Values, Traditions, and Service

FAMILY GOALS:
1. Discuss family values; explain why each is important to you and how they will benefit kids. Write them on the handout and find ways to reinforce them.
2. Discuss and establish fun family traditions and ways to give family service; write on handout and post them.
3. Together, discuss how kids can be an “Agent for Change” to help others be alcohol-free.

FAMILY FUN:
Make a Family Shield with four family values. Create a motto that represents those values and write it above the shield. Display it in your home.

POWER PHRASE:
“Our happiness is directly related to adopting pro-social values, giving service to others, and bonding with fun family traditions and happy family rituals.”

- Identify, teach, and reinforce pro-social values
- Establish fun family traditions
- Give service to help build and strengthen society
Fun Family Traditions
Creating and celebrating happy family memories

Family traditions are ways of celebrating events or happenings that help kids have fun and feel a sense of identity, belonging, and connectedness. Tradition celebrations can happen once a year, like a family reunion or a holiday celebration, or take place on a monthly or weekly basis like a monthly Sunday dinner with relatives or a Friday night family board game. A monthly “Give Back to My Community” day of service—either by helping elderly neighbors, helping the less fortunate, or picking up trash in the park—helps kids develop empathy and respect for their community. A tradition can also be a “family cheer” to celebrate a success, like good grades; or a group hug for making it through a hard day. Regardless of how your family decides to celebrate or serve, it’s all about happy, healthy togetherness.

Below, write the traditions you already enjoy and ask yourself: “Are our family traditions adequate to produce happy family bonding?” and “Do they reinforce our values?” If not, how can you make them more meaningful? If you would like to create a new family tradition, what events would you like to celebrate? Write down your ideas in the middle column. Add ways to make good health part of your on-going holiday traditions by including physical activity, healthy foods, and new healthy ways to fix traditional foods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our Current Family Traditions</th>
<th>New or Improved Family Traditions</th>
<th>Some Ideas to Get You Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Family game night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reunion with extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Religious holidays; add service to deepen meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• National holidays: add meaning like hanging “Blessing Leaves” on Thanksgiving “Thankful Tree”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Picnic celebrating summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Birthday dinners / breakfasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sunday dinner with relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Friendship day: invite neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Independence Day; make a collage of gifts freedom provides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Make a “Welcome New Baby” book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Father-son outing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Daddy-daughter date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Monthly lunch date with Mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Saturday special breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Memorial Day: celebrate your heritage by learning of ancestors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Celebrate Grandparents Day with service, a meal or coupon to a restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Celebrate Mother’s/ Father’s Day with “service” coupons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Write love notes of things you like about each other on Valentine’s Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Celebrate wedding anniversary by doing your own “circle of love”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Hold a monthly “Values” night and serve treats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

©2011 KAROL KUMPFER, PH.D. AND JAYNIE BROWN
I Can Contribute
Recognize society’s benefits and begin now to give back

Like the air we breathe, the benefits we get from society are so prevalent that we often take them for granted. That’s especially true for kids, who naturally begin life a bit self-centered. It is our job as parents to help them realize that so much of what they enjoy was paid for by the work and sacrifice—even the very lives—of those who came before them. But these benefits come with a cost—we and our children are expected to pass on a stable, orderly, and well-maintained society to the next generation. Parents need to help kids come to a realization that they have an obligation to protect and build society; that they have the capacity within themselves to become a positive “agent of change” in their family, with their peers, and even their community. When kids are awakened—not only to a sense of duty, but of empowerment—anti-social activities like joining a gang, or buying drugs that empower and pad the pockets of criminals, are no longer enticing.

Help your kids make a list below of all the benefits they enjoy from society. Then write down the anti-social activities that tear down or harm society. Include the ripple effect of things such as using drugs, tagging others’ property, cheating on taxes, not voting, or drunk driving. Then discuss and brainstorm what you and your kids can do to make society stronger—one brave personal choice at a time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Blessings or Benefits Does Society Provide Me?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Anti-Social Behavior Harms Society?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Can I Do to Make Society Stronger?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you know? Many problems we face as a society have their roots in underage drinking, since it often spawns drug use and other criminal behavior. Here are some research-proven environmental strategies to help prevent it: 1) Increase alcohol taxes and use in prevention programs. 2) Require registration and tracking of beer kegs. 3) Support social host laws that penalize adults who host underage drinking parties. 4) Support the age 21 law. 5) Support “environmental factors” that promote healthy alcohol use in a community, including limiting liquor licenses and hours of operation.

©2011 KAROL KUMPFER, PH.D. AND JAYNIE BROWN
I Have Power to Do Good
Doing good in my family, school, and community makes me happy

Our brain is “hard-wired” to give feelings of pleasure when we do good. You can increase your feelings of happiness by giving service and doing good to others.

“There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it.”

Martha Graham, dancer

Directions: Make a list below of things you can do in your family, school, and community to make them better and happier.

1. __________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________

4. __________________________________________________________

5. __________________________________________________________
Values are attitudes about life that determine our thoughts and actions. Pro-social values—that benefit self and society—help kids make good decisions and feel happier. Write the values that matter most to your family on the shield. Some to consider are: Ambition • Charity • Chastity • Cheerfulness • Civility • Conscience • Cooperation • Courage • Creativity • Empathy • Education • Environment • Faith • Fairness • Forgiveness • Frugality • Generosity • Gratitude • Hard Work • Honesty • Humility • Kindness • Love • Loyalty • Making Amends for Wrongs • Optimism • Patriotism • Peacemaker • Respect • Responsibility • Sexual Fidelity • Self-Control • Self-Motivation • Self-Reliant • Self-Respect • Serenity • Service • Tolerance •

A motto is a brief statement that captures the values and beliefs of an individual or family. For hundreds of years, families have created mottoes and put it on their family shield or crest to let people know what they stood for and aspired to be. Some examples of family mottoes are: “All for one and one for all.” “In difficulty, win by patience.” “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” “We are strong with love.” “No empty chairs.” “Love each other.”

As a family, thoughtfully develop a motto and write it in the banner on the shield. Enjoy designing, coloring and being creative with your family shield and then post in a prominent place.
Keeping the Changes We’ve Made
5 skills to bond, set boundaries, and monitor to keep kids safe from addiction

1. **PRACTICE MINDFULNESS** to calm and strengthen your brain by doing breath awareness exercises. (Intro Lesson)

2. **HAVE “MY TIME.”** Daily one-on-one play time with each child, where you focus on giving positive attention and compliments. (Intro Lesson)

3. **NOTICE AND COMPLIMENT THE GOOD DAILY**
   Make sure your compliments are sincere, specific, and enthusiastic. (Lesson 1)

4. **COMMUNICATE WITH LUV-LISTENING AND RESPECTFUL “I-MESSAGES”** Banish the Communication Boulders. (Lesson 2)

5. **HOLD A WEEKLY FAMILY MEETING** (Lesson 2)

6. **USE POSITIVE DISCIPLINE AND REWARDS TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR.**
   Teach and reward the behaviors you want, and be consistent in calmly using mild negative consequences for non-compliance. (Lessons 3 and 4)

7. **MONITOR YOUR KIDS** and their friends to make sure that they stay in an alcohol- and drug-free environment. (Lesson 9)
These values and skills will arm your children with life-long habits that are highly respected, valued in the workplace, and create personal satisfaction.

**HOW TO TELL THE TRUTH**

1. Look at the person.
2. Reflect on your commitment to tell the truth.
3. Answer questions honestly, saying exactly what happened.
4. Don’t leave out details to misrepresent what happened.
5. Admit to mistakes; offer to make amends.

**HOW TO DEVELOP COURAGE**

1. Recognize that fears are generated by thoughts.
2. Keep your self-talk positive (“I can do this...”)
3. Decide on your values, why they are important to you.
4. Be willing to take hardship or persecution.
5. Respectfully speak up when you see a wrong done.

**HOW TO SET AN EXAMPLE**

1. Be humble; recognize everyone has worth.
2. Resolve to live true to your values.
3. Work hard to excel in an area.
4. Be kind and friendly to everyone.
5. When faced with a choice between a “low road” (anti-social behavior) and a “high road” (pro-social ways), always choose the “high road.”
6. Encourage friends to do the right thing.

**HOW TO BE AN AGENT OF CHANGE**

1. Notice something in your home, school, or community that needs to be changed.
2. Research and talk to others about it.
3. Decide on a plan of action.
4. Talk to friends and get their support.
5. Present your idea to those in charge; work to make it happen.
Talking with Your Kids about Sex
Helping youth understand rights, responsibilities, and consequences

One of a parent’s most important jobs is to teach children about the rights and responsibilities of sexual reproduction and the innate power they have to create human life. To be effective, parents need to have many open, honest conversations about it throughout a child’s life based on their own family values.

Here are three things parents need to share with their kids:

1) **How the miracle of human life is created** when two tiny cells, each carrying a man and a woman’s personal DNA, meet in a woman’s body and begin the amazing process of making a baby. They need to know about the female menstrual cycle and how to prevent conception.

2) **Sexual activities release powerful “bonding chemicals” in the brain** that create intense euphoric feelings and are designed to create strong emotional ties with a spouse. These sexual experiences become a fixed part of a person’s brain wiring. When physical intimacy between loving couples is combined with emotional intimacy and a lasting commitment to their relationship, sex is much more enjoyable, satisfying, and helps create stable marriage relationships.

3) **The right to mate and reproduce the human species carries enormous responsibilities.** A stable society depends upon well-raised children who become responsible, law-abiding, tax-paying adults. Because a person’s sexual actions can produce human life—those choices are not their “own private business”—they can permanently affect the lives of others. Once a baby is born it cannot be “put back.” Children have the right to be born into a family with two loving parents to care for them. When children are born outside of a marriage relationship, they are more at risk for neglect, poverty, abuse, and addiction—forcing the child into unhappy, difficult circumstances. Often, society has to support the child or pay for problems he or she may cause.

Parents need to teach youth that their personal sexual choices can have a positive or negative effect on themselves and society: a positive (or pro-social) effect when it serves to bond couples in a loving, stable family relationship that produces children who grow up to become contributing citizens. Or it has a negative (anti-social) effect if it spreads disease, exploits women or children, or results in children born outside of a stable family relationship.

**Other Facts to Share with Teens**

- Every child has the right to be born into a family and be cared for, as much as possible, by the mother and father whose sexual union gave him or her life. (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 7, 1990)

- Single teen mothers put their children at higher risk to have health problems, live in poverty, be neglected or abused by others, do poorly in school, use alcohol and drugs, run into trouble with the law, and become teen mothers or fathers themselves.

- Children who are neglected or abused often suffer attachment anxiety, which later negatively affects their ability to bond in a romantic relationship as an adult, and hinders their ability be a responsive caregiver to their own children. Children deserve better than this.

- Two-thirds of teen mothers never finish high school, which means they have to take lower-paying jobs, or be publicly supported on welfare.

- Half of all single mothers receiving welfare had their first child in their teens, before they were mature enough.

- Only 20% of teen fathers ever marry the mother.

- If a boy fathers a child, legally he is financially responsible for raising the child to age 18. Young fathers can be court-ordered to pay thousands of dollars in child support, and have their wages garnished if they fail to pay.

**Factors That Put Teens at Risk for Early Sex and Unplanned Pregnancies**

- **Alcohol or drug use** lowers inhibitions, good judgment, and the ability to care if they make a mistake; often used for date rape

- **Media influence**: Kids who watch “R” rated movies are twice as likely to engage in sexual activities, have unplanned pregnancies as those who don’t watch sexually explicit films

- **Negative peer pressure** gives the false belief everyone is doing it

- **Pornography**: damages brain’s pleasure center, making it harder to bond with a spouse (or future spouse); addicting

- **Exclusive dating** or dating older boys/men

- **Lack of parental love**: lack of affection from a father

- **Lack of parental monitoring** of activities, dating partners, and time alone—particularly when parents are at work or late at night

- **Abuse**: Sexual, physical, emotional abuse, or neglect
Creating Stable Families (part 1)

Society’s future depends on learning how to create stable families

As teens mature, some of the best things parents can teach them are the attitudes and skills to create loving, stable families of their own. These include 1) skills to develop an enduring romantic relationship, 2) skills to create a happy, stable home-life, 3) a commitment to honor, support, and protect each other and the relationship, and 4) pro-social values that foster loving family relationships. This includes the value of socially-responsible sex (i.e., sex that bonds a couple in a loving, stable relationship, and doesn’t spread disease, exploit women or children, or produce children outside of stable family relationships).

This visual can help you teach these preparing-for-marriage skills: a foundation of good values; a “romance wheel” to create loving relationships; a sturdy house of personal skills built of four walls and a roof; and a strong commitment “fence” to surround and protect the marriage relationship.
Creating Stable Families (part 2)
Foundation, romance wheel, and fence

Foundation of 10 Pro-Social Values
“Pro-social values” are personal beliefs on how to behave and treat others. They are like interlocking blocks that serve as a firm foundation for a marriage relationship. When you include these 10 fundamental beliefs in your value system, love can flourish:

1. Honesty
2. Generosity
3. Kindness
4. Respect
5. Sexual Fidelity
6. Peace & Harmony
7. Service
8. Self-control
9. Responsibility
10. Admitting & Correcting Mistakes

8 Steps to Create an Enduring Romantic Relationship
These are shown as a wheel because once you go through steps 1-8, you begin number 1 again, this time at a deeper level and continue in these steps all the rest of your married life.

1. Notice the good in each other
2. Communicate admiration
3. Gaze into each other’s eyes
4. Think positively (about the person and the relationship)
5. Have honest disclosure
6. Share life’s dreams and goals
7. Show loving physical affection
8. Be kind and perform acts of service
Creating Stable Families (part 3)

House with walls and roof

Building a marriage is like building a home: it needs four strong walls and a good roof.

**WALL 1: WISE FINANCIAL PLANNING**

1) Get a good education with marketable skills.
2) Find a good job and work hard to provide for your family's needs.
3) Establish financial goals and write them down.
4) Make a reasonable budget to meet those goals. Track your spending; review weekly as a couple. Avoid impulse purchases and buying to impress others. Plan ways to share with those who are less fortunate.
5) Save for the future.

**WALL 2: GOOD RELATIONSHIP SKILLS**

1) Notice and compliment the good in others; accept and appreciate differences.
2) Use effective communication skills including LUV—Listening and respectful, assertive I-Messages. Avoid Communication Boulders).
3) Treat others with kindness, unselfishness, and affection. Express love often; notice needs and give service.
4) Practice good problem solving and negotiation skills.
5) Use good anger management and conflict resolution skills.
   “Evaluate your behavior often: “Are my attitudes or actions helping or harming family relationships? What do I need to change?”

**WALL 3: HOME & FAMILY MANAGEMENT**

1) Plan and use time wisely to accomplish the things that are most important to a stable family life.
2) Work to have an orderly and well-functioning home where each member has responsibilities and contributes.
3) Make chore charts. Establish a set cleaning time. Reward compliance.
4) Have set places for each person’s belongings. Put back the things you use.
5) Set up positive routines with set times to pay bills, clean house, do homework, have family meetings, and have family fun.

**WALL 4: POSITIVE HEALTH PRACTICES**

1) Appreciate your body. Cultivate a positive mental attitude and avoid all addicting substances.
2) Plan and eat nutritious meals with whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and low-fat protein.
3) Maintain a healthy weight: eat normal portion sizes, healthy foods, mindfully enjoy each bite, and stop when you begin to feel full.
4) Get physical exercise five days a week. Include aerobic, strength-building, and stretching exercises.
5) Try to get 8 hours of sleep each night. Maintain a consistent bedtime.

**ROOF 1: APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL AFFECTION**

Appropriate physical affection (including touching, hugging, caressing, kissing, and massaging) triggers “feel-good” chemicals in the brain that make family feel loved and emotionally bonded.

(Appropriate physical affection includes the duty to protect children from sexual abuse.)

**ROOF 2: FAMILY FUN**

Plan and make time to laugh, play, and have weekly fun activities as a family. Family fun contributes to healthy family bonding and is good for children's brain health.
Couple’s Time: Questions to Reconnect
Communication that increases love, understanding, and appreciation

**WHAT:** Once a month, plan a quiet time alone when kids are put to bed early and parents have “Couple’s Time” where you can talk undisturbed for an hour about 1) your positive memories, thoughts and feelings for each other; and 2) your needs to help your relationship flourish. It can be during a quiet dinner or sitting together in a favorite quiet spot.

**HOW:** Decide on the time and place ahead of time. Set the mood by playing soft music that you enjoyed during courtship, lighting a scented candle, or by taking a few minutes to do a “Loving-Kindness Meditation” exercise directing positive thoughts towards yourself and your spouse (See Handout 1-9).

Begin by reading The Love Pledge and then bring to mind a happy memory you shared together, before you were married, where you felt loved. Savor the feeling the memory created. Touch hands and look into each other’s eyes for a minute or two. Then take turns choosing a few positive expressions to complete from the first category (below). Then share ideas or needs from the second category while your spouse LUV Listens. End Couple’s Time by expressing your love and sharing physical affection.

---

**The Love Pledge**

I care deeply about you and desire to understand your thoughts and feelings. I pledge to create a loving and emotionally safe environment for you to tell me about the things you think, feel, and need. I will “LUV-Listen” with respect, and promise not to get angry about the things you share.

---

**Expressions of Appreciation**

(Adapted from JoAnn Larsen, DSW)

- “The thing I love most about you is…”
- “I am specially proud of you when…”
- “The thing that attracted me to you was…”
- “One of the happiest times of my life was…”
- “Something good that I learned from you is…”
- “One of your best assets is…”
- “I like it when you…”
- “A peak experience in our relationship is…”
- “One of the needs you satisfy in me is…”
- “A song that reminds me of you is…”
- “The things I most like to do with you are…”
- “You are most helpful when…”
- “The things that hold us together are…”
- “One way I try to show I love you is…”
- “What I like most about our relationship is…”
- “What I would miss most about you is…”
- “The gift I would like most to give you is…”

---

**Expressions to Increase Understanding and Help Our Relationship Flourish**

- “A feeling I have trouble with is…”
- “When I can’t express something to you, I…”
- “One thing I am afraid of is…”
- “A habit I have that bothers me the most is…”
- “I need you most when…”
- “I wish you would let me know when…”
- “Something I need most from you is…”
- “It hurts me when…”
- “A pattern I see in our relationship is…”
- “I would like our relationship to…”
- “I wish you would let me know when I…”
- “When we fight, I…”
- “I tend to not tell you about…”
- “I think you avoid me when…”
- “An important issue between us is…”
- “A question I’ve wanted to ask you is…”
- “To keep from being hurt, I…”

©2011 KAROL KUMPFER, PH.D. AND JAYNIE BROWN
Making Happy Marriages (part 1)

Proven skills and attitudes to create the marriage you’ve dreamed of

(Print two worksheets per couple)

A happy, secure marriage—where spouses are best friends; who love, support, and nurture each other; and who enjoy mutual sexual pleasure—is one of life’s greatest joys. Research shows that most marriages can be made joyful, caring, and romantic by adjusting partners’ attitudes and developing specific skills to change behaviors and build a close marital friendship.

It is worth the effort to make these mental adjustments and learn these new skills because a happy, secure marriage improves mental and physical health; contributes to economic prosperity; and helps you have a happier, more fulfilling life. A happy marriage is also the foundation of a stable society, because children will be more emotionally stable and grow up to be thoughtful, law-abiding, responsible adults who contribute to the well-being of society.

Below are attitudes and skills that either help a marriage become joyful and satisfying or that harm it. Each of the harmful ways of interacting are “learned behaviors” that can be corrected by learning and practicing new attitudes and skills.

Put a check mark by the ones you engage in, and ask your spouse to grade you as well. Then, using the form on page 10-12, have a pleasant personal conference where you lay aside defensiveness, refrain from blame, and take honest note of your skill deficiencies and attitude errors. Make a plan to correct the negatives by choosing to learn, embrace, and live the positive opposite of each deficiency. Practice Loving-Kindness Meditation towards your spouse daily. Track your behavior. With honest soul-searching and effort, you can change your attitudes and learn skills to create the joyful marriage you’ve always dreamed of.

©2011 KAROL KUMPFER, PH.D. AND JAYNIE BROWN
Making Happy Marriages (part 2)
A plan for increasing love & correcting attitude errors or skill deficiencies
(Print two worksheets per couple)

1. Set a goal. Decide what you want your marriage to be and feel like and write it below:
_______________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Set up protocols: Decide on respectful protocols (set ways of doing or discussing things) to handle difficult aspects of marriage. Remind each other to follow them.
   a) How we will handle disagreements: _______________________________________________________________
   b) How we will handle money/budgeting issues: _________________________________________________________
   c) How we will handle concerns about sex: ______________________________________________________________
   d) How we will handle differences in parenting: _________________________________________________________
   e) How we will protect our relationship from intruders: __________________________________________________

3. Take inventory; discard anti-social behaviors: Look at the attitude errors and skill deficiencies you marked on the previous page. Recognize that they are anti-social behaviors and that they harm your ability to have the loving marriage you want. Desire to rid yourself of them. With the help of your spouse, choose three things that are most harmful to your relationship. Decide that you will permanently abandon those negative things and adopt the positive opposite of each behavior or attitude.

4. Write the 3 positive behaviors you will begin doing here. (List any skills you need to learn to put the behaviors into practice.)
   a) ___________________________________________________ SKILL: __________________________
   b) ___________________________________________________ SKILL: __________________________
   c) ___________________________________________________ SKILL: __________________________

   Contract: Write out a Contract for Change on each new behavior. Do Positive Practice and track your behavior. Apologize when you make a mistake and keep trying.

5. Give a gift of self to your spouse by asking: “What is one thing you would you like me to do differently to make you feel more loved?” (List it as a positive behavior—something you want him or her to DO, not STOP doing.) Write it here: _____________________________________

6. Develop emotional intimacy: Learn the skills required to develop emotional intimacy and put them into practice. This will help emotionally heal a spouse who is burdened with “attachment anxiety/avoidance” caused by poor nurturing or abuse as a child. It will provide a more peaceful, happy marriage.

---

**Tips to Develop Emotional Intimacy in Marriage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAILY</th>
<th>WEEKLY</th>
<th>MONTHLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Kiss; say“I love you;”</em></td>
<td><em>Go on a fun date</em></td>
<td><em>Take a relationship inventory)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>touch; hug; make eye contact</em></td>
<td><em>Build your friendship</em></td>
<td><em>Review and set goals to build relationship</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Do a kind deed; say what you like about each other; express gratitude; laugh</em></td>
<td><em>Have happy, tender sex</em></td>
<td><em>Express needs; air differences</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

©2011 KAROL KUMPFER, PH.D. AND JAYNIE BROWN
Making Happy Marriages (part 3)
Tips to deal with toxic behavior in those we love

“Toxic” people yell, swear, use sarcasm, use angry or derogatory voice tones, or become manipulative or violent when they don’t like what is happening or get their way. People engage in angry, manipulative behavior for a variety of reasons. These toxic behaviors may stem from some of the causes listed below:

1) Neglect or abuse as children: This can lead a child to develop attachment anxiety, which translates into attachment avoidance as an adult, which prevents bonding and causes him or her to misinterpret other people’s intentions, see harm where none was intended, and respond badly.

2) Parents who gave in to their rages as children, which rewarded and reinforced bad behavior.

3) Immature moral reasoning skills: they don’t understand that it is wrong to treat people badly in order to get what they want.

4) Mental illness; poor brain health from genetic factors; or increased irritability due to inadequate brain nutrition. (These may be helped by counseling, medication, neuro-feedback, and changing diet to consume adequate fish oil, vitamins, and protein.)

Regardless of the cause, people can improve brain health and learn new behaviors and skills if someone kindly confronts them; expresses love; requests that they change their behavior; praises good behavior; and ignores them when they become abusive or manipulative.

How to Deal with Toxic Behavior

The following steps will help you deal with toxic behavior from those you love. However, the situation may get worse before it gets better as the toxic person goes through stages of shock, denial, anger, depression, and upping his or her toxic behaviors to see if you will give in to his or her demands. Eventually the person will accept the need to change. If these steps don’t help, ask a counselor or trusted friend to talk to the toxic person with you.

1. Recognize that it is not in the best interest of the toxic person to remain abusive.
2. Believe that, despite your weaknesses, you deserve to be treated with respect as a human being.
3. Document each abusive occurrence in writing. List the date and time of what triggers the abusive behavior. Make two copies—one to use, and one to keep in a safe place.
4. Decide what behaviors you want the toxic person to do instead; write it down. List the skills the person needs to handle irritating situations in positive, constructive ways. Be sure to learn and use those same skills yourself.
5. Prepare yourself for a frank, but loving, conversation by learning and practicing the skills of positive criticism, delivering difficult feedback, and motivational interviewing from Lesson 7.
6. Ask the toxic person for a pleasant personal conference at a time you both agree on.
7. At your personal conference, present the evidence of his or her toxic behaviors that you’ve kept track of. Explain how it has affected you and how you would like him or her to behave instead. Ask him or her for a commitment to change the toxic behaviors. Use the Contract for Change handout in Lesson 7. Ask what help he or she needs.
8. Explain what you will do if the toxic behavior occurs again:
   a) Call it to his or her attention. (“Just now when I disagreed with you, you began yelling. That is anti-social behavior.”)
   b) Say what you need. (“What I need is for you to speak politely. When we are both calm, we can talk.”)
   c) Then IGNORE him or her and walk away until he or she is willing to discuss things politely using LUV-Listening and assertive I-Messages.
9. Praise every attempt at good behavior.

Are You Toxic?

CORRECT YOUR ATTITUDE ERRORS:

1. Acknowledge other people’s rights to see, feel, and choose differently than you.
2. Have empathy and respect for other people’s points of view. Admit that you could be wrong.
3. Be generous—recognize that other people have the right to win in disagreements too. Let your spouse have his or her own way at least 51 percent of the time.
4. Be happy for other people’s successes.
5. Find joy in giving service to others.

LEARN AND PRACTICE NEW SKILLS:

1. Practice positive communication:
   a. Use LUV-Listening and I-Messages.
   b. Be assertive instead of aggressive.
   c. Give kind, respectful responses.
   d. Let go and accept “no” graciously.
2. Notice and compliment the good in others daily.
3. Use good problem-solving and Win-Win Negotiation skills.
4. Practice Mindfulness and Loving-Kindness Meditation from the Intro Lesson.
5. Apologize for your mistakes. Ask forgiveness and offer to make amends.