

Together in Happiness
Impacting lives through marriage education



ביחד באושר
המרכז לחינוך לנישואין מאושרים [ע"ר]

ע"ש פייגעל בת טוביה ניסן ואיסר בן אברהם בנימין

March 14, 2017/Adar 16,5777

To Whom it May Concern,

On behalf of Together in Happiness/B'Yachad B'Osher, we are honored to provide substantive research findings demonstrating the effectiveness of pre marriage education. The material presented has been gathered in collaboration with the recognized world experts in the area of marriage education research.

The source for all of the premarital education/counseling research presented in connection with proposed bill 2004761 לנישואין בקורס הכנה לנישואין

or other documents related to premarital education/counseling *is*

עמותת Together in Happiness/ביחד באושר בראשות סוזן ברט.

Any replication of this document in whole or in part must include the reference paragraph above as to the source for the material.

We believe our amuta has much to contribute to the advancement of marriage education in Israel and we are happy to be a vital player in the promotion of marriage education and only ask for the acknowledgment for material that we provide.

Susan Barth

Founder

Together in Happiness/B'Yachad B'Osher

www.together-in-happiness.com

Testimony on Behalf of SB29: Utah Marriage Commission Amendments

(edited by Dr. Hawkins March 3,2017)

According to Dr. Alan J. Hawkins (current Chair of the Utah Marriage Commission, a statutory commission within the Utah Department of Human Services, and professor of family life at Brigham Young University):

“Premarital education classes and counseling are designed to help individuals assess their readiness for marriage, evaluate the quality of the match, align expectations and plans, and strengthen commitment, communication, and other relationship skills.”

[Ponzetti Chapter 4 RME Effectiveness 2015.pdf](#)

Dr. Hawkins’ scholarship has concluded the following noteworthy findings:

The annual number of divorces in Utah totaling 10,000 cost taxpayers an estimated cost in excess of \$200 million each year.

Scafidi, B. (2008). The taxpayer costs of divorce and unwed childbearing: First-ever estimates for the nation and all fifty states Institute for American Values and Georgia Family Council.

[COFF \(1\).pdf](#)

Research indicates that premarital education also appears to reduce divorce rates in the high-risk early years of marriage, perhaps by 20%.

Nock, S., Sanchez, L., & Wright, J. (2008). *Covenant marriage: The movement to reclaim tradition in America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; Stanley, S., Amato, P., Johnson, C., & Markman, H. (2006). Premarital education, marital quality, and marital stability: Findings from a large, random household survey. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20, 117-126; Hahlweg, K., Markman, H. J., Thurmeir, F., Engel, J., & Eckert, V. (1998). Prevention and marital distress: Results of a German prospective-longitudinal study. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 12, 543-556.

Recent research also documents that couples who invest in premarital education are three times more likely to seek out marital counseling when serious problems arise in the marriage.

Williamson, H. C., Trail, T. E., & Bradbury, T. N. (2014). Does premarital education decrease or increase couples’ later help seeking? *Journal of Family Psychology*, 28, 112-117.

The edited text above is based on the Testimony on Behalf of SB29: [Utah Marriage Commission Amendments](#)

The original document is provided in the following link:

[Testimony SB29 1-25-17.docx](#)

The following items represent research conducted by the most highly regarded experts in the field of premarital and marital education.

The title of the research document is followed by the summation. At the end of the research is the link to the actual document.

***Do Pre Marital Education Programs Really Work? A Meta Analytic Study**

Elizabeth Fawcett, Alan Hawkins (Brigham Young University)

Victoria Blanchard (SUNY Albany)

Jason S. Carroll (Brigham Young University) 2010

Family Relations, 59, 232-239

Research conducted based on 47 studies showing premarital education programs appear to be effective at improving couple communication, with studies that employed observational measures rather than self report measures producing large effects. They found an important implication for premarital education programs from the findings.

It seems that an emphasis on teaching communication and problem solving skills is justified.

The evidence is that couples learn these skills and basic research confirms that premarital communication skills are positively associated with good marital outcomes.

*** Premarital Ed Meta-Analysis FR 2010.pdf**

***Making a case for premarital education**

Stanley, S. M. (2001) *Family Relations, 50, 272-280*

Researchers have found that a small proportion of couples who take a marriage preparation class together—perhaps about 10%—decide not to marry when they are alerted to red flags in their relationship, likely preventing future divorces.

Premarital education can slow couples down to foster deliberation; it can send a message that marriage matters; it can help couples learn of options if they need help later; it can lower the risk for subsequent marital distress or termination in some couples.

[*making_a_case.pdf](#)

***Premarital education, marital quality, and marital stability: Findings from a large, random household survey.**

Stanley, S.M., Amato, P.R., Johnson, C.A. & Markman, H.J. (2006).

Journal of Family Psychology, 20, 117-126

Using a large random survey of four Middle American states, the authors found that participation in premarital education was associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction and interpersonal commitment to spouses and lower levels of destructive conflict.

Premarital education was associated with a 31% decrease in the odds of divorce.

Efforts to provide better access to high quality premarital and marriage education services would benefit many couples including those from diverse backgrounds.

[*Stanley Amato Johnson Markman JFP 2006 \(4\) \(1\).pdf](#)

***Evidence based Approaches to relationship and Marriage Education edited by James J. Ponzetti, Jr.**

**Chapter 4 Does It Work? Effectiveness Research on Relationship and Marriage Education
Alan J. Hawkins**

Marriage preparation education (MPE) for engaged couples.

Surveys using correlational methods have pointed at the potential positive effects of MPE (Stanley, Amato, Johnson and Markman, 2006).

A 2014 study by Rhodes, Stanley and Markman followed a large national sample of unmarried young adults over 5 years. 40% of those who married during that period reported that they invested in some kind of marriage preparation education. Fifty five percent of those who invested in MPE had marital quality in the top 40% of the sample distribution, while only a third of those who did not participate in MPE scored in the top 40% of the marital quality distribution.

[*Ponzetti Chapter 4 RME Effectiveness 2015.pdf](#)

Specific curriculum research

Additional research based on the most scientifically researched premarital education PREP (Prevention Relationship Education Program) curriculum (which our amuta has the exclusive rights to distribute in Israel), as presented by Dr. Howard Markman, the developer of the PREP curriculum:

- PREP has been tested in two large randomized clinical trials with premarital couples, including a study where Clergy were trained to deliver PREP as part of their premarital counseling.
- Findings show that PREP couples, including those trained by Clergy, had higher rates of relationship quality over a 5 year period, including in one study, lower rates of aggression and up to 10 years later, PREP couples who had the best relationships entering premarital counseling had lower rates of divorce compared to similar couples who did not take PREP.
- In a study with over 600 couples, a version of PREP for Army couples had a significantly lower divorce rate two years after PREP than a randomly selected control group. PREP is widely used with young couples and individuals in the US Military.
- All couples in Singapore get the opportunity to take a 2 hour version of PREP when they pick up their marriage license. Close to 5000 have taken the PREP program to date.

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