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News Release

The Truth About “I Do”

An approximate 2.4 million well intentioned “I do’s” are uttered a year, and at least half of them end in “I don’t”. In fact, step-families are said to be the emerging new face of the family. Statistics reflect that approximately 33% of Americans are members of stepfamilies and about 40% of families with young children will become stepfamilies before the children turn 18 years old. Before we get too comfortable with these statistics, “I don’ts” definitely are accompanied by consequences that commonly affect much more than the original two involved. Stress in its many forms coupled with other associated effects of divorce can often be felt within the children and all involved for many years to follow. Although many families *survive* divorce, certainly, the best case scenario is one where it and its causes don’t reside.

Since deciding to marry is one of the biggest and important commitments many individuals make in life, taking a closer look into some of its associated issues might prove to be beneficial.

Misconceptions/Danger Zones associated with marriage:

Infatuation versus love: Puppy love and its older versions can feel similar to what many commonly mis-identify as genuine love. However, infatuation and marriages built upon it can dissipate almost as quickly as it begins because it is often based in superficialities and assumptions.

Falling in/Running away: Falling into anything is rarely good, especially when relating to love. Likewise, running away from various situations often sets a couple up for disaster. Love should be entered into wisely and treated with much consideration and respect to give it a good start to success.

“Rose colored glasses:” Many are in love with being in love. Oftentimes, this can cloud a person’s true view of an individual and the relationships in which they enter as a result of it.

The Common Consequences:

Severed Spouses: Many relationships end with partners facing troubled finances, fear, hurt, anger and sadness. These often don't have quick fixes and spill over into other phases of their life.

Confused Children: Children of divorce often have trouble with picking up the pieces whether expressed verbally or through invert or overt actions. The effects can possibly resurface in their relationships with others.

Frantic Family: New routines, difficult conversations and inevitable conflicts can set a family up for various challenges, short and long lived. These undoubtedly require for all involved and affected a varying degree of dedication, time and patience to conquer successfully.

Three ways to avoid divorce:

Careful selection: Picking a mate should be done with the carefulness and consideration properly reserved for an individual being invited into another's life "until death..." Marriages will be challenging but great decisions made initially can play a great part in ensuring success.

Pre-marital-counseling: Participating in pre-marital counseling can be one of the most enjoyable and eye-opening experiences a couple share. This gives each a chance to learn more about the commitment of marriage, themselves and, especially, their potential life-long partners.

Effective conflict management: It is important for couples to explore and develop a healthy mode of conflict management. All healthy and troubled marriages and relationships alike have conflicts. The differences lie in how they handle the issue and each other during these times.

Please feel free to contact the St. Clair County Extension office regarding the following related programs:

Relationship Smarts (Teenage dating and related issues)

Smart Steps (Step Families)

PASD (Parenting After Separation and Divorce)

For more information on this or related topics, contact Synithia Williams, Regional Extension Agent in Family and Child Development for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at (205) 338- 9416 or email at willisl@aces.edu.

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