

MARGARET ARCUS AWARD ADDRESS

I get by with a little help from my friends: Reflections on two decades of promoting and experiencing relational health

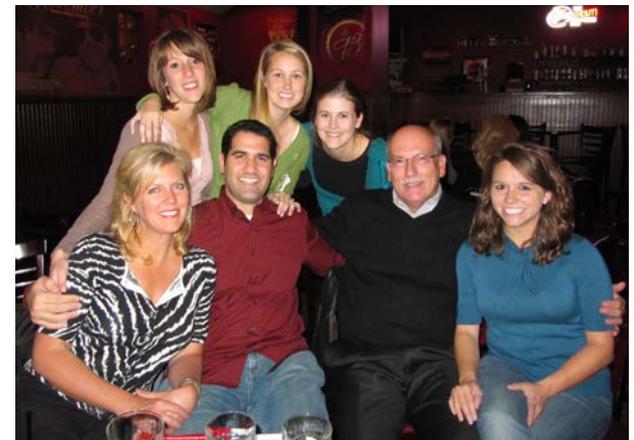
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The Story of Us



Let's make it happen out there!



The Story of Us



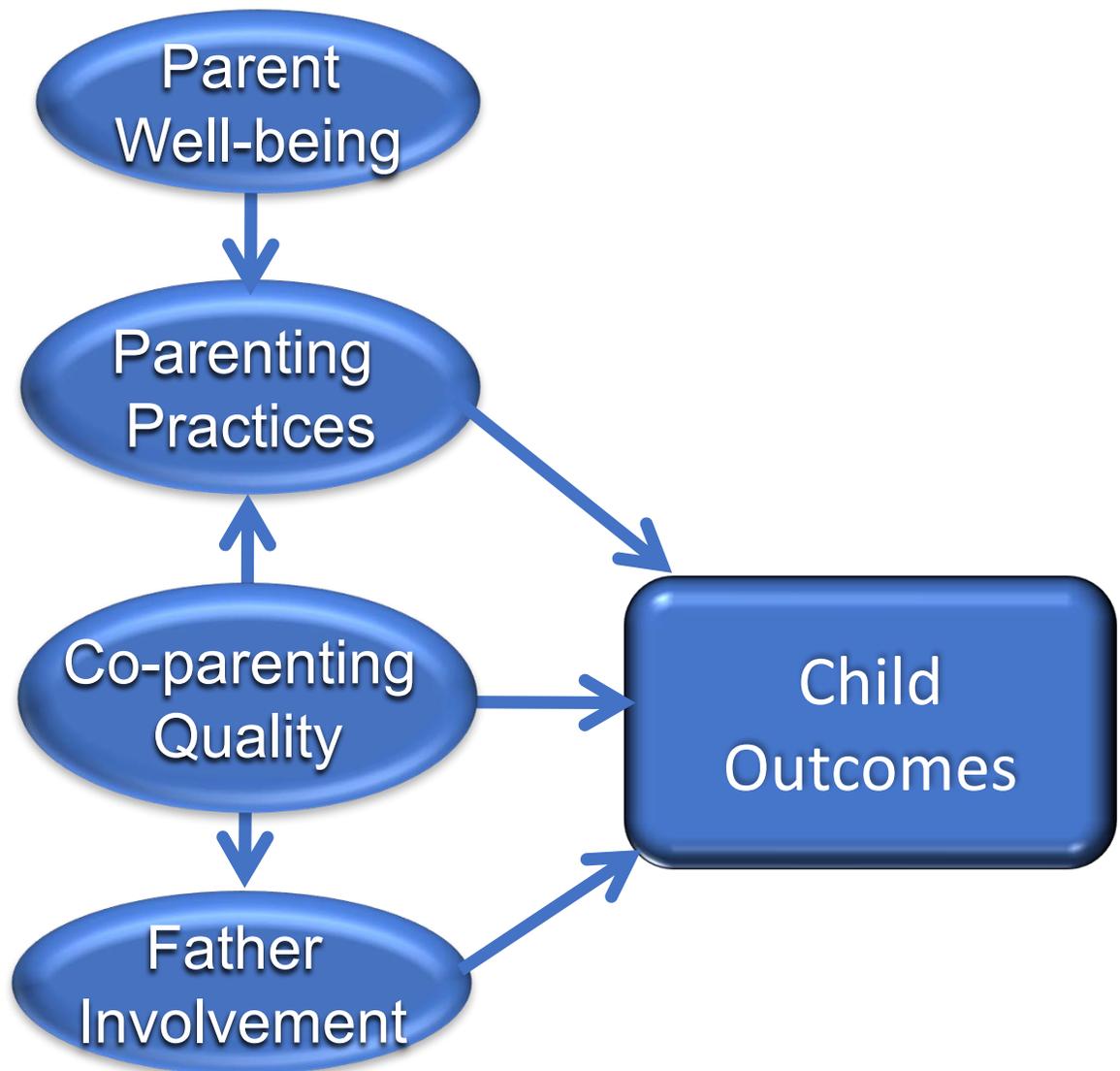
Overview

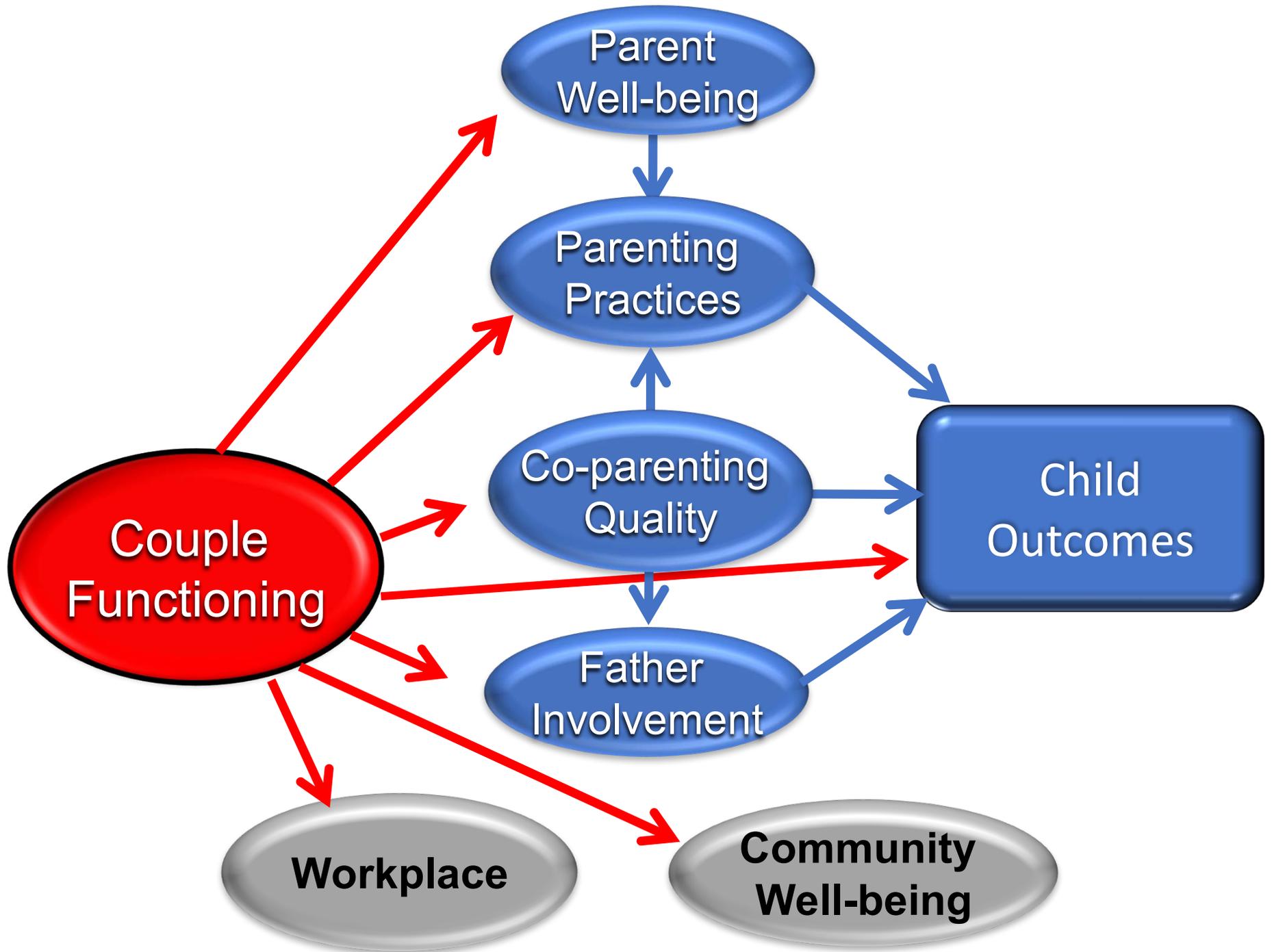
- ▶ Why do this?
- ▶ What are the goals and what approach do they prescribe?
- ▶ Practicing what we teach
- ▶ Show me the evidence
- ▶ What's ahead?

Why do relationships matter?

***What's
Love Got
to Do
With It?***



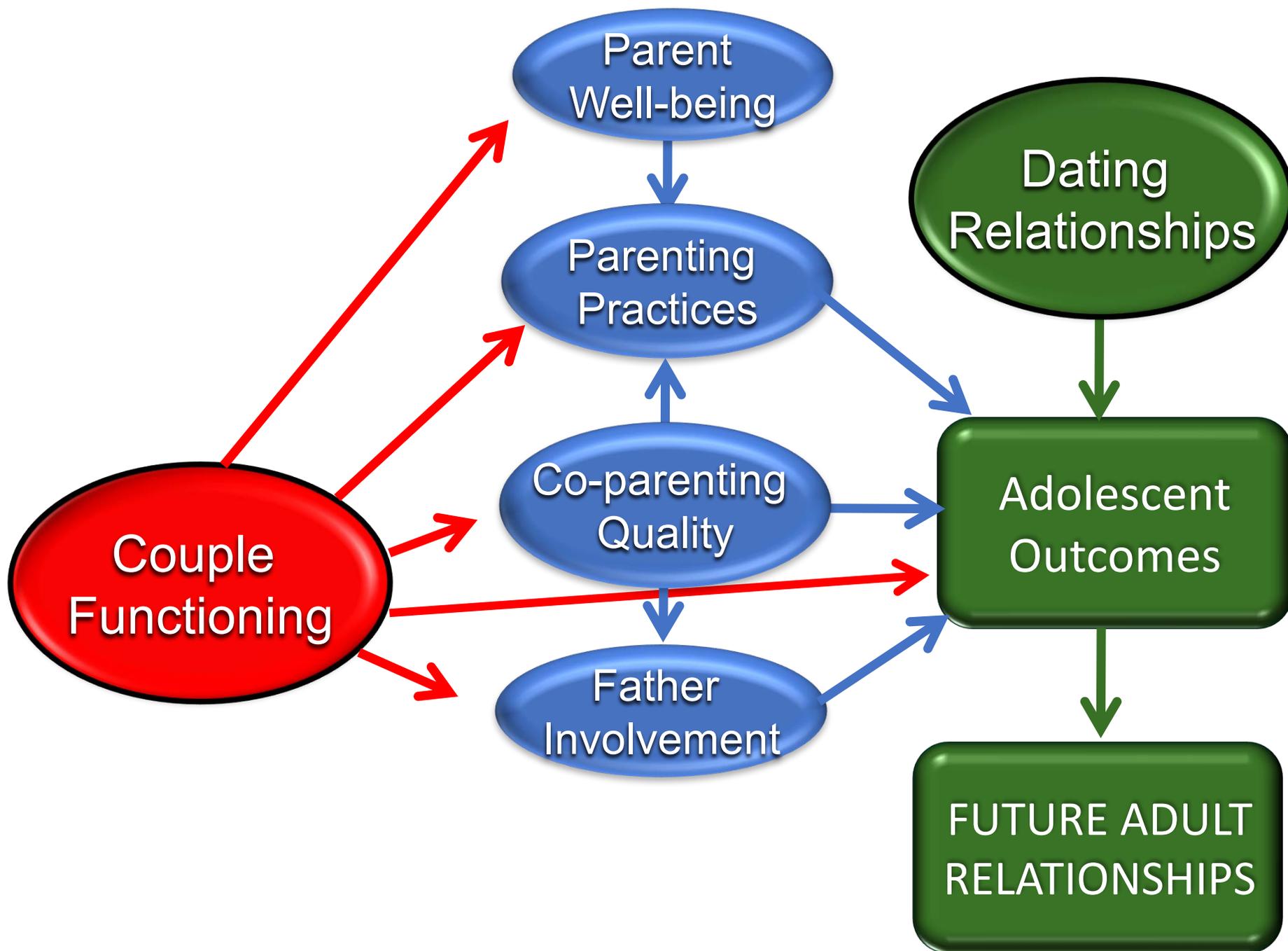




Relationship health predictive of mental and physical health for adults - *and their children*



- ▶ better nutrition and lifestyle habits
- ▶ less substance abuse issues
- ▶ fewer acute and chronic diseases
- ▶ sleep better
- ▶ recover quicker when ill
- ▶ lower incidence of mental health issues
- ▶ greater academic achievement and educational attainment



Rationale for Targeting Youth Relationships

- ▶ **Developmentally relevant** – a “teachable moment” in the life course
- ▶ **Relationship models acquired**
- ▶ **Emotional and physical health affected**
- ▶ **High rates of relationship abuse experiences**

Taylor & Mumford, 2016; Hawkins, 2018; Karney, et al, 2007; Manning, et al, 2010



Promoting Strong Families and Nurturing Homes for Children

- ▶ Safe neighborhoods
- ▶ Educational Opportunities
- ▶ Access to Stable Employment
- ▶ Financial management skills
- ▶ Parenting skills
- ▶ Child development knowledge
- ▶ Knowledge about good nutrition
- ▶ Knowledge about important health behaviors
- ▶ Quality childcare
- ▶ Quality healthcare
- ▶ **Healthy relationship knowledge and skills**

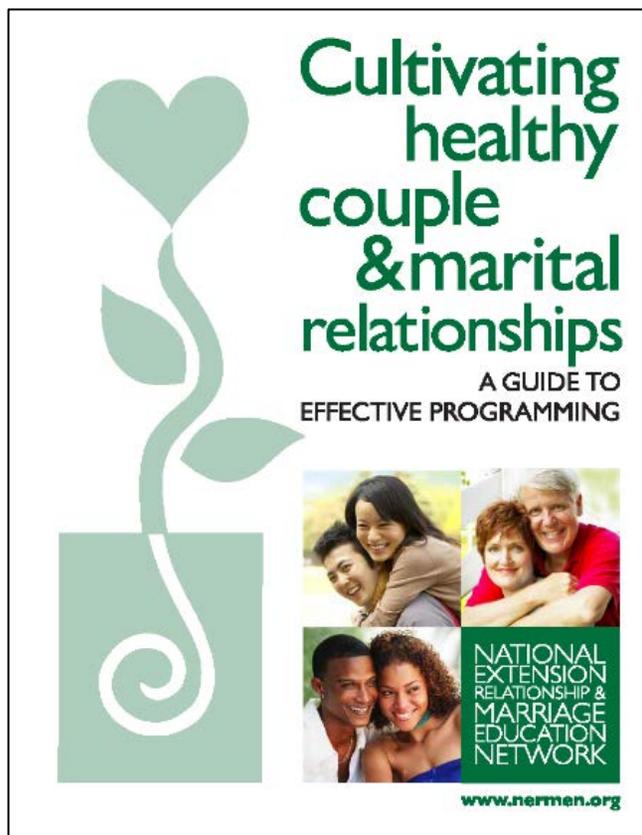
*Healthy couple and coparenting relationships—
the missing target in family program*



THE GOALS – “COMING TO THE TABLE”

- ▶ Access to information on healthy relationships is an equity issue
- ▶ We are invested in inclusivity and the value of all individuals and family forms
- ▶ We wanted the assurance that program design was research-informed and process-oriented, focused on teachable concepts and skills.

Engaged Scholarship – Translating research to practice



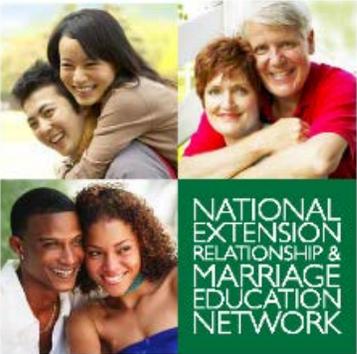
- ▶ The process is as valuable as the “products”
- ▶ Collaborate = “co-labor” and honor the input of multiple experts
- ▶ Relationships build social capital and infrastructure within which to embed the programs and research

“None of us is as smart as all of us”
Ken Blandchard

Engaged Scholarship – Translating research to practice



**Cultivating
healthy
couple
& marital
relationships**
A GUIDE TO
EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING

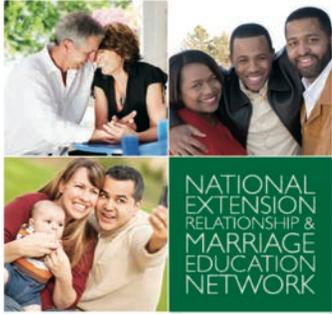


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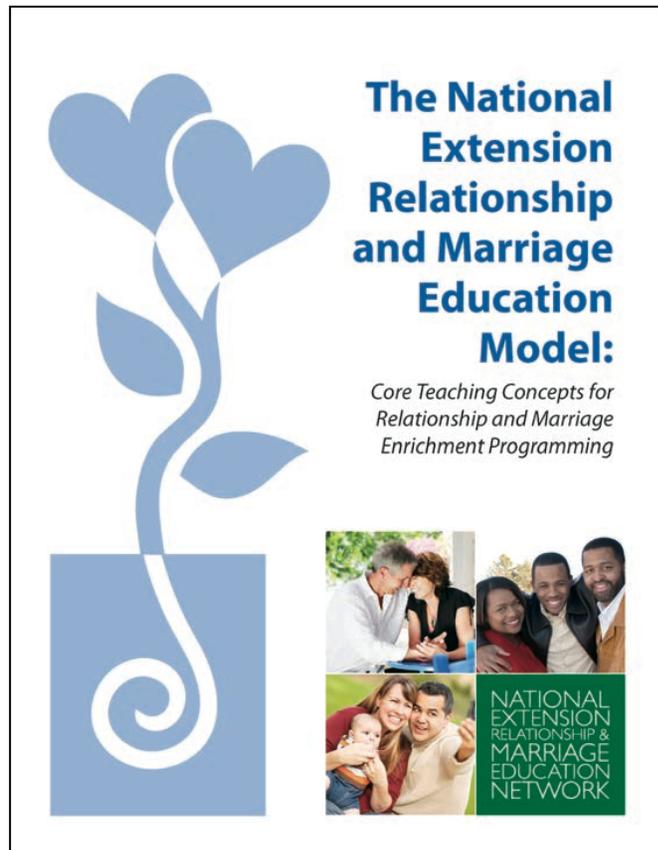
Research-based Program Content

1930' Penn State Study on Marital Quality

- ▶ Strongest predictor of husband's marital satisfaction:



CONTRIBUTORS



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National Extension Relationship & Marriage Education Model (NERMEN)



HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIP
& MARRIAGE
EDUCATION
TRAINING

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Elevate

Taking Your Relationship to the Next Level

CARE FOR SELF

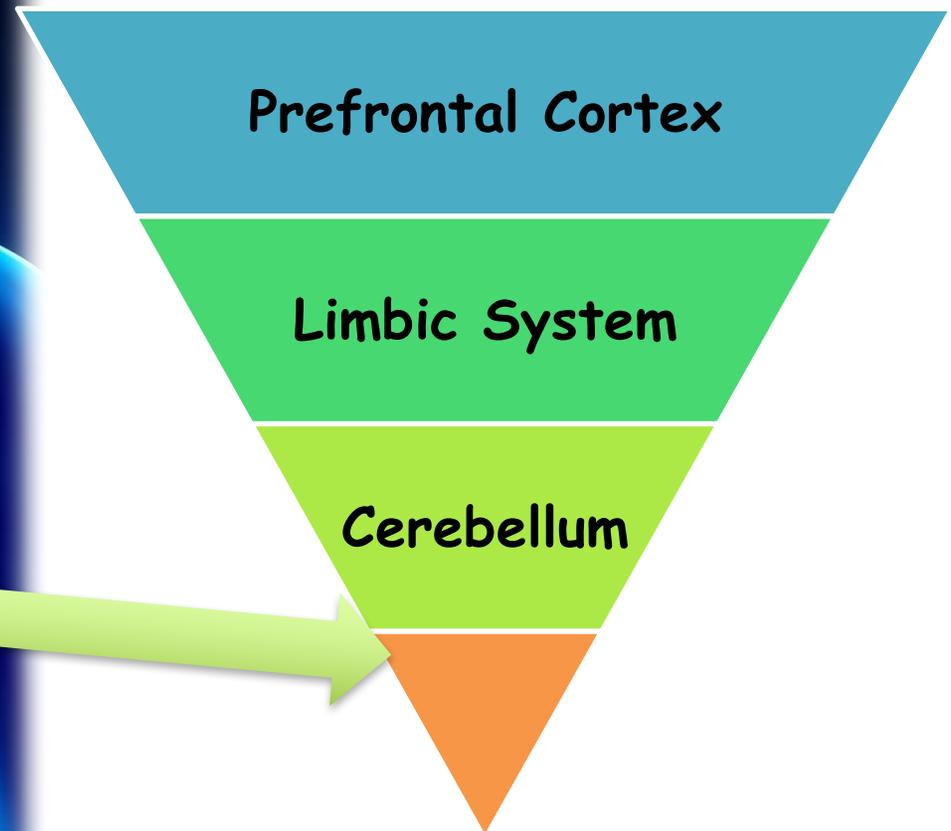
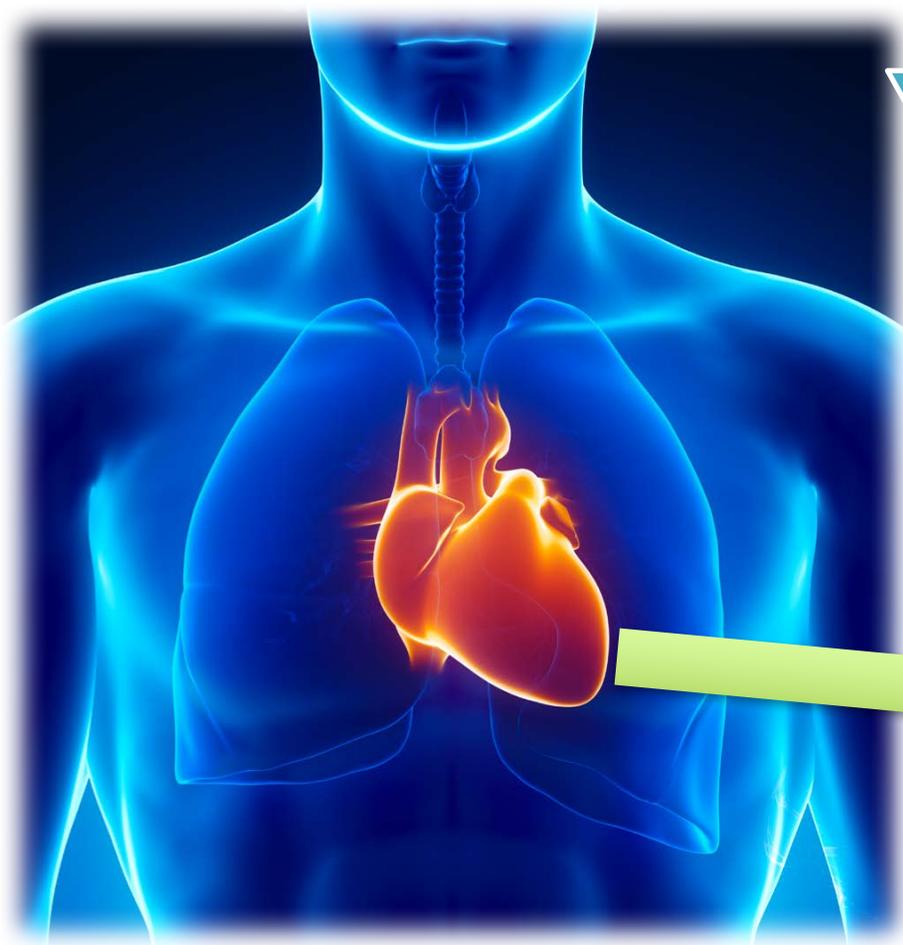
Maintaining Overall Health & Wellness



- ✓ Physical
- ✓ Emotional/Mental
- ✓ Spiritual
- ✓ Relational
- ✓ Sexual



Heart-Brain Connection



How Do We Manage Stress?



Breathe



CHOOSE

Making Intentional Relationship Choices



Continually doing things to hold on to each other, so that we don't naturally drift apart.

KNOW

Maintaining Knowledge of Partner's World



INTIMACY:
IN-TO-ME-
YOU-SEE



Shared Meaning is Important



CARE

Maintain Positivity In Your Relationship



People that have lots of positives in their relationship handle the negative better.

SHARE

Develop and Maintain Friendship



- ✓ Spend meaningful time together
- ✓ Build couple identity
- ✓ Nurture positive interactions

It's not only **WHAT** you say,
but **HOW** you say it!



Dude!



It's not only **WHAT** you say,
but **HOW** you say it!



You just found out
that your manuscript
was accepted?

Dude!



It's not only **WHAT** you say,
but **HOW** you say it!



I think you just
stepped in dog poop!

Dude!



It's not only **WHAT** you say,
but **HOW** you say it!



You just found out
you didn't get that
grant you spent 6
months working on.

Dude!



It's not only **WHAT** you say,
but **HOW** you say it!



You see your
partner in an
attractive outfit.

Dude!



Filters get in the way of communicating...



Emotional states

Beliefs and expectations

Distractions

Differences in style



Filters get in the way of communicating...



How We Respond Matters!

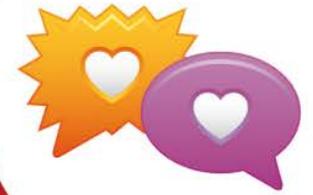


How We Respond Matters!



MANAGE

Dealing with Differences in Healthy Ways



Our capacity to manage conflict is shaped by past and present experiences.



CONNECT

Engage in a support network!



What have we done? What do we know?

- ▶ **2017-2014: 1.5 million youth and adults completed an RE Program**
- ▶ **Feasibility studies and outreach strategies that focus on demonstration programs**



YOUTH RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION



YOUTH RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION

INCREASES

- ↑ **Interpersonal competence**
 - ▶ *Conflict management skills*
 - ▶ *Reflective coping*
- ↑ **Egalitarian gender role beliefs**
- ↑ **Willingness to use RE**
- ↑ **Self-Esteem**
- ↑ **Ability to resist pressure to have sex**
- ↑ **Individual empowerment**

DECREASES

- ↓ **Faulty beliefs about relationships**
- ↓ **Endorsement of aggression use in relationships**
- ↓ **Personal distress**
- ↓ **Use of negative behaviors**
- ↓ **Faulty beliefs about relationships**
- ↓ **Reactive coping**

ADULT RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION

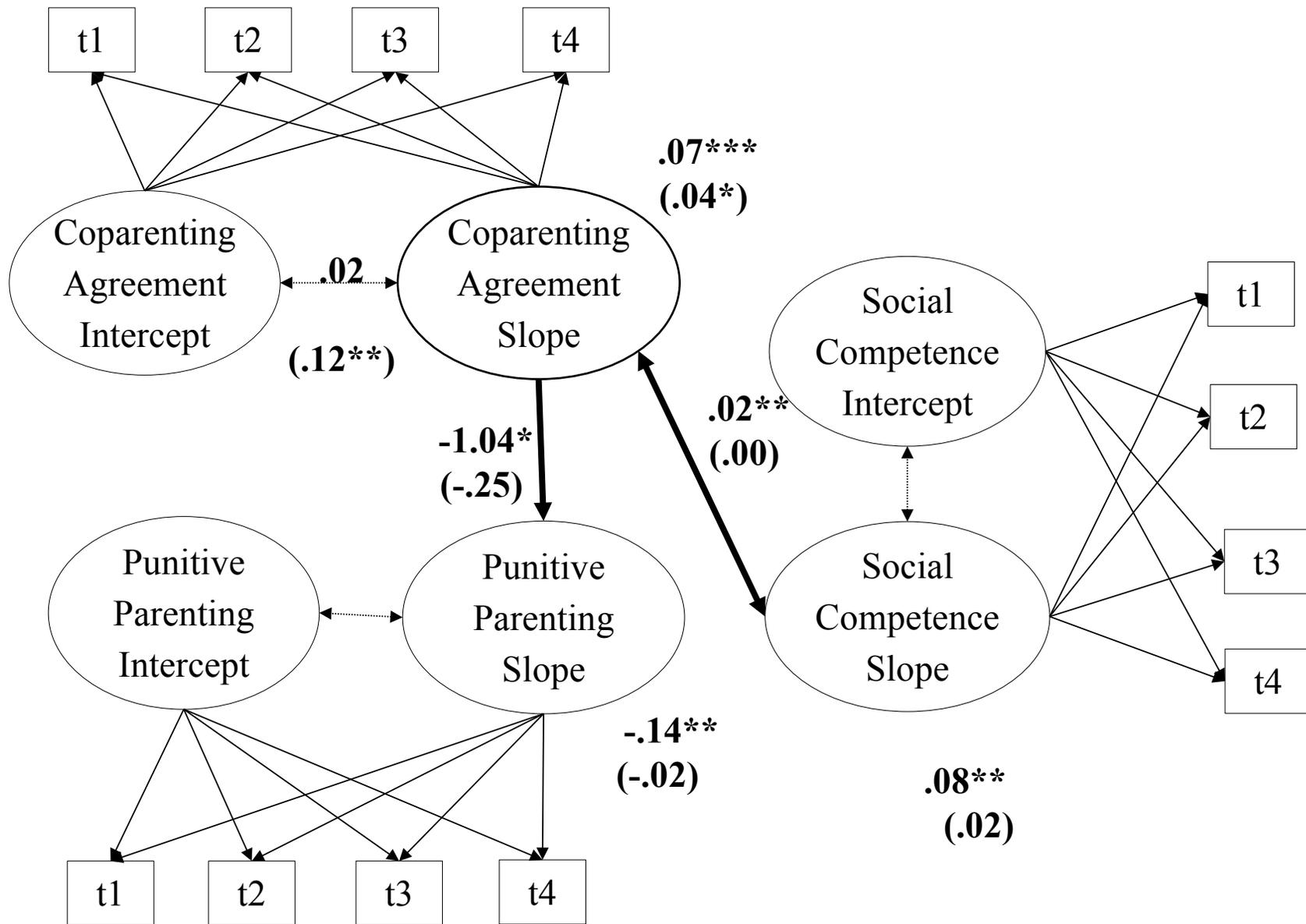


Evidence of CRE Effects

- ▶ An accumulation of evidence demonstrating benefits for couple functioning and stability in the short-term
 - ▶ Early studies used more homogeneous, higher-resource samples of married couples.
 - ▶ Recent meta-analyses focus on experiences of more ethnically and economically diverse participants (Fawcett, et al, 2010; Fentz & Trillingsgaard, 2016; Hawkins & Erickson, 2015; Pinquart & Teubert, 2010)
- ▶ Longer-term studies find sustained effects of CRE interventions (Cowans' work)

Assessing the family system

- ▶ Benefits found in the individual functioning domain; parenting and coparenting
- ▶ Benefits found for children (Cowan & Cowan, 2014)
- ▶ The process of change; relationship between changes explored
 - ▶ Behavior change drives commitment level (Rauer, et al., 2016)
 - ▶ Couple functioning influences parenting practices (Adler-Baeder, et al., 2015)



A long, straight asphalt road stretches into the distance under a blue sky with white clouds, flanked by green fields.

**What's
Ahead?**



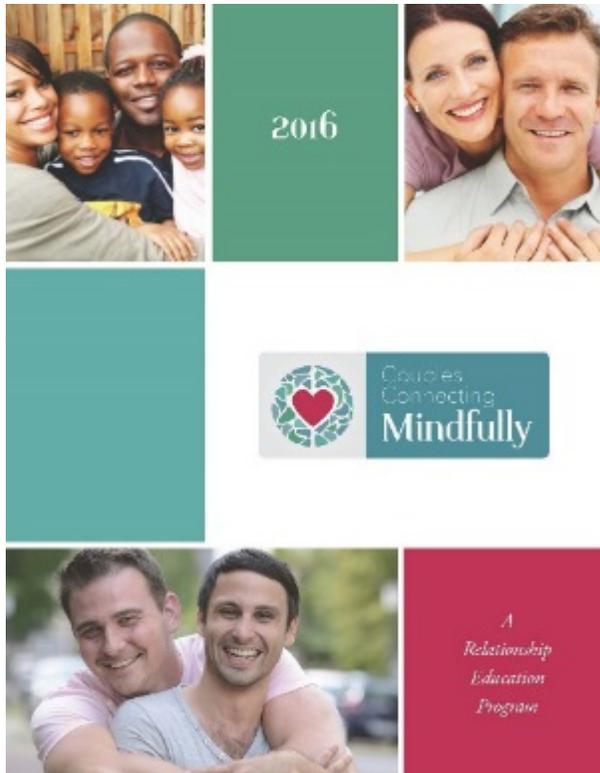
Are we asking the right questions?

- ▶ Warning! Are we over-emphasizing the “average” experience and missing out on understanding diverse experiences?
- ▶ Exploring diversity of sample

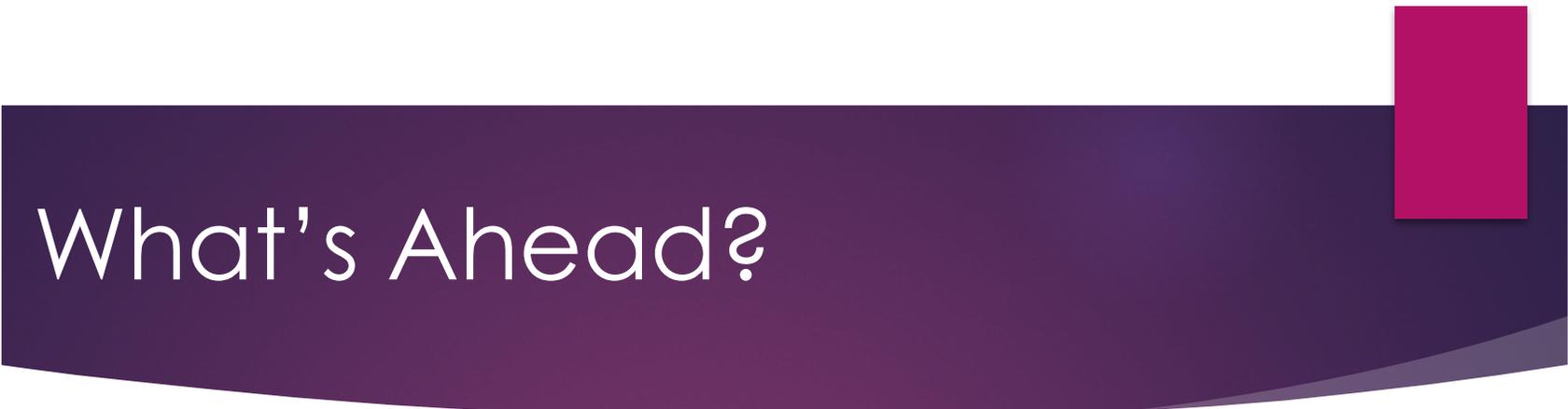


**What works
for whom?**

What's Ahead?



- ▶ Greater emphasis on health and stress management.
- ▶ Bio-social approach
- ▶ Research on mindfulness based



What's Ahead?

- ▶ Combining parenting and CRE
- ▶ Wrap-around services
- ▶ Infusing CRE into community services, education, and trainings
- ▶ Online and apps
- ▶ Start “up-stream” – More YRE!
- ▶ Boosters – it's not a “one time experience”

corbis.



The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.

- Helen Keller

