clinton once said, "It is the economy, stupid" and this phrase became very famous; it is time for another slogan: "It is family, my dear". (Stupid could be offensive.) Once we try and invest in family, we will see the difference. Behavioral problems at school are related to family, drop-outs are related to family, health problems are related to family (which are not teaching a healthy lifestyle), increases in crime are related to family, increases in divorce rates are related to family problems (couples who come from divorced families tend to get divorced more than couples who come from intact families). Almost all problems in the community and society can be traced to family. Just as problems can be traced back to family, so can the solution be also traced to family. When we invest time, money and resources in family, which is the foundation and nucleus of society, we will make significant contributions to and advancement toward solving social problems and decrease problems in the community.

FACT # 1

The effect of distress and problems on family

Marital distress and family problems direct and indirectly affect the society. Marital problems cause short and long term problems, problems that untrained eyes can see directly but problems which are not perceptible at the beginning. There are also other kinds of problems, which we will call collateral damage. All these problems are of wide scope, even though they are not perceptible at first. Research has shown that family problems and marital distress are linked to or affect children, adults and the community. These are some reasons why communities, school boards, government agencies, private agencies and other entities must invest in families:

A. Reasons that relate to children.

Marital distress alone has been linked to manifestations of stress in children, including:

1. Internalizing and externalizing behavior problems¹
2. Conduct disorders²
3. Poor academic performance³
4. Low self-esteem.⁴
5. Youth crimes including theft, robbery, violence, gambling and sexual crimes⁵
6. Social and Emotional disturbance in school⁶
7. Teen suicide⁷



B. Reasons related to adults and/or couples

Marital distress and family problems also have been linked to adult manifestations of stress, including:

1. Substance abuse, criminal activity, and others
1. Eating disorders
2. Psychopathology⁸
3. Marital battering/domestic violence⁹
4. Depression¹⁰
5. Suicide
6. Financial problems
7. Traumatic divorce, which brings all additional or collateral damage.



¹ Buehler, C, Krishnakumar, A, Stone, G, Anthony, C, Pemberton, S, Gerard, J, & Barber, B. (1998). Interpersonal conflict styles and youth problem behaviors: A two-sample replication study. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60, 119-132.

² Coie, J, Watt, N, Hawkings, S, Ramey, S, Markman, H.J, Long, B, & West, S (1991). Prevention research: Conceptual model of strategies and procedures. Papers presented at the National Prevention Conference, Washington, D.C.

³ Goldberg, J. R. (1993). The business of preventing and treating troubled Marriages. *Family Therapy News*, 24 (5) 1-28.

⁴ Idem

⁵ Hooper, B. (1985). *Youth in China*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.

⁶ Mattison, R E, Morales, J & Bauer, M. A. (1992). Distinguishing characteristics of elementary schoolboys recommended for SED placement. *Behavioral-Disorders*, 17, 107-114.

⁷ Mc Ciure, G.M.G. (1988). Adolescent mental health in China. *Journal of Adolescence*, 11, 1-10.

⁸ Brown, D. R. (1996). Marital status and mental health. In H.W. Neighbors & J.S. Jackson (Eds.), *Mental Health in Black America* (pp. 77-94). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁹ Markman, h. J & Mahlweg, K (1993). The prediction and prevention of marital distress: an international perspective. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 13, 29-43.

¹⁰ Horwitz, A.V., White, H. R., Howell-White, S (1996). The use of multiple outcomes in stress research: A case study of gender differences in response to marital dissolution. *Journal of health and Social behavior*, 37 273-291.

C. Marital distress related to community

Marital distress is related to problems in the workplace and tends to:

1. Decrease work productivity
2. Increase absenteeism¹¹
3. Research shows an average of 30% absenteeism are related to family or marital problems
4. Families in distress or with problems break rules, commit robbery and theft, and are involved in crimes more than other families.
5. Families with problems tend to not pay their taxes and cause more social problems than a healthy family

FACT # 2

Effect of single parents on society

Single parenting or one-parent homes are unwillingly and unconsciously adding to social problems. When fathers do not assume their responsibility and remain in healthy and intact marriages, it brings collateral damage that affects the community in the short and long terms. A divorce may sound simple and innocent; however, it brings in a very subtle tsunami of social consequences and tends to perpetuate problems in place of solving them. Siblings tend to emulate their parent's conduct and tend to end up having the same relationships their parent had. In some countries 65% of homes are single-parent. Absence of the father figure can be devastating for a child's development; both boys and girls are affected due to the absence of father figure at home. Research shows the following:

1. Children who grow without a father figure are five times more at risk to live in poverty¹².
2. Children who grow up without a father have 50% more risk of abandoning school and looking for a job.
3. Children who grow up without a father are more at risk to drop-out of secondary school.
4. Children who grow up without a father are more at risk to get pregnant.
5. 75% of patients in rehabilitation centers and other mental health facilities are people who grew up or were raised without a father.
6. 63% of teens who commit suicide are teens who grew up without their father.¹³
7. 85% of detainees or prisoners grew up without a father figure.¹⁴

Men and women complement each other; both play an important role in the lives of children and both contribute significantly to bringing balance in the development of a child. The capacity of a young child to relate to society and contribute depends on the job done by parents and the contribution or investment that both made in their child. When the man leaves, he takes 50% of the child's possibility for healthy development; the mother should do extremely well and make use of other family members and resources to complement or to do a good job--in other words, to compensate.



FACT # 3

Modern families are unaware of the damage media can cause and need the proper tools to deal with this two-edged sword.

The Internet is a powerful and effective tool; however, it brings dangers and collateral damages that can be critical. Modern families need the proper tools and information in order to be able to deal with the Internet effectively and avoid potential

¹¹ Forthofer, M.S., Markman, H.J., Cox, M, M., Stanley, S., & Kessler, R.C. (1996). Associations between marital distress and work loss in a national sample. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58, 597-605.

¹² Richard Andrew. Absent Fathers and Awful Statistics-Part One. <http://fatherhood.families.com/blog/absent-fathers-and-the-awful-statistics-part-one>.

¹³ U.S Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of the Census Claudio Rize. 2003. El Padre ausente. <http://kaire.wikidot.com/el=padre-ausente-2>

¹⁴ Julio Brochak Cambra. Consecuencia de la ausencia del Padre varon en los hijos. [http. www.Secuestro_emocional.org./main/efectos-ausencia-padre.htm](http://www.Secuestro_emocional.org./main/efectos-ausencia-padre.htm)

damage. The Internet is a powerful tool in the multimillion dollar business of pornography. Pornography through the Internet is causing a tsunami of damage to marriages and consequently to society. "Just one click away" has made a video clip that contains important information to make families aware of the dangers of internet and offering resources for help.¹⁵

Research shows that the reason for so many family problems, infidelity and marital dissatisfaction is related to the misuse of the Internet. Research shows some alarming facts, such as:

1. Of the seven billion people populating our planet, 2.2 billion are online daily.
2. On daily basis there are 247 billion e-mails and 5 billion text messages send
3. In the U.S. alone 40% of children will go online
4. There are 2.5 billion pornographic e-mails circulating daily
5. World statistics show that in 2010 the average hour per person on the Internet were 18 hours.
6. Pornography through the Internet tends to make spouses lose sexual appetites for their partners. More than 50% of partners who watch porn lose sexual interest in their spouses and according to the lawyers who specialize in divorce, 68% of divorces are related to dating or online porn...so the cause can be traced to the Internet.
7. 20% of women are addicted to Internet porn.
8. Internet has surpassed TV when it concerns a child's interest.
9. The percentage of children who receive pornographic spam on a daily basis is 47%.
10. The average age that a child sees the first pornographic image is nine years due to the Internet.
11. 90% of children between 8-16 years will see pornography on the Internet, and this is in the U.S. alone.
12. The pornography industry informed that 20-30% of their clientele are children...they are constantly online.
13. The percentage of Christians who see pornography on the Internet is alarming, 50%. Experts are saying that the Internet has increased infidelity by 300%.
14. 80% of children between the ages of 15-17 will be exposed to "hard-core" porn.
15. There are more than a billion porn websites.

This indicates that families are in great need of help, support and proper tools. Experts are aware that families are in need of urgent professional guidance in order to know how to deal with these new phenomena. When we consider that 30 years ago families didn't have these types of challenges to deal with, we understand why parents are so frustrated: They have not received the tools to deal with this new development. Know-how and 21st century parenting skills are needed to deal with current challenges. Families need updated, state of the art guidance and cutting edge tools to deal with these new parenting challenges. That's why we offer help through our counselors and experts. Our Center is joining other organizations in the frontline in order to support and provide professional help as families face new challenges and new demands.

WHY SHOULD WE DEDICATE MORE ATTENTION TO FAMILIES?

FACT # 4

Social scientists discovered 26 reasons why marriage should be promoted and supported

The importance of marriage is fading away in the minds of the new generations in many countries. The indomitable high rates of divorce are challenging whoever is contemplating marriage as a reasonable alternative. Some even consider marriage and being happy as a myth and intellectually not defensible. However, research shows that marriage matters and is here to stay. With the proper support of community, government, private agencies and other entities, marriage will maintain its position as one of the most important institutions on earth. Fifteen scientists under the guidance of W. Bradford Wilcox from the University of Virginia concluded that marriage is an important institution and



¹⁵ <http://www.just1clickaway.org/> or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlnYrsZ7r-8>

must be supported. Marriage is better than cohabitation and all other new alternatives we might think of.

Why Marriage Matters: 26 Conclusions from the Social Sciences:¹⁶

Family

1. Marriage increases the likelihood that fathers and mothers have good relationships with their children.
2. Cohabitation is not the functional equivalent of marriage.
3. Growing up outside an intact marriage increases the likelihood that children will themselves divorce or become unwed parents.
4. Marriage is a virtually universal human institution.
5. Marriage, and a normative commitment to marriage, fosters high-quality relationships between adults, as well as between parents and children.
6. Marriage has important biosocial consequences for adults and children.



Economics

7. Divorce and unmarried childbearing increase poverty for both children and mothers.
8. Married couples seem to build more wealth on average than singles or cohabiting couples.
9. Marriage reduces poverty and material hardship for disadvantaged women and their children.
10. Minorities benefit economically from marriage.
11. Married men earn more money than do single men with similar education and job histories.
12. Parental divorce (or failure to marry) appears to increase children's risk of school failure.
13. Parental divorce reduces the likelihood that children will graduate from college and achieve high status jobs.

Physical Healthy and Longevity

14. Children who live with their own two married parents enjoy better physical health, on average, than do children in other family forms.
15. Parental marriage is associated with a sharply lower risk of infant mortality.
16. Marriage is associated with reduced rates of alcohol and substance abuse for both adults and teens.
17. Married people, especially married men, have longer life expectancies than do similar singles.
18. Marriage is associated with better health and lower rates of injury, illness, and better disability for both men and women.
19. Marriage seems to be associated with better health among minorities and the poor.

Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being

20. Children whose parents divorce have higher rates of psychological distress and mental illness.
21. Divorce appears to significantly increase the risk of suicide.
22. Married mothers have lower rates of depression than do single or cohabiting mothers.
23. Boys raised in single- parent families are more likely to engage in delinquent and criminal behavior.

¹⁶ The Twenty-Six Conclusions: A Snapshot. Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-Six Conclusions from the Social Sciences. Institute for American Values, 2005. <http://center.americanvalues.org/?p=7>

24. Marriage appears to reduce the risk that adults will be either perpetrators or victims of crime.
25. Married women appear to have a lower risk of experiencing domestic violence than do cohabiting or dating women.
26. A child who is not living with his or her own two married parents is a greater risk for child abuse.
 - When we speak about marriages we refer to healthy marriages
 - This is what research shows; however, there may be exceptions.

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FACT # 5

Infidelity is causing subtle and imperceptible long term damage

Infidelity is causing a tsunami of marital problems, bringing many social consequences that are not easy perceptible at the beginning of an affair for those involved. According to sociologist and expert Glenn Norval of the University of Texas, 74-80% of marriages will have be confronted or have to deal with infidelity. Other experts give more conservative numbers, e.g., therapist Peggy Vaugh suggests 40-60% of couples will be confronted with episodes of marital infidelity. Research shows that:

1. 86% of man and 81% of women admit that they flirt on daily basis at their jobs with the opposite sex.¹⁷
2. 60% of infidelity happens on the job or at work.
3. In 150 different cultures, infidelity is the main reason for divorce.¹⁸
4. Only 24% of marriages will experience “stay together till death do us apart”, as the vows indicate.



Infidelity causes substantial damage to a relationship and it will generally take approximately two to two and half years for a marriage to heal from the wound of infidelity. When infidelity causes divorce, it brings consequences not only for the couple but also for the children. Sometimes the collateral damage of infidelity to a marriage is irreparable. Professional help is needed when couples are facing this challenge. You may have questions that need to be answered on this topic, such as: Why does an affair happen? What are the seven reasons? Why do men fall into an affair and what are the 11 reasons women fall into an affair? Which are the most common myths regarding an affair? Which phases does an affair pass through? What are the most common types of affair? What are the signs of an affair? How does one recover from an affair? What and how can one deal with the pain caused by an affair? Our specialists are ready to help you deal with the issue of an affair; they will give you all the support and professional guidance you need.

¹⁷ Vaugh, P. “The Monogamy Myth”

¹⁸ Betzig, L. (1989). "Causes of conjugal dissolution: A cross-cultural study." *Current Anthropology* 30(5): 654-676.