

## Family Benefits From Strong Marriage

You have likely heard the statement, “The best thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.” Actually, one of the best things parents can do for each other – as well as their children – is to build and nurture a strong marriage.

What are some of the benefits?

Married couples...

- live up to eight years longer than others
- have fewer mental health problems
- have greater financial stability
- save more money

Children are less likely to...

- live in poverty
- experience mental health or emotional problems
- abuse drugs and alcohol
- drop out of school

### What can a couple do to strengthen their marriage and family?

**Stay committed to each other and your family.** Commitment is put to the test when challenges and difficult issues come along.

What will you do? Choose to honestly work through the issues, or emotionally move away from each other to avoid confrontation? Strong commitment will give you the courage to face challenges and make changes as the marriage develops.

**Communicate.** Don’t just check your calendars to see who is running the kids to the next soccer practice. Really communicate with each other and your children. Talk about what has happened during your day, what you have learned, how you feel about events going on in the world.

**“I” messages.** When difficult issues arise (and they will) learn to share your thoughts with “I” messages rather than “You.” This seemingly simple change in how feelings are stated accomplishes a lot. You take responsibility for your own feelings and avoid the blame game. It opens the door to true communication instead of escalating the conflict.

**Spend plenty of enjoyable time together.** As you plan your day, include time with your spouse.

Yes, work or hobbies are important – even essential. But where are your priorities? Your spouse will notice and feel valued when time with them is high on your list. Find things you enjoy doing as a couple – things that don't cost a lot of money.

**Spending enjoyable time with your family is important, too.** Eating meals together can bring your family closer. Great times and memories happen around the kitchen table! Additional ideas might be playing card or table games together, taking walks or bike rides, or making videos or slide shows to send to grandparents.

**Let your spouse and each family member know they are loved and appreciated.** Say “I love you.” You may think they already know that you love them, but hearing the words sends a powerful message. Let each one know that their place in the family is important, and you notice the things they do to contribute to the family. Surprise each other with little notes of encouragement tucked in a lunch box or under a pillow.

Every couple has difficult times, but the benefits of working through the problems rather than choosing to divorce are well worth the effort.

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Source: *Take Back Your Marriage*, Dr. William Doherty

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