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Helping Organizations Retain Their Most Valuable Asset

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Tips on Choosing a Summer Camp

While it's challenging to find the best camp for your child, this checklist will provide you with some basic guidelines for making this very important decision.

- What is the director's age and background? How long has the director run this camp?
- What are the camp's goals and philosophy?
- What is the schedule like? Is it a structured program or one that emphasizes a lot of free choice?
- What is the camper-counselor ratio?
- What percentage of campers return each year?
- What is the total cost of the camp including extras?
- How does the camp insure the safety and security of its campers?
- What is the policy about food packages, letters home, and TV?
- What medical facilities are available and what medical staff is on campus?
- Is there a refund policy if the camper leaves early?
- What happens when the weather is bad?
- How does the camp program meet individual needs and differences?
- Will the program encourage the child to try new things or things he or she is not skilled in?
- How structured is the program? Are there electives (choices the child can make)?
- Is your child willing to make a commitment to spending a major portion of the day in one activity or sport?

If you need further assistance regarding summer camps, do not hesitate to contact HMS.

Source: National Camp Association, Inc.

What makes a marriage work?

Periods of conflict, frustration or anger are an inevitable part of every marriage simply because they are in the fabric of all human relationships. Why are some couples able to work through their disagreements or frustrations and survive and thrive, while others end up in a vicious cycle of negative feelings, emotional distancing and deterioration that leads to divorce?

Staying together

Contrary to popular belief, it's not how much you love each other that will best determine the future of your relationship, but how you handle conflicts and disagreements. Couples that stay together disagree about just as many things and the same things - money, time, housework, sex, priorities, the kids, etc. - as couples that divorce. The difference is that those in successful marriages know how to manage conflict in a constructive and positive way.

Researchers from two major research labs in the United States have found that the likelihood of divorce can be predicted by studying how couples handle conflict. Disagreement isn't predictive of divorce. Fighting isn't predictive of divorce. Criticizing, stubbornness, withdrawal and arguing that includes put-downs, accusations and rejections is predictive of divorce.

Over time, these negative patterns of dealing with conflict steadily erode all the good things in the relationship, ultimately leading to a relationship overwhelmed by negative feelings.

The magic 5:1 ratio

Researchers studying relationships report that stable couples don't allow their relationship to be overrun by negative feelings. In fact, they say, successful couples maintain a healthy balance between their positive and negative encounters with each other. They don't avoid disagreements. They don't avoid arguing. But they do balance out any negative interactions with positive feelings and actions like showing interest, being affectionate, showing they care, being appreciative, smiling, paying compliments, laughing, showing concern, etc.

Interestingly, a very specific ratio exists between the amount of positivity and negativity in a successful relationship. That ratio is 5 to 1. In other words,

MARRIAGES AND RELATIONSHIPS STAYING TOGETHER



stable couples have at least five times as many positive interactions in their relationship as negative ones.

How to resolve conflicts constructively

By learning to resolve conflicts and manage disagreements constructively, you can limit negative encounters with your partner and strengthen the positive side of your relationship. Follow these guidelines:

1. Eliminate negative communication styles
Are you or your partner guilty of any of the communication styles below? Negative ways of interacting sabotage any attempts at constructive communication, erode positive feelings and are devastating to a relationship.

- _____ □ criticizing your partner's opinions,
- _____ □ making accusations feelings or desires
- _____ □ putting down the thoughts, feelings,
- _____ □ avoiding disagreements or actions or worth
- _____ □ of partner important discussions
- _____ □ name calling
- _____ □ disregarding
- _____ □ insensitivity
- _____ □ withdrawing from conflicts
- _____ □ stonewalling
- _____ □ bringing up past hurts

2. Learn how to listen
Constructive and positive communication begins

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with genuinely attempting to understand the other person's point of view, needs or feelings. First, listening to understand focuses attention on the issue at hand, not on individual personalities. Second, caring to listen to what your partner thinks and feels is a way of showing that you care about him/her. For more effective listening you should:

* Listen for understanding - Give your partner an opportunity to communicate his/her thoughts, feelings, needs or desires regarding the issue at hand. Listen for understanding, rather than spending time preparing for what you're going to say next.

* Ask questions - Guard against assuming that you know what your partner meant or felt by asking questions to assure your understanding. Ask questions such as, "Do I hear you correctly?" or "Is this what you are saying?" Avoid questions that result in a simple "yes" or "no" answer.

* Summarize - When your partner is finished speaking, repeat what he/she said - in your own words - to confirm with your partner that you understand.

3. Learn to speak without attacking

By learning to speak without attacking your partner's thoughts, feelings, actions or worth, you can



According to the National Institute of Mental Health, in any given one-year period, 9.5 percent of the population, or about 20.9 million American adults, suffer from a depressive illness. Depressive illnesses cause pain and suffering not only to those who have a disorder, but also to those who care about them. Left untreated, serious depression can destroy family life as well as the life of the ill person. Seeking professional help is the key to healing and recovery.

If you are the partner, parent, child or friend of someone who is suffering from depression, what can you do to help? Here are some important ways in which you can help the healing process:

1. Learn all you can about depression, its symptoms and treatment. The more you know about depression, the better you can help the depressed person and yourself.
2. Get appropriate diagnosis and treatment. The most important thing anyone can do for a depressed person is to help them get appropriate diagnosis and treatment. The first step is for them to see a doctor and ask to be examined for depression. Once a treatment program is prescribed, helping may involve monitoring whether the depressed person is taking their prescribed medication, or encouraging them to stay with treatment until symptoms begin to abate (several weeks).
3. Offer emotional support. The second most important thing is to offer emotional support. This involves understanding, patience, affection and encouragement. Engage the depressed person in conversation and listen carefully. Do not disparage feelings expressed, but point out realities and offer hope. Do not ignore remarks about suicide. Always report them to the doctor. Invite the depressed person for walks, outings, to the movies, and other activities. Be gently insistent if your invitation is refused. Encourage participation in some activities that once gave pleasure, such as hobbies, sports, religious or cultural activities, but do not push the depressed person to undertake too much too soon. The depressed person needs diversion and company, but too many demands can increase feelings of failure. Do not accuse the depressed person of faking illness or laziness or expect him or her to "snap out of it." Eventually, with treatment, most depressed people do get better. Keep that in mind, and keep reassuring the depressed person that with time and help, he or she will feel better.

HMS is here to help

Remember, Human Management Services (HMS) is always available to help you or your dependents with any type of personal, family or work-related concern. All HMS services are FREE and strictly CONFIDENTIAL. If you need some help, why not call an HMS counselor today? We're here to help.

keep disagreements from escalating into full-blown and nasty arguments. To improve your talking skills you should:

* Make "I" statements - Avoid starting a sentence with "you." It sounds like an accusation or an invitation to fight (which it usually is). Instead, put yourself on the line by sharing how it is for you. Say, "I think..." or "I want..." or "I feel..." No cheating by saying, "I think that you..."

* Use "Feeling" words - It's not fair to expect your partner to guess or "figure out" what you are feeling, as in, "If he loved me, he'd know!" Quit playing the guessing game and say it straight. Be sure to use feeling words like "sad," "happy," "excited," "angry," "worried," etc. Remember to start the sentence with an "I" as in, "I was upset when you forgot about our date."

* Focus on issues, not personalities - Deal with specific issues on which decisions and compromise action can be worked out. Be specific when you introduce a complaint. Confine yourself to one issue at a time.

By talking with "I" statements and focusing on specific issues, you eliminate the possibility altogether of using unproductive and destructive communication styles like accusations, put-downs, or criticizing.

By avoiding negative communication styles and improving your listening and talking skills, you can learn to resolve differences without negative consequences and, in fact, grow stronger and closer by solving them together.

Contact HMS for professional help

Sometimes our problems are too hard to solve on our own. If you're stuck in an ongoing conflict that never gets resolved, or if physical abuse, substance abuse or depression are involved, you and your partner should seek professional help. Human Management Services (HMS) can assist you or your dependents with CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. If you need help, why not call a professional HMS counselor today? We're here to help you.

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