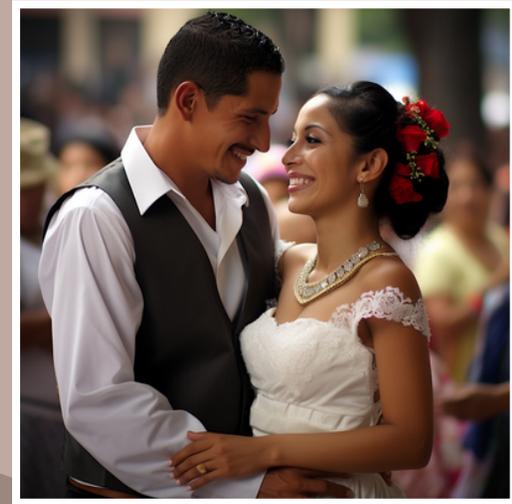
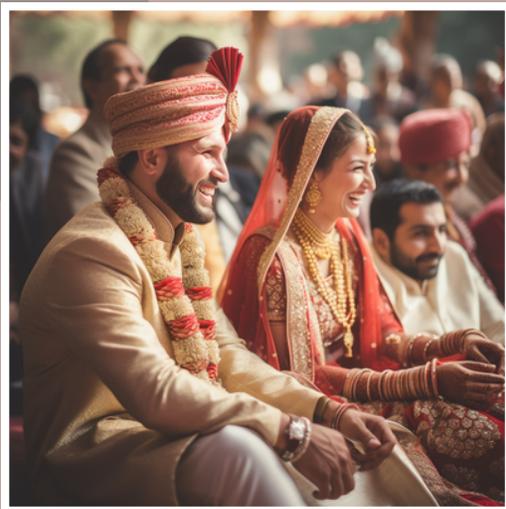


Healthy Marriage and Family Relationships

If a nation seeks to strengthen the health of its citizens and communities, it is wise to promote healthy families. There are many potential health and personal benefits when individuals are part of a caring family, as the family is the most common source of food, shelter, and safety. It is the most basic unit of belonging, acceptance, and identity. People without a strong family structure often feel lonely, and loneliness is frequently linked to poor health, depression, antisocial behaviors, and even premature death.

Individuals learn life patterns from the family, including important health behaviors, nutrition, sleep, exercise, and coping skills. The family is the most frequent source and reinforcement of values, faith, education, purpose, support, work habits, and commitment to others, and this is where these principles are reinforced. In addition, the family is society's foundation for economic, social, and emotional well-being. Health education without the promotion of healthy mothers, fathers, and extended family is often limited in impact because the most critical support of healthy decisions and actions is ignored.

Each spouse's family of origin impacts the creation of a healthy family. If each marriage partner grows to maturity with caring, committed parents who share respect, responsibilities, and trust, then they are more likely to carry those attitudes and behaviors into a healthy marriage. The Institute for Women's Health created the Three Generation Model for Adolescent Health (AdGen3) and The Parent Guide, promoting strong multi-generational bonds supporting youth through adolescence and as they prepare for their future careers and families.



Adolescents and young adults should be fully informed about the health, social, emotional, and financial benefits of a healthy marriage. These lessons can be shared through their families, faith groups, and schools. Skills related to communication, conflict resolution, financial literacy, sharing responsibilities, and future parenting should be included. Finally, respect for the value of children and the dignity of life and the lives of others should be emphasized in each lesson.

Consistent messages from school, faith, and community leaders should clearly condemn violence, especially family violence. Violence in a family has many immediate and long-term health and social consequences. Local laws and law enforcement should protect victims and prosecute perpetrators. Leaders in churches, mosques, temples, and communities should teach youth through their sacred texts to respect and protect each other, especially women, and to condemn violence. Similarly, when youth are valued, supported, and have educational and career opportunities, they will be better equipped to develop skills to avoid, resist, and/or recover from coercion, abuse, and violence.

Premarital education and counseling equip young couples with skills that reduce confusion and conflict in early marriage and family formation. Some governments, like Hungary, are providing incentives for couples to marry and have children. Counseling before marriage can also allow health information to be shared, including genetic diseases (such as sickle cell disease), chronic illnesses, or sexually transmitted diseases/HIV. Mutual respect, responsibilities, and emotional intelligence in marriage can be discussed, as well as shared values, faith, and family goals, including planning for children. Awareness of fertility cycles and age-related windows is important for a couple. Early adult pregnancy is recommended before fertility decreases with increasing age.

The future of each country is dependent on the next generation. Many countries are now facing a serious population decline that will limit their future productivity and survival. Couples who wish to have children should be supported by their nation and community. Early adult pregnancy is recommended before fertility decreases with increasing age.



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Thanks to our many collaborators, including Geraldine Veiman, MD, and graduate Public Health students involved in the IWH Young Leaders Program

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ISBN: 979-8-218-36899-9

First Edition

Published by: The Institute for Women's Health

THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

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