raising your child

together

A Guide for Unmarried Parents

Raising Your Child Together:
A Guide for Unmarried Parents

Office of Family Support, Department of Social Services
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Congratulations Mom and Dad

This guide is especially for new parents—**mothers and fathers**—who are **NOT MARRIED**. You may be in one of these situations:

You are romantically involved and living together with your child, or you may visit each other often. Whatever the case, you share the work, joys and anxieties of parenting, but you aren't sure if marriage is in your future.

or

You do not live together, and your relationship may be strained. One of you is the primary caregiver, but you do want to work together and cooperate to raise your child.

or

You may be single and not interested in a relationship or marriage right now, but you want to learn some things that will be helpful in the future.

* **A good relationship between you and your partner is important to your child... and it's not rocket science.**

This Guide Can Help

In this guide, we share some of the keys to successful relationships. This guide can help you learn to raise your child as a team—whether you plan to stay together, or not. If marriage is a goal, this guide will help you prepare for marriage.

A good relationship between you and your partner is important to your child...and it's not rocket science. Most anyone can learn relationship skills, and reading this guide is the first step.

This guide will help you...

- *learn to communicate and handle differences*
- *manage anger*
- *handle money wisely*
- *maintain the love and good feelings for your partner*
- *learn what it takes to have a good, long lasting marriage*
- *handle the tough issues that can break couples apart*
- *develop a written partners-in-parenting agreement*

This guide can help **unmarried parents**, **married couples**, and **single individuals** learn how to have a successful relationship.

Become Parenting Partners

It's important to your child… and you!

Children need the love, care and attention of **both mother and father**. It's best if you can cooperate as parents; even better if you have a good, long-lasting marriage. But let's face it, for some couples, marriage isn't always possible.

*** No matter how you feel about each other, your child loves and needs both of you. Become partners in raising your child. It's what's best for your child.**

Many parents do a fine job raising children alone, and their children grow up without any serious problems. But it's certainly harder to raise a child by yourself.

Children who grow up with little or no relationship with one of their parents often have difficult issues to deal with. These issues affect how they feel about themselves and the way they relate to others later in life.

How Children Benefit When Parents Cooperate as a Team

If marriage is not an option for you, but you learn to parent as a team your child will:

- *Be more likely to do well in school and in life*
- *Be more likely to have the time, attention and financial support of both mother and father on a consistent and regular basis*
- *Be less likely to have the emotional scars that can result from having an absent parent*
- *Learn that even when parents no longer love each other, they can both love their child*
- *Avoid being used as a pawn in the war between two parents*
- *Love and grow to respect both parents*

How Children Benefit When Their Parents Marry

When two parents raise their child within a strong, healthy, committed marriage their child will:

- *Be less likely to get into trouble with the law, or become a young single parent*
- *Be more likely to do well in school… and beyond*
- *Be more likely to be physically and emotionally healthy*
- *Be less likely to be poor*
- *Have the time and attention of both mother and father on a daily basis*
- *Learn how men and women create loving partnerships*

You CAN Build a Strong Relationship

Healthy relationships come in all shapes and sizes. They may not look alike, but all healthy relationships share things in common. Basic relationship skills will help in all aspects of life…dating, marriage, even work. Most important, you set a good example for your children when you can communicate effectively, solve problems and manage conflicts.

*7 Seven Basic Tips

1 Communicate Clearly <<<

Communicate your thoughts and feelings clearly and respectfully. Listen carefully to make sure you understand what is being said.

Take turns—good communication is a two-way street.

Listen and work to understand what your partner means. Are you really listening? Or are you judging what's being said and thinking about what to say next?

Clearly express what you feel and think. You must tell your partner what you want. He/she cannot read your mind or heart.

An effective and popular communication tool is the Speaker/Listener Technique. It can be very effective for dealing with sensitive issues. It's not recommended that you talk this way all the time—that would be too artificial. But it can help you feel safe when talking about difficult issues. Try out the technique with a "practice" topic…one that won't upset either of you. This technique gets easier with practice.

Speaker-Listener Technique

Agree to take turns saying what's on your mind about an issue. Ask your partner to begin.

When your partner is speaking, listen carefully—don't interrupt.

Before you take your turn to say what's on your mind, repeat back to your partner what you think you hear him/her say.

Your partner should tell you if you got it right. If not, your partner should explain it again, perhaps using different words to help you understand.

Next, it is your turn to say what you want about the subject, and your partner's turn to listen quietly and then repeat back to you what he/she heard.

You may go around this process several times before you both feel understood. Only then should you move on to talk about how to solve the problem.

*Adapted from Markman, H.J., Stanley, S.M., Blumberg, S.L., Jenkins, N.H., & Whiteley, C. (2004) *12 Hours to a Great Marriage.* New York: Wiley and Sons.(See www.prepinc.com.)

Consider this…

When you and your partner disagree, which type of statement does he/she use? Complaint, Criticism or Contempt? Which type do you use most often?

2 Disagree Respectfully <<<

Disagreements and conflict are normal in relationships. The way you handle conflict can make the difference between a relationship of equal respect and a war between the sexes.

Check out the difference between complaint, criticism and contempt.*

Complaint

- *specific and limited to one situation*
- *states what you want done or how you feel in a calm tone without disrespect*
- *uses "I" statements*

"I'm upset because you didn't take out the trash."

Criticism

- *blames the other person*
- *uses the words "always" or "never"*
- *uses "you" statements*

"You always add more stuff to the trash when you see it's overflowing. Why don't you ever take it out?"

Contempt

- *adds insult to the criticism*
- *a verbal attack in which you accuse your partner of stupidity or incompetence, etc.*

"You pig, why can't you get off your lazy butt and take out the trash instead of always leaving it for me?"

Quiz

Which of the following is more likely to get your partner to take out the trash?

1. *"I'm upset because you didn't take out the trash." (Complaint)*
2. *"Why don't you ever take out the trash?" (Criticism)*
3. *"Take out the trash you lazy butt! You always leave it for me." (Contempt)*

If you guessed number one, you're right. If you chose either criticism or contempt, it's likely that your partner will refuse to reply…and that won't get the problem solved.

* Adapted from John Gottman and Nan Silver (1999). *Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work.* Three Rivers Press.

3 Manage Your Anger <<<

Too often, couples' arguments turn into yelling and screaming matches that get out of control and even violent. Things are said and done that can seriously damage your relationship. When children see their parents fight, it's upsetting and causes them to be scared. Read these tips on managing your anger…more important, **use them**!

Try out the Speaker/Listener Technique (page 3) to discuss the issue calmly and safely.

Agree to take "time-outs" whenever emotions are out of control. You can discuss the issues later after you've cooled down, or maybe even another day.

Never resort to physical violence. Violence is never justified, no matter how angry you are.

Use statements that clearly state your wants and needs. Do not use language that expresses criticism or contempt.

positive

negative

* **In successful relationships, partners say or do positive things about four to five times as often as they say or do negative things.**

4 Try a Little Tenderness <<<

Sometimes partners forget to show normal respect or gratitude to each other. In successful relationships, partners say or do positive things about four to five times as often as they say or do negative things. Show your appreciation with words or deeds…and do it often! At least twice a day, say things like…

"Thank you so much for **remembering** *to do…."*

"I really *like* it when you…"

"You look really ***sharp*** *in that outfit today…"*

"You are so **patient** *with our baby. I know how difficult it is when he cries all the time…"*

5 Learn Your Partner's *"Love Language"* <<<

People show love in different ways. A father may show his love for his wife and children by working hard and earning money. The mother shows her family she loves them with hugs and kisses and "I love you's."

Each of us has our own "love language." The problem arises when we don't recognize our partner's love language. **Karen and Max's story is common:**

KAREN SEEMS MOODY AND UNHAPPY. SHE COMPLAINS THAT HER HUSBAND, MAX, DOESN'T spend enough time with her or their son. She says, "We don't talk. I don't feel connected to you." Karen's love language is to spend "quality time" with Max. On the other hand, Max does things to make life easier for Karen - working hard, keeping up the yard and doing grocery shopping. Max's love language involves "acts of service." He doesn't understand why Karen is so unhappy.

Love Language Q&A

Karen and Max truly love each other, so why do they feel so unloved? Different Love Languages is the answer. Karen and Max show their love in different ways. If they made an effort to occasionally use their partner's love language, they would both feel more loved.

What's Your *Love* Language?*

Your Love Language is how you show love, and everyone's Love Language is different.

Consider the **five** main types of Love Languages.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION | You say nice things to your partner. You give him/her compliments and words of encouragement. You make requests rather than demands.

QUALITY TIME | You give your partner your full attention. You share, listen and do things together.

GIVING & RECEIVING GIFTS | You enjoy exchanging gifts.

ACTS OF SERVICE | You do things you know your partner will find helpful, such as housework, babysitting or cooking.

PHYSICAL TOUCH | You connect with your partner physically…holding hands, kissing and being sexual together.

Love Language Q&A BONUS QUESTION!

Which is your Love Language? What about your partner…which Love Language does he/she use? Are your Love Languages the same or different?

* Adapted from Gary Chapman(1995) *The Five Love Languages* (see **Resources** on page 17)

6 Keep the Love and Friendship Alive

Working and also caring for a baby and children takes all parents' time and attention, so much so that they often forget to take time to enjoy each other. In many families, parents rarely spend any time alone together, and when they do, they usually talk about the kids! **Here are some tips to help keep your love and friendship alive.**

Couple time…every day

Set aside time each day to connect. Take five minutes…this may be after the children have gone to bed or before they wake in the morning…and ask about your partner's day.

Fun time…once a week

Plan for fun time together every week…or at least, once a month. Plan an activity away from the children. It could be a dinner and a movie or simply a walk. Get creative with child care; ask a couple to sit for you and then return the favor by babysitting for them.

Away time…whenever you can

Once in a while, take a trip together without the children. Whether it's one night or a weekend away, it will be worth it. It's good for your children, too. Kids need to know that you enjoy doing things together as a couple.

7 Plan and Dream About Your Child's Future

Couples need to work through differences in their values and beliefs as it affects their child's future. Talk **together** about the family life you want to create for your child. Think about these questions as you plan your child's future. Are your answers the same or different from your partner's?

Do *you want your child's experience to be like your own growing up? Or do you want it to be different? How so?*

What *are your hopes and dreams for your child? Do you want your child to attend public or private school?*

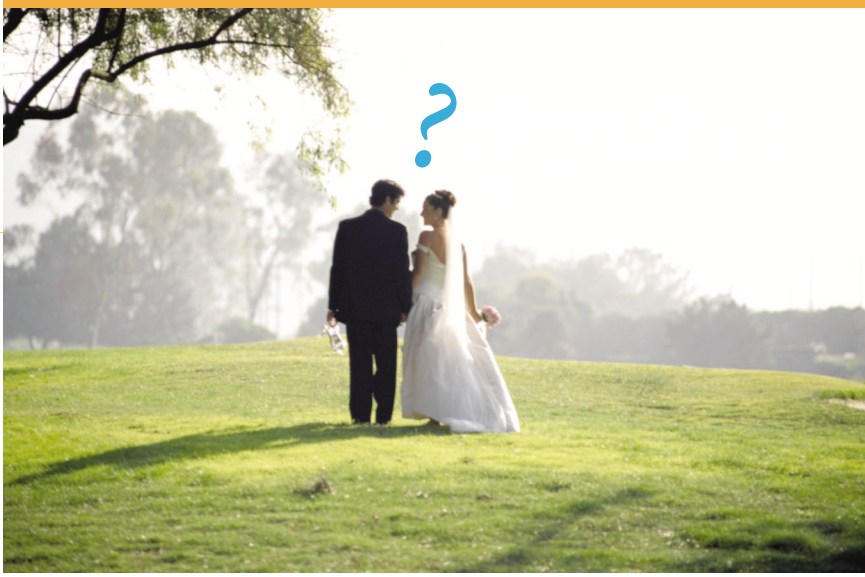
What *interests or talents do you want to encourage?*

What *kind of person would you like your child to be?*

What *kinds of work or career would you like him or her to have?*

Do *you want your child to have a family? Do you want one day to have grandchildren?*

Why Marry?



Many unmarried parents do want to marry some day—they believe it would be best for their children and for themselves. But they don't feel ready for marriage.

It's true, you should not marry just for the sake of the child. You need to be sure that marriage is going to be good for both of you, and that it will last.

If you are unsure about the benefits of marriage, consider this Top Ten list.

The Pros of Marriage — Top Ten List

Here's what married couples say that they value most about their marriages.

1. **Companionship**
   "I know I can always talk to my wife. We know how to relax, laugh, and have fun together."
2. **Friendship**
   "My husband is always interested in me. He accepts me just as I am, just like a best friend should."
3. **Partnership**
   "It's good to know I have a life partner and a parenting partner. My husband shares the worries and joys of family life and raising our children."
4. **Economics**
   "Now that we're married, we earn more, save more and spend wisely."
5. **Better health**
   "I eat better and live a healthier lifestyle now that I'm married. We also watch out for each other's health."
6. **Better Sex**
   "Now, our sex lives are about our deep love and devotion for each other. For me, married sex is more satisfying…not to mention, safer."
7. **Shared Values & Spirituality**
   "When we talk about our values, I can feel the deep connection. It's nice to celebrate the deeper meanings of life."
8. **Care & Comfort**
   "I know my husband will be there to care for me and my family as the years go by."
9. **Shared Hopes, Dreams & Memories**
   "When I share my hopes and dreams with my wife, she often has the same dreams. And it feels so good to know we share so many wonderful memories."
10. **Commitment**
    "Our love is not just a feeling. It's a decision. No matter how rough things get, we'll stick it out and make things better. That's what I call commitment."

Waiting to Wed?

Reasons Why Couples Put Off Marriage

Many unmarried parents would like to marry but don't feel they are "ready." When asked why, the two biggest reasons are money concerns and relationship problems. But couples can overcome these obstacles. By working on these issues now, you can become more confident…maybe even confident enough to take the plunge and get married!

Managing Money Together

Many unmarried parents say they are waiting for financial security before they marry. Many want to have steady jobs that pay decently, enough savings to live in a better home, or even pay for the wedding. The problem is that few couples know how to achieve these goals.

You may worry that your partner is not responsible when it comes to money. Or you may be concerned that your partner does not earn enough money. Child support obligations from former relationships can be a concern, as well.

When couples live together, but are not married, each person's money is their own. Couples in this situation typically do not pool their money, and this makes it harder to keep track of where it's going. When money is tight and held separately, it's easy to get really stressed and blame the other for not earning enough or spending too much.

But when two people commit to marry, they decide to share their income and expenses. Two can live cheaper than one, but more important, when they plan together financially two can earn and save more together.

When two people commit to marry, they decide to share their income and expenses. Two can live cheaper than one, but more important, when they plan together financially, two can earn and save more together.

It's true in some cases when you marry, you may lose some types of government assistance. Your partner's income may reduce your benefits or eliminate them altogether. But there are other ways you may benefit financially from marrying…especially in the long run.

Consider these common money worries…and possible solutions!

ONE OR BOTH OF YOU DOES NOT EARN ENOUGH TO SUPPORT A FAMILY

Go to an employment agency to get help. They can help you look for a steady job or find a better paying job. Look into a job training program to learn more skills.

THERE NEVER SEEMS TO BE ENOUGH MONEY, OR YOU'RE IN DEBT AND BILLS ARE PILING UP

Take a course as a couple on budgeting and money management. These courses may be available at little or no cost in your community.

CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS ARE TOO HIGH, OR YOU'VE ACCUMULATED CHILD SUPPORT DEBT

Get advice from a local fatherhood program or child support office. There may be ways you can adjust or reduce your child support debt or current payments.

YOU DON'T WANT TO GET MARRIED UNTIL YOU CAN AFFORD A BIG WEDDING PARTY

Decide to have a small, low-cost wedding celebration. You can always have a big celebration in a few years when you can afford it.

YOU CAN'T AFFORD THE TYPE OF HOME YOU'D LIKE

You may discover that it's easier to get a loan as a married couple. Consult community non-profit organizations or a reputable lending institution for sound financial advice. They can help you do some serious financial planning together to achieve your dreams.

YOU'RE CONFUSED ABOUT YOUR TAXES

Get free advice from the IRS or a trusted financial advisor in the community. You may qualify for extra tax credits… read the sidebar on the next page to find out how to give your paycheck a boost.

Give Your Paycheck a Boost

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a special tax benefit for people who work full or part-time and have relatively low incomes. If you qualify, you'll owe less in taxes, and you may get a substantial cash payment even if you don't owe any income tax. If you have a child, you may be eligible for the Child Tax Credit—worth up to $600 per child. You must file a federal tax return to qualify. For information about tax credits and free help filing your taxes, call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040.

Are You Ready?

Some couples love each other very much but still say they are not "ready" to marry. Arguments and differences are a constant concern. And they worry whether they can trust each other not to "fool around."

JEREMY SAYS RACHEL NAGS AND COMPLAINS WHEN HE SPENDS TIME WITH HIS FRIENDS. RACHEL says Jeremy doesn't help her enough with the children. Jeremy criticizes Rachel for spending too much money. They agree on one thing: they have too many arguments and differences to get married. They don't want to marry unless they are sure it will last. They have seen how much divorce hurts. But they love their baby and want her to be happy.

Jeremy and Rachel's situation is common, but there are things you can do—tools you can learn to use— to improve your relationship...

Develop Realistic Expectations

Marriage is much more than the "happily-ever-after" you see in movies. Every marriage has highs and lows. All couples have differences and disagreements. The issue is not whether you still have disagreements but how you manage them. Couples who want to stay together must learn how to turn "romantic, movie-star" love, into real, lasting, "grown-up" love. That takes commitment and conscious work.

Communicate Well and Manage Disagreements

Learn and practice the relationship skills discussed in this guide. Even better, find a class or workshop in your community that teaches relationship skills.

Learn to Accept Your Partner

It is natural to get annoyed with your partner. But let's face it, no one is perfect! You may be able to change some things about yourselves, but there will always be things neither of you can change. Besides, "opposites" often attract each other. Learn to accept and even welcome the differences between you and your partner.

Make Your Relationship a Priority

Make time for each other. Take care to preserve the fun and friendship in your relationship. And, most important, protect yourself from attractions to other people. Commitment and fidelity are decisions—choices that you make—not just something that happens.

Make an Economic Plan for Your Family

First make a budget. List your income, expenses and other obligations. Share it with your partner. Discuss your economic concerns, and decide on what your financial goals are. Get good financial advice. Make a plan for how you can reach these goals.

Parent as a Team

It takes good team work to raise your children well. Each parent has their own style but it's very important to agree on the basic ground rules and consequences. Explain them to your children in advance. And always back each other up. Experts say parents should be loving but firm, not too strict and not too easy. Parenting should not be all work and discipline. Don't forget to take the time to talk to and play with your children.

Tackle the "Big, Tough" Issues

Everyone brings personal issues into relationships. But if you have a problem with addiction, mental illness or infidelity, this can seriously hurt your relationship. These issues can also affect your ability to parent. If you've been denying or simply fighting about the "big, tough" issues, it's time to tackle them. Being able to talk safely and calmly about these issues is a first step. *(The Speaker-Listener Technique described on page 3 can help.)* Then decide together on the steps you'll take to solve them. (See page 14 and 17)

Become a Partner-in-Parenting

The Time is NOW

Parents who live apart have a hard time cooperating. One parent may make it difficult for the other parent to visit the child. Another parent may use late child support payments as a form of retaliation. Hostile interactions and name-calling is painful for the child. Children often feel torn between the two parents.

If you cannot create a friendly co-parenting relationship, then consider treating your relationship as a formal business agreement. Treat each other like someone you do business with. Work out agreements on various issues, and if necessary, put them in writing. Ask a friend or family member you both trust to help. Here's a model of a Partners-in-Parenting Behavior Agreement and Co-Parenting Plan:*

Partners-in-Parenting Behavior Agreement

First discuss these general guidelines. Once you have agreed on them, sign and date the agreement:

1. *We agree to keep conflict between us away from our children.*
2. *We will be respectful in our words and not put each other down in front of the children.*
3. *We will only say positive things about each other when the children are present.*
4. *We will not make promises we can't keep.*
5. *We will not ask the children to choose between us.*
6. *We will encourage our children to love and respect both parents.*
7. *We agree to send messages to each other directly or through another adult. We will not send messages with the children.*
8. *We will each respect the relationships we have made with new partners.*
9. *We will ask new partners and members of our family to respect these guidelines as well.*

_____ signatures and date

* Adapted from *50/50 Parenting in Fragile Families.* A program curriculum developed by Pamela C. Wilson and Ademola Ekulona, Baltimore: Center for Fathers and Workforce Development, 2003.

How to Make a Partners-in-Parenting Plan

Now it's time to prepare your own Partners-in-Parenting Plan. Answer the following questions, then formulate a plan that reflects the answers to each, write these answers out and both sign and date it.

1. *How will we communicate with each other, including in person, phone calls, written notes, etc.?*
2. *What are the living arrangements for the children? Who will they live with? Where will they live?*
3. *When, where and how often will there be visitation?*
4. *How will we handle access to our extended families? This includes personal visits, phone calls, etc.*
5. *Who will provide child care?*
6. *Will we share the decisions on our children's education, medical care, church attendance and other issues?*
7. *Where will the children celebrate their birthdays and holidays?*
8. *When will child support payments be made? How much? Which parent will carry the children on their health insurance policy?*
9. *How will we handle location moves of either parent?*
10. *If necessary, how will we renegotiate this agreement?*

_____ signatures and date

POP Quiz

Do You Know the Three Most Important Little Words?

A. *Now I understand*
B. *Maybe you're right*
C. *I am sorry*
D. *All of the above*

If you guessed "D," you're right! Use these words frequently, and your parenting partnership will benefit. There are three more you may want to add to the list...

* *iLove You*

Big, Tough Issues that Hurt Relationships

Substance Abuse, Gambling and Other Addictions

Addictions of any kind hurt relationships. They hurt children, too. If you or your partner...

- *is a habitual or binge drinker, in amounts that interfere with work and/or relationships*
- *abuses drugs of any kind*
- *gambles frequently and uncontrollably*

...then professional help is needed. When treatment works—and it often does—your life will turn around. Your relationship with both your partner—and your children—will improve.

Mental Health Problems

These problems are very common and nothing to be ashamed of. If you or your partner is...

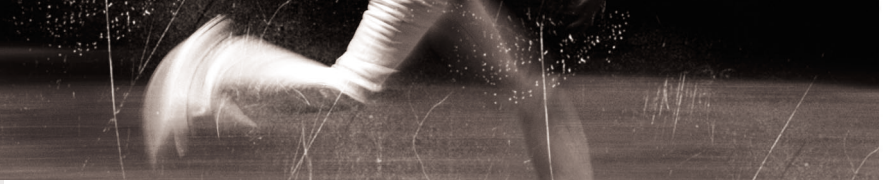
- *feeling depressed or "down" for more than a couple of weeks*
- *ever talks about suicide*
- *is constantly worried or anxious*
- *seems out of touch with reality*

...professional help may be needed. Treatment for depression and other mental health problems is often successful. Support your partner by acknowledging the problem without blame.

Sexual Infidelity

Unfaithfulness or "cheating" can destroy relationships. When one partner is "fooling around," the trust between you is broken. It's important to be open and honest when talking about the situation. You may need to make clear what your expectations are and set some ground rules for the future.

Learning that your partner is unfaithful may hurt deeply but it doesn't have to end the relationship. Many relationships and marriages have survived infidelity...some relationships even grow stronger. And remember, it does take time to rebuild trust. Chronic, repeated infidelity is a serious problem and needs professional help.



What about Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence, or "battering," can take many different forms. It's a pattern of behaviors used by one person to maintain power and control over another person in a marriage or an intimate relationship.

Domestic violence is a serious problem affecting couples in every community across the country. It may often lead to child abuse. The effects of witnessing a parent abuse the other parent can have life-long negative effects on children.

a batterer's behavior can include:

Physical and sexual acts of violence or threats of physical and sexual violence

Verbal abuse and threats

Control of a partner's daily activities

Control of a partner's use of money

Isolation of a partner from others

Attacks on a partner's spiritual or religious beliefs

* If you are the victim there is ***no reason*** to feel shame or to blame yourself.

If you are the batterer, you must take ***responsibility*** and choose to stop your violent behavior.

Both the batterer and victim need to seek help **independently** from experts in domestic violence.
(Going to a counselor together may only make things worse.)

Call the domestic violence toll-free hotline at **1-888-411-1333** for confidential help. Visit **www.lcadv.org** for information about domestic violence.

Take Three

Three Important Parenting Messages

As you take on the responsibilities of parenting together, remember these three key points:

1. *The BEST thing you can do for your child...*

is to build a strong relationship as a couple. It's great if you can cooperate as parents, but even better if you have a good, long-lasting marriage.

2. *If you plan to marry...*

start working on a plan right now to overcome any issues that stand in the way.

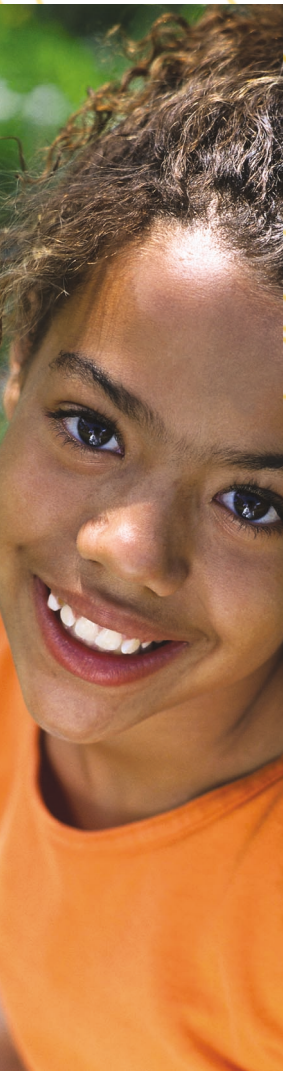
3. *If you need help...*

no matter the problem, seek help from others. When you ask for help, it's a sign of strength and proof of your love for your child.

DEPARTMENT of SOCIAL SERVICES
OFFICE OF FAMILY SUPPORT
With You. For You. Building a **Stronger** Louisiana.

RESOURCES

Where to go for additional information and help in Louisiana



Find out from the sources listed below if your community offers free or low-cost classes or workshops in communication and relationships skills, building a strong marriage, co-parenting and stepparenting. Or seek couples counseling from a faith-based counselor or mental health professional who has had special training in working with couples.

To locate where to go to find jobs or job training, and help with financial issues, housing, child care, food banks, crisis counseling, family support, domestic violence, health, mental health and substance abuse issues call:

- Your local United Way and ask to speak with the person who can help you find the services you are looking for. The United Way phone number should be listed in the phone book. In New Orleans area call **269-2673**, VIA-LINK's COPEline. In Baton Rouge call **463-5463**, INFO-LINE.
- Family life specialists at the Cooperative Extension Service sometimes offer free or low cost classes and workshops on money management, parenting and other related issues. Call the nearest branch of the Louisiana State University, Cooperative Extension Service to find out if there are any near you.
- Look on the bulletin board at your public library for classes, workshops or organizations that can help you. Check out some of the books listed below, or videotapes on relationships, parenting and other issues.

For addiction-related services, you may also contact your local Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Al-ANON (phone numbers listed in your yellow pages).

For information and confidential services related to domestic violence contact **1-888-411-1333.**

Books

Audrey B. Chapman (2001). *Seven Attitude Adjustments for Finding a Loving Man*. Pocket Books.

Gary Chapman (1995). *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*. Northfield Publishing.

Anita Doreen Diggs and Vera S. Paster (1998). *Staying Married: A Guide for African American Couples*. Kensington Pub. Corp.

Darlene Powell Hopson and Derek A. Hopson (1994). *Friends, Lovers, and Soul Mates: A Guide to Better Relationships between Black Men and Women*. Simon and Shuster.

Pamela Jordan, Scott Stanley and Howard Markman (1999). *Becoming Parents: How to Strengthen Your Marriage as Your Family Grows*. Jossey-Bass Pub.

2003: Louisiana Department of Social Services, Office of Family Support. *Marriage Matters! A Guide for Louisiana Couples*.

raising your child

together

A Guide for Unmarried Parents