

USU EXTENSION IMPACTS: HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



The relationships we have with others impact our personal health, professional effectiveness, and quality of life. Unhealthy relationships impact not only individuals, children, and families, but the effects extend to the workplace and society in general. One report estimates that divorce and unwed childbearing costs taxpayers in Utah \$276 million every year.

Healthy Relationships Utah, a Utah State University Extension initiative, has a long history of successful programs and partnerships. The initiative supports an array of services as part of an overall strategy to promote healthier relationships in Utah. Through grants provided

by Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy Relationships Utah is able to provide free, research-based relationship education courses in communities, jails, high schools, and at many DWS facilities throughout the state. We hope you enjoy reading about how our programs help promote healthy relationships.

— Brian Higginbotham, USU Extension associate vice president



PROTECTING FAMILIES IN UTAH

USU Extension offers a variety of programs statewide that provide individuals with resources to enhance their relationships. Educational opportunities include such things as marriage relationship conferences, date nights, healthy relationships classes, divorce education, and underage drinking prevention programs.

2016 PROGRAMMING

Total times programs
were offered:

832



Number of
participants reached:

15,835



Community partners
participating:

715



COMMENTS FROM PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS:

“Great activity and information for parents to use with underage drinking.” 

“We are more ‘intentional’ about our marriage.” 



SMART STEPS CLASSES FOR STEPFAMILIES

As a resource to the increasing number of blended families, USU offers remarriage and stepfamily education. In collaboration with community-based agencies, classes are offered in various locations in Utah at no cost to married and non-married couples with stepchildren.

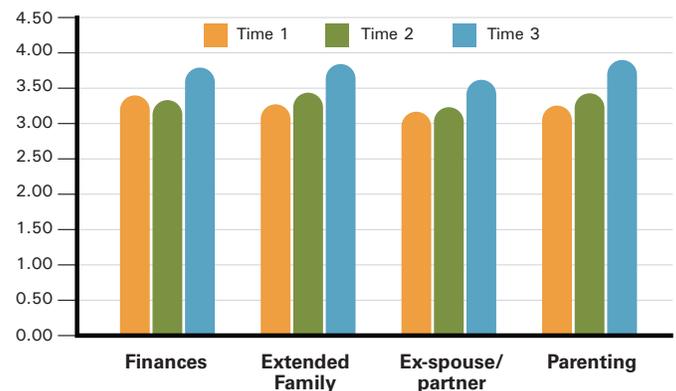
Parents' ages range from 18 to 80, with an average age of 36. Each year, approximately 500 couples participate. Children between the ages of 6 and 17 attend with their parents.

Participants receive six sessions of the *Smart Steps: Embrace the Journey* curriculum in English or Spanish. Adults and children meet separately, then combine for a family activity. Skills such as communication, conflict management, and stepparenting are taught. Participants complete an evaluation about their level of knowledge or skill before (Time 1), after the class (Time 2), and one month later (Time 3).

Results from the evaluations indicate stepfamily education is effective, that relationship quality is enhanced through program participation, and that positive program effects are sustained and continue after the classes.



Mean scores of Agreement on Key Relational Issues



Individuals in this subsample reported increased agreement with their partner on key relational issues: finances, dealing with family/relatives, dealing with ex-spouses/partners, and parenting.

PARENTING AND RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

The Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) has partnered with USU Extension to offer relationship education in select DWS locations, communities, and schools.

FROM JULY THROUGH DECEMBER 2016:

14
EDUCATORS
SERVED

13
UTAH
COUNTIES

Courses offered in:

HIGH SCHOOLS
DWS OFFICES
COMMUNITY AGENCIES
throughout the state

5,633
participants in
6 MONTHS

3 research-based, healthy relationship curricula were offered:

HOW TO AVOID FALLING FOR A JERK/JERKETTE

for high school students to teach steps to build healthy and safe relationships.

COUPLE LINKS

for adults in committed relationships to help them understand differences, increase trust and dependability, and develop a deeper commitment.

PARENTING THE LOVE AND LOGIC WAY®

teaches parents how to raise responsible children and have fun in their parenting role.

FATHERHOOD EDUCATION

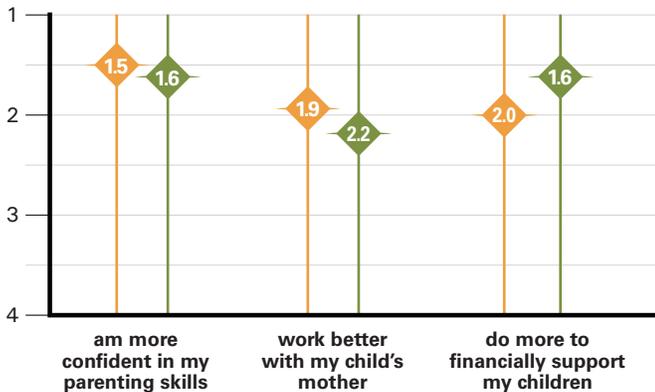


Fathers are traditionally an underserved population for relationship education programs. For this reason, in the summer of 2016, Healthy Relationships Utah began offering fatherhood-specific programs. Approximately 150 father and father-figures are served each month.

Fatherhood programming includes three research-based curricula: *Fathering with Love and Logic*[®] teaches fathers skills for raising responsible children and enjoying parenting; *Home Run Dads* uses a sports theme to help fathers strengthen their relationship with their child(ren) and learn skills for healthy relationships, and *InsideOut Dad*[®] is offered exclusively to incarcerated fathers looking to connect with their children.

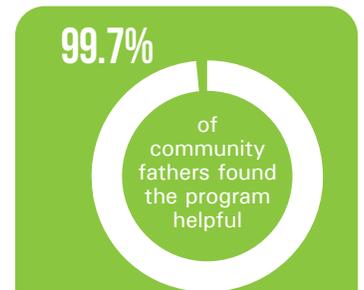
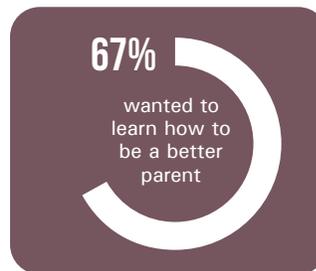
PARTICIPANT DATA

Since attending the program, participants reported:



1 - Strongly Agree
4 - Strongly Disagree

◆ Community Fathers
◆ Incarcerated Fathers



MARRIAGE PROGRAMS

Marriage Survival is a 6-week course where couples spend time building stronger relationships as they learn better communication skills, build financial goals, work on commitment, and guard against issues that hurt relationships. Those who have attended report that they gained relationship skills and that classes enriched their desire to maintain a strong marriage.

Research shows relationship education significantly impacts participants':



The Northern Utah Marriage Celebration, a date night of education and entertainment, is held every February with the goal of helping couples gain knowledge and learn skills to strengthen their relationships. The event usually draws a crowd of nearly 700 people each year from across the Wasatch Front and occasionally other states.

58% of respondents felt that the conference addressed their main relationship concern, problem, or question either "quite a bit" or "a lot."

99% of respondents indicated they talked to their partner about what they learned at the conference within 2 weeks following the event.

Those who attended other healthy relationship events for couples such as the date nights and Marriage Survival also completed evaluations and indicated similar impacts.

DIVORCE EDUCATION

There are approximately 10,000 divorces each year in Utah. The Utah legislature requires divorcing parents, with minor children, to take a divorce orientation course and a divorce education course. Utah State University Extension is the approved provider for the online offerings. Per Utah Code (Section 30-3-11.3 & 30-3-11.4), the courses:

- Educate parties about divorce and reasonable alternatives.
- Educate and sensitize divorcing parties to their children's needs both during and after the divorce process.

Couples without minor children are not required, but may choose to attend. The courses are accessible via usuextension.digitalchalk.com.

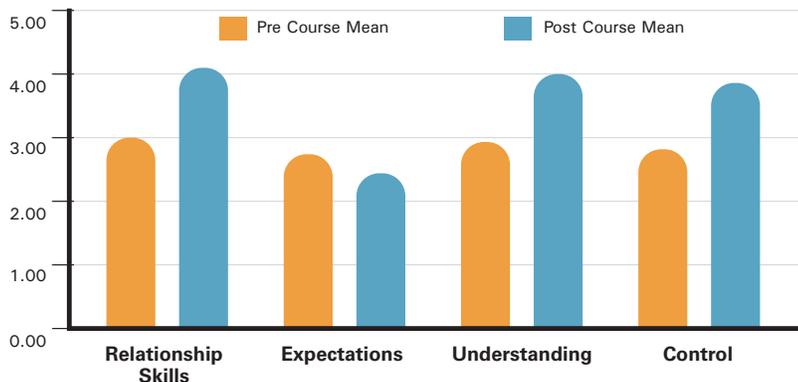


HIGH SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION



A youth version of the *How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk/Jerkette* curriculum is used with high school students during health and adult role classes. In 2016, Extension served approximately 9,000 teens in 30 schools. Participants in this course learn the steps to build a healthy and safe relationship. Topics include healthy relationship skills and keys to effective personal change and growth (relationship skills), unrealistic relationship expectations (expectations), understanding of healthy relationship behaviors (understanding), and awareness of warning signs of potentially dangerous partner attributes (control). Pre-to-post evaluations document statistically significant improvements in all targeted outcomes.

Program Outcomes - High School Sites



"Expectations" is reverse coded - the decrease indicates fewer unrealistic relationship expectations.

"I enjoyed learning how all the things you do in a relationship impact your future relationships in a major way."

"I learned how to spot warning signs and really get to know somebody before starting a relationship."