

November 2017
Webinar

Shifting the Field to Prioritize Relationship Education for Youth

*With Dr. Alan Hawkins,
Brigham Young University*

Webinar Information

If you are unable to access audio through your computer, please use your phone:

+1 (415) 930-5321/access code: 772-974-053.

All attendees are muted.

Ways to participate:

- Type your questions in the “Questions” box
- Answer the poll questions
- Raise your hand questions.

This webinar will be archived at:

www.dibbleinstitute.org/webinar-archives/

Charlie and Helen Dibble





The Dibble Institute

Resources for Teaching Relationship Skills



The Dibble Institute
Relationship Skills for Teens and Young Adults

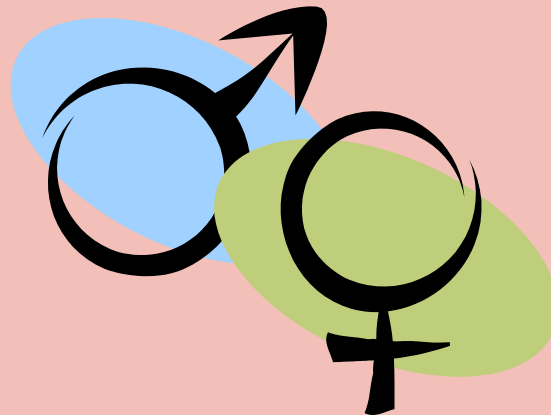
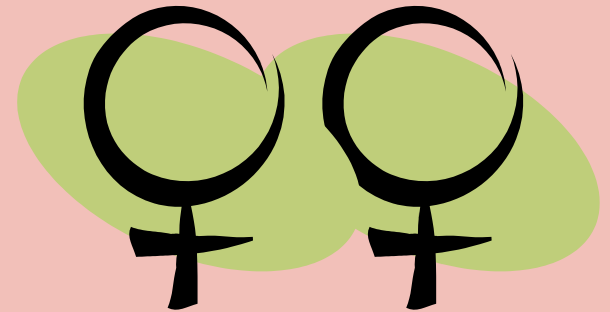
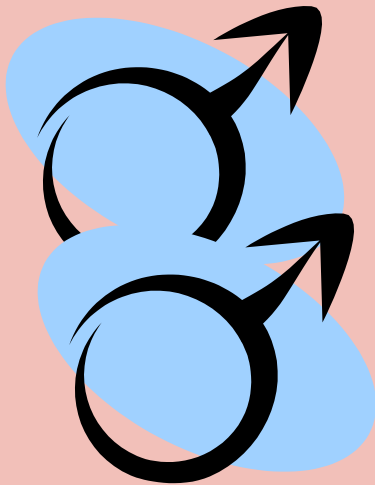
The Dibble Institute believes in
research.



The Dibble Institute believes in
stable, healthy families.



The Dibble Institute believes
all people deserve respect.



PRESENTER:



Dr. Alan Hawkins

Professor, School of Family Life
Brigham Young University



SHIFTING THE FIELD TO PRIORITIZE RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION FOR YOUTH

Dr. Alan J. Hawkins

Brigham Young University

hawkinsa@byu

Dibble Institute Webinar
November 7, 2017

Couple RE vs. Individually-Oriented RE

There is a reason that the most common abbreviation for our field is CRE.

RE evaluation research 1975-2016 = 262 studies

- Target = couples: 227 studies (87%)
- Target = young individuals: 35 studies (13%)
(but uptick over last decade)

Do we need to re-prioritize our efforts?

Will Youth Be Receptive to RE?

- 75% of teens: “Having a good marriage is extremely important to me.”
- 80% of young adults: “It is important to me to be married some day.”
 - Only minor variations by race, class.

But are aspirations alone enough for youth to arrive safely at their marital destinations?

- Big barriers and lengthy detours

Scholarly Voices

- *“[I]ntervening earlier in relationship development, before individuals are committed or perhaps even partnered, has the potential to have an even greater impact on improving relationship quality” [than interventions for couples already committed to marriage].*

- Galena Rhoades & Scott Stanley (2009)

Scholarly Voices

- *“Adolescent romantic relationships [are] a key period during which the foundations of healthy adult marriages may be strengthened.”*

- Ben Karney & Colleagues (2007)

Scholarly Voices

- *“We are failing to equip our youth with the ideas, tools, and practices to know how to negotiate their romantic and sexual lives in healthy, nondestructive ways that prepare them to achieve the happy, functional marriages and families that most of them say they want in future years.”*

- Christian Smith & Colleagues (2011)

Scholarly Voices

- *“There is little effort from any institutional source aimed at helping emerging adults consider how their present social, romantic, and sexual experiences shape or war against their vision of marriage.”*

- Mark Regnerus & Jeremy Uecker (2011)

Scholarly Voices

- “Relationships” should become the 4th-R in school.

- Frank Fincham (2012)

Scholarly Voices

- 70% of 18-to-25-year-olds reported wishing they had received more information and help from their parents about some emotional aspect of a romantic relationship
- 65% reported wishing they had received guidance on romantic relationships in a health or sex education class at school

- Richard Weissbourd, Making Caring Common Project, Harvard University (2017)

CRE vs. RE

- Once couples commit to a permanent union and marriages form, it is still important to support those relationships, but . . .
- . . . **there may be only so much that can be achieved when these marriages are formed on weaker foundations, and . . .**
- . . . **too many marriages begin at lower levels of marital quality.**

Can we help?

Prevention vs. Intervention

- Large proportions of couples in CRE report they are in substantial distress
- Before forming long-term relationships, young people can learn to:
 - avoid the pitfalls of problematic relationship formation,
 - follow safer behavioral paths to healthy and stable marriages, or
 - terminate high-risk relationships before marriage and parenting.

The Need for More YRE

YRE = Youth Relationship Education (teens & young adults)

Four bodies of research document:

1. Potholes in teen romantic relationships
2. Problematic paths, dangerous detours in route to marital destination
3. Low quality starts to marital journeys
4. Marital road repair work is hard

The Need for More YRE

Potholes in Youth Romantic Relationships:

- By age 18, two thirds of adolescents have been in a romantic relationship (most lasting more than a year)
- 30%–40% of young adult romantic relationships involve some kind of relationship violence
- Delayed marriage but not delayed relationships, sex, cohabitation, parenthood

The Need for More YRE

Problematic paths, dangerous detours:

Premarital relationship patterns → marital quality:

- 30% of newlywed couples experienced premarital “churning/cycling” (related to higher risk of abuse)
- Early initiation of sex in relationship
- “Sliding” through key relationship transitions
- Premarital cohabitation (before commitment to future)
 - Serial cohabitation
 - Premarital childbearing

The Need for More YRE

Low quality starts to marital journeys; how it starts matters to how it ends:

- 1/2 husbands, 1/3 wives reported significant doubts about marrying prior to marriage, so . . .
 - 2/3 marriages: 1+ spouses had doubts
 - Doubts → lower quality, higher divorce risk
- 40% men, 30% women report starting marriage at low-moderate satisfaction → higher divorce risk
- **Problems that lead to an eventual divorce are usually present from beginning of the marriage**

The Need for More YRE

Marital road repair work is hard:

- Distressed couples usually do not seek help before divorcing
- When they do, usually crisis point = harder to help
- Among those thinking about divorce:
 - 25% sought counseling
 - 15% talked to religious leader
 - 10% took CRE class
- Counseling success: about half report resolving major problems (but significant relapse over time)

Does YRE Work? Early Evidence

- Meta-analysis of YRE Evaluation Studies ($k = 30$):
 - Control-group studies: $d = .36$ ($k = 17$; $U3 = .65$)
 - 1-group/pre-post studies: $d = .47$ ($k = 13$; $U3 = .68$)
 - Improved knowledge of healthy relationships
 - Increased relationship skills
 - Decreased faulty relationship beliefs
 - Increased disapproval of relationship aggression
 - Reduced pregnancy risk
- **BIG BUT . . . lacking long-term follow-up studies of relationship-formation behavior**
- Need major multi-site RCT study (by ACF?)

What about Marriage Prep Education?

- Only 30-40% couples invest in formal MPE (quality??)
- Meta-analysis of 50 studies : Improved skills
 - But need to assess for less educated engaged couples
- Couples who invested in MPE 2-3 times more likely to seek out marital counseling when problems arise
- MPE programs may need to be adapted to 21st Century relationship formation challenges
- **Need for effective MPE never greater!**

Implications for RE Practice and Policy

- Give greater priority to YRE
- Parents need to step up
- Religious organizations need to step up
- Schools need to step up (4th R)
- Positive Youth Development programs need to step up
- Colleges need to step up (especially 2- & 4-year colleges)
- Researchers need to step up: need for rigorous evaluation studies (RCTs)

To read more:

Hawkins, A. J. (2017). Shifting the relationship education field to prioritize youth relationship education. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/m5thFt69bK83PpY98mTZ/full>

QUESTIONS?

Thank You for Joining Us Today!

There is a brief survey after the end of this webinar. Thank you for providing us your feedback!

Webinar will be available in 3 days:

www.DibbleInstitute.org/webinars

Questions? Contact:

Irene Varley- Irene@Dibbleinstitute.org

Cathy Guidry- Cathy@Dibbleinstitute.org

Keep In Touch!

- www.DibbleInstitute.org
- Subscribe to our newsletter
- Like us on FaceBook
- Follow us on LinkedIn
- RelationshipSkills@dibbleinstitute.org
- 800-695-7975

December 2017
Happy Holidays!

From Freakanomics Radio –

We invite you to listen to the following podcast as it clearly lays out the argument for marriage as a values vs. economic decision.

The Fracking Boom, a Baby Boom, and the Retreat from Marriage

Speakers:

Stephen J. Dubner, Host, Freakanomics Radio

Melissa Kearney: Professor in the Department of Economics at the University of Maryland