

A decorative border of various green tropical leaves, including palm fronds and monstera leaves, frames the entire page.

Dating **SURVIVAL**

Building Strong Relationships

**Curriculum Developed
by**

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**For more information on receiving a copy of the full
curriculum please see www.marriagesurvival.org**

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Dating Survival: Building Strong Relationships

Course Overview

Course Goals:

- 1. To provide resources to promote building strong and healthy marriages and families.**
- 2. To provide individuals with skills to build stronger relationships.**
- 3. To better understand key components of selecting a healthy partner.**

The four lessons presented in this course are:

Lesson 1 – Building Healthy and Fun Relationships

Lesson 2 – Building Strong Communication Skills

Lesson 3 – Getting to Know You

Lesson 4 – Dating Safety

Each lesson includes an overview, leader guide, PowerPoint, handouts, and interactive activities.

EXTENSION 
UtahStateUniversity

The entire page is framed by a lush border of various tropical plants, including large green leaves, palm fronds, and smaller ferns, creating a jungle-like atmosphere.

MARRIAGE **SURVIVAL**TM

Building Strong Relationships

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UtahStateUniversity
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



Marriage Survival: Building Strong Relationships

Course Overview

Course Goals:

- 1. To provide resources to promote strong and healthy marriage and families.**
- 2. To encourage couples to spend time in positive activities together.**
- 3. To provide couples with marriage skills to build stronger relationships.**

“The first bond of society is marriage.” - Cicero, over 2,000 years ago
(www.famousquotes.com/author/cicero/4)

Marriage is the foundation of the family and the family is the foundation of society. When we strengthen marriages, we strengthen families, children and communities. (www.heritage.org/issues/family-and-marriage)

Most Americans will choose to marry. However, over half of these marriages will end in divorce. This coursework is designed to strengthen marriages and families.

The six lessons presented in this course are:

- Lesson 1 – Committing to Your Relationship
- Lesson 2 – Building Strong Communication
- Lesson 3 – Strengthening Your Relationship
- Lesson 4 – Your Money Relationship
- Lesson 5 – Building Safe and Happy Relationships
- Lesson 6 – Blending Families

Each lesson includes an overview, leader guide, PowerPoint, handouts, and activities. A Date Night Activities section (Section II) is included for ideas of additional couple activities. Section III contains additional resources such as ice breakers, interactive tools and games, and homework assignments for lesson enhancement.



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Dating SURVIVAL

Communication Is Sweet

Practice makes perfect! In this activity we will practice using “I” statements and reflective listening.

Instructions:

Have participants pair up with someone for the activity.

Provide a lollipop/sucker for each person.

Have participants take turns sharing a statement and reflect back the message that was shared. It may be helpful to share the following fill-in-the-blank sentence to get them started:

“I feel _____ when _____, because _____.”

EXAMPLE: Person number one might say, “I feel *anxious* when *my friend is late meeting me*, because *I worry that something might have happened to him*.”

Person two would then respond with a reflective listening statement:

“I _____ that you _____ when _____.”

For example, “I *sense* that you *are concerned about your friend* when *he is late meeting you*. Is that right?”

Pick one person to start the conversation, and have the other put the sucker in his or her mouth. Then continue the conversation with the following rules.

1. Only one person can speak at a time.
2. To indicate your desire to speak, pull the sucker out of your mouth and hold it in front of you.
3. If your partner pulls his/her sucker out, you are to finish your immediate thought and put your sucker back into your mouth.
4. While the sucker is in your mouth, concentrate on what your partner is trying to say.
5. When you are ready to respond, pull the sucker out and let your partner finish his or her thought. Ideally, you reflect what you heard your partner say before adding your response.

Did both of you talk? Did both of you listen? If, after your conversation, one of your suckers is gone while the other is barely licked, one person has dominated the conversation or the other hasn't participated beyond listening.

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"I" Statements and Reflective Listening

"I" Statements (How you feel)

I find it difficult...
 I get upset...
 I seem to get...
 I have often felt that...
 I feel intimidated...
 I feel unappreciated when...
 I'm worried that something will go wrong if...
 My concern is that...
 I get really anxious when...
 I get really scared when...
 I feel hurt when...
 I want to...
 I would like...
 What I'd like to see happen is...
 It would be nice if...
 I feel tired when...
 I feel angry when...
 I feel sad that...
 I feel happy when...
 I don't like it when...
 I want us to be able to work this out together...

Reflective Listening (Paraphrasing)

I understand the problem as...
 I see the situation as...
 I'm sensing...
 Did you say...
 Could it be that...
 I wonder if...
 Correct me if I'm wrong...
 I get the impression that...
 Let me see if I understand. You...
 As I hear it, you...
 You feel...
 From your point of view...
 It seems to you...
 In your experience...
 From where you stand...
 As you see it...
 You think...
 You believe...
 What I hear you saying is...
 I'm picking up that you...
 I really hear you saying that...

Time Capsule Letter

Often people get married without having serious discussions about their compatibility and other important topics. Also, because “love is blind,” we often let our emotions choose our partners without seeing the whole picture. While some of our ideas may change with time, the things that matter most usually stay pretty consistent over time.

Instructions:

Write a letter to yourself or future partner sharing what is important to you in a relationship. When you are done, seal it in an envelope and put it in a safe place. Open the letter when you ready to become committed in a relationship.

This letter can be used to remind you of what you really want in a relationship and/or start a discussion with the person you want to be with. For example, you could say “I want ____ children and I want to raise them ____ way,” or “I want ____ (religion, athletics, vacations, etc.) to be a part of our lives;” and then discuss with your partner to check your compatibility in those areas.

Top 10 Qualities I Am Looking For in a Mate

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Dear _____:

Section #1: Being a couple: How we will relate to each other (respect, boundaries, etc.), how we will spend time as a couple, how we will communicate and resolve conflicts, etc.

Section #2: Creating a family: Thoughts about raising children, spending time as a family, what values, religion or spirituality you want as part of your family, etc.

Section #3: Living in reality: Financial expectations, plans for school and work, where you want to live, division of work around the home, etc.

Section #4: Summary of all of the qualities and anything else you think would be important to add.