

# Morality Forum Update

*Standing up for family values in society*

Issue 28

Winter 2007-2008

## **PORNOGRAPHY: THE FACTS**

by John O'Neill

In Britain today, pornography is readily available: 27 channels of porn are coming into our nation from abroad. After Britain, in other European countries the highest intake of porn channels is 4 or 5! So-called "soft" porn is on sale in newsagents, supermarkets, petrol stations etc. "Hardcore" porn is sold in licensed sex shops. Tapping in the word "porn" on the internet to one server alone brings up 24,522 sites! The government only considers categories such as child porn as being unacceptable and therefore legislated against. There is a question that needs to be asked regarding pornography: Is it harmful, or, is it just harmless "adult" entertainment? The government and the various regulatory bodies seem to base their thinking on moral issues on liberal, humanistic, amoral thinking: "Adults are entitled to make up their own minds." The film censors are now releasing films which were banned in previous years. It seems that it is an "anything goes" attitude with the ever increasing levels of sex, violence, and bad language in the media, films, etc. A study of 88 civilisations in the 1940's by Professor J.D. Unwin from Cambridge University showed that, whenever there was widespread promiscuity, premarital sex, infidelity, and same sex relationships, the civilisation was dead within three generations - with no exceptions! Studies by other historians such as Arnold Toynbee show conclusively, that no society in history has been able to survive for long without a strong moral code, and, that immorality corrupts individuals and destroys societies! Moral and spiritual values have been in constant decline in Britain since the nineteen fifties.

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### **Mission Redesign**

by Diana van der Stok

Have you watched "Inconvenient Truth" and "The 11th Hour"? Both dealing with the climate change crisis? Inconvenient truth's producers saw Al Gore's slide show in 2004. Inspired, they approached director D. Guggenheim about making the slide show into a film. Sceptical at first Guggenheim later on saw Gore's presentation for himself, saying he was blown away" and now thought "global warming the most important issue... I had no idea how you'd make a film out of it, but I wanted to try." I've wanted to tell this story for a long time and I feel like I've failed" "I've probably given this slide show 1,000 times. I would say, at least 1,000 times...I guess the thing I've spent more time on than anything else in this slide show is trying to identify all those things in people's

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### **Published Letters**

#### ***A Hope for 2008***

by Theresa Quarmby

What a tragedy that the number of teenagers having a second abortion exceeds 100 a month - according to official figures.

Normal Wells of the family education trust said that the Government in its zeal to promote contraception as the mark of sexual responsibility, the sex education establishment had "cheapened sex and lost sight of its purpose as an expression of the total self-giving of a husband and wife to each other in the context of a lifelong marriage."

Every day about 600 British babies are killed by legalised abortion, almost none of these are performed on women who became pregnant through rape or incest, or because the pregnancies pose a threat to the lives or health of the mothers. How lovely it would be if in 2008, women as the guardians of the family could become essential leaders, using their skills as mothers, nurturers and educators to promote the healing of the family, commit to becoming peacemakers and care for all children unborn to born as their own - for they are our future.

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## Days of shame

SHAME on the British Medical Association who want early abortion to be made easier!

Last year there were 193,737 abortions in England and Wales, an increase of 3.9%. 68% of those were carried out during the first 10 weeks of pregnancy!

Because of scientific and technological advances we can now observe life as it develops in the womb:

Day 20: Foundations of the brain, spinal cord and nervous system are already established.

Day 21: The heart begins to beat.

Day 28: The backbone and muscles are forming. Arms, legs, eyes and ears begin to show.

Day 30: The embryo is 10,000 times larger than the original fertilised egg and developing rapidly.

Day 35: Five fingers can be seen in the hand.

Day 40: Brain waves can be detected and recorded.

Week 6: The liver is now taking over the production of blood cells, and the brain begins to control the movements of muscles and organs.

Week 9: The baby will curl its fingers around an object placed in the palm of its hand.

Week 11: The baby is about 2 inches long. The face has assumed a baby's profile and muscle movements are becoming more coordinated.

Week 12: The baby now sleeps, awakens and exercises its muscles energetically - turning its head, curling its toes and opening and closing its mouth. The palm when stroked, will make a tight fist.

It is to this point of gestation (12 weeks) that BMA want abortion to be made easier.

Surely we are talking about a fully formed child by this time and the fact that removing the need for two doctors' signatures will lead to an increase in terminations. Shame on the BMA.

## Responses to Theresa's Letters:

**1) A mother's right** When is TQ going to stop going on about her anti-abortionist views?

As far back as I can remember she has been voicing her opinions upon us. I have news for you T, there are some of us who (including the government) believe it is the mother's right to choose, not yours.

Granted it would be better if effective contraception was used but sometimes things don't work out as planned.

After all at 12 weeks the embryo is a living thing but so is an amoeba.

The difference is that the embryo is not capable of surviving outside of the womb without medical intervention.

If my daughter became pregnant (married or otherwise) and decided that it wasn't right for her, I would support her in whatever view she took.

There are too many people on this planet for it to support a modern western lifestyle without consequences.

The more that can be done to reduce this over breeding the better. It's about time that rather than allowing people

to breed at will there should be limits. If abortions are the means to this then so be it! (SKMakin, Outlane)

## Impact on changing attitudes (reply to SKMakin)

I will stop going on about abortion when it is legally banned, and it will be one day, just as slavery was legally banned.

I believe that of all the subjects relating to the sanctity of human life, abortion is the keystone.

It is the critical issue that has been overwhelming in changing attitudes toward the value of life in general. We need to make a stand for the dignity of the individual, for each person's right to life - for each individual to be treated as created in the image of God rather than a collection of molecules with no unique values.

Indeed if any of my family became pregnant I would support whatever decision was made as one cannot make anyone do what they do not wish to do, but one can present the truth of abortion which is the taking of the life of an unborn child.

Too many people on the earth? A devastating consequence of abortion has been its effect on the national birth rate.

Since the Abortion Act came into force, the fertility rate in Britain has declined steadily, and is now 25% below that required to replace the population by natural means.

The result is fewer children and young people in society - 180,000 fewer each year. The national decline in fertility is perhaps the most important social trend of our lifetime.

The consequences for schools, universities and the economy are obvious. There is likely to be a pension crisis, which would become more acute as the number of economically active people in the population declines. Thus the consequences of the Abortion Act are slowly being worked out in our society! Theresa Quarmby, Kirkburton

**2)** A few weeks ago a lady named TQ wrote in regarding the law on abortion and having a four-month old baby myself I have just found time to write in and respond to this.

**I totally agree with Theresa;** our laws are disgusting. When I was pregnant I had a 'week by week guide' and I loved looking at my baby growing and developing every week. To think that in this country we can just abort a baby so easily and 'get rid of it', so to speak, is like discarding rubbish and is utterly unacceptable. I would love to see this law changed as so many little lives are being thrown away too easily now, and as a country we make it far too easy. (Golcar Mum)

**3)** Unlike SKMakin I appreciate TQ's letters and so do many others.

She is obviously a well-informed lady who cares deeply about the unborn. She takes the trouble to present the unpalatable truth to us, pointing out the dangers that can affect women who have had a termination and the hurt a baby goes through in the process. I, and many others, hope that TQ will keep "going on about her anti-abortion views". The public should know these facts.

May I respectfully suggest that SK Makin looks at the signatures to the letters in The Mailbag and then, if one is signed TQ just do not read it. ☐

*from page 1 Pornography: The Facts*

The results are: a ten-fold increase in crimes and enormous increases in social problems! WE REAP AS WE SOW!

There are only one set of laws in operation in our world in relation to human conduct. They are the moral and spiritual laws which have been given to us by our creator for our well being and protection. They have stood the test of time and we ignore them at our peril! The sexual act is meant to be a holy act of love between a man and a woman in a God centred eternal marriage, living for the sake of each other and for the good of all mankind, producing children, and living in accordance with the moral and spiritual laws. The sexual act is often totally debased and degraded by the electronic and print Medias, films etc. Pornography is the antithesis to our creator's blueprint for an ideal world, which is based on developing our hearts and spirits by becoming beings of true love, through living for the sake of others. Pornography is about lust and self-gratification. It destroys love which is the most important ingredient for human wellbeing and happiness. You cannot buy true love in a sex shop. Children need to be brought up in an atmosphere of love and can learn respect and decency - if adults set the example.

It is a question of whether you feel people should be valued as individuals with their own special character and personality or simply as objects of somebody else's desire. Porn does not give a true sense of the value of men and women. It lowers the value of human beings. Porn objectifies women and reduces them to a commodity. It demeans their value as a human being and reduces them to lower even than animals: they become inanimate objects. A rape victim's resistance, objections and desperate pleadings are of no relevance or interest to someone who views her merely as a sexual object, not a human being. For some porn addicts even children become simply sex objects. Some porn depicts acts of violence in association with sex. Porn addicts lose self-respect and respect for others. By creating desire without fulfilment and destroying moral integrity, far from keeping potential murderers and rapists off the streets, porn encourages the state of mind which makes violent sexual crimes possible. Once lust is generated somebody can easily become a victim. More and more innocent children, young girls and even old ladies are being raped and murdered by men with corrupted minds, who have ended up debasing themselves to the level of their animal instincts.

In America the FBI has reported that 81% of sex killers have said that their biggest sexual interest lay in viewing pornography. When porn was banned in Oklahoma City in the USA the incidence of sexual crimes decreased, whereas in the rest of the country the incidence of sexual offences increased! Superintendent Hames, former Head of New Scotland Yard's Obscene Publications Squad called for tougher laws to enable him to fight what he called: "a rising tide of child pornography." He went on to say: "The vast majority of murderers, serial rapists and child molesters indulge in

pornography. We must fight to protect society from evil monsters who purvey pornography for profit." Over the past 30 years a considerable amount of scientific material has shown the harmful effects of pornography on both the individual and society in general.

Half of convicted rapists have an obsession with violent pornography. Ted Bundy the infamous serial rapist and murderer testified as to how he ended up murdering and raping. He continually needed to go to higher levels to satisfy his sexual lusts. He ended up looking at hard core pornography and then murdering and raping. Victor Cline of the University of Utah has revealed how men who become addicted to pornography begin to want more explicit material, and end up acting out what they have seen. A study at Calgary University in Canada by Research Director Professor Violata reveals that: pornography leads to behavioural, psychological and societal problems. "Our study involved more than 12,000 participants and very rigorous analysis. As a society we need to move towards eradicating it." John Major, former Prime Minister of Britain: "There can be little doubt that pornography has an insidious and dehumanising effect on attitudes to women and family relationships. Pornography degrades all who come into contact with it." The murderer of the teacher Jane Longhurst was addicted to pornography. The images he saw fed his perverted fantasies and he finally acted them out. There has been a 176% increase in rapes in recent years.

The Moors Murderers (they killed 5 young people and probably more) were addicted to pornography, as was Roy Whiting who killed eight year-old Sarah Payne. "A boy of 11 seriously sexually assaulted a 4 year old girl next door. From the age of 7 he had been allowed to watch Sky Adult films. The abused child and her family are still undergoing counselling. A boy of 7. His parents watched pornographic videos, allowed the boy to see them. Through his childhood he tried to touch girls sexually. When he was 15 he raped and buggered his brother and sister."

Our legislators and moral regulators need to make their decisions according to the facts regarding pornography. It clearly has a dehumanising effect on those people who become addicted to it. Whatever level people are at who use pornography it is inevitable that there will be negative consequences in the long run, because pornography totally violates the moral and spiritual laws. In a decent civilised society there should be no place for insidious commodities such as pornography, in all its various degrading forms. □

### TAKE ACTION!

John O'Neill organised a petition against a local newspaper in his area, as the paper published a lewd half page advert for a lap-dancing club. Some local shops agreed to display the form on their shop counters. The offensive advert has not been published since the petition forms were given to the newspaper.

### Why Save Sex?



This is a message today's teenagers desperately need to hear, Why Save Sex? presents sexual intimacy as something powerful and special, and offers four positive reasons to save sex for marriage. All too often teaching aimed at encouraging young people to refrain from sexual intimacy outside marriage is portrayed in a negative way – a matter of 'just saying no'. However, the fact is that saving sex for marriage is positive and liberating.

John O'Neill has sent the leaflet WHY SAVE SEX to all the schools in his area - more than 50. To order the leaflet contact Family and Youth Concern: Tel:02088942525 Email:fyc@ukfamily.org.uk

### EMAILS TO MFU:

1

Dear John,  
Thank you for this very valuable work that you are doing. Can you tell me where I can find the "voluntary Code of Practice as set out by the National Federation of Retail Newsagents" as mentioned in your e.mail.

Many thanks! Best rgds, MARK BRANN

2

Very interesting John. Keep me on your list please. I love this stuff. Maybe we can do something more in Today's World. Julian Gray

3

Hi John  
Many thanks for sending me the Morality Forum newsletter. I can't believe it's issue 26 and I only just heard about it. Usually I'm on the ball with anything like this. I must be sleeping too much (chance would be a fine thing!). The newsletter is excellent, albeit a little out of date. Content is wonderful. John, you do so much...it's great to hear from you again and to catch up. What are you up to now, other than the usual? Shame that there was no mediamarch this year or else we could have caught up then. Keep up the great work John. It's always nice to hear from you.

God bless, Denise, Celibrate - celebrating celibacy  
Celibrate, PO Box 5054, Leicester LE2 3XY  
email: hello@celibrate.org website: www.celibrate.org

4

Hi John,  
thanks for the "Morality Forum Update" it is really interesting to read and what insight..... look forward to the continuation. Priscilla.

5

Dear Mr O'Neill,  
Thank you for sending me the spring/summer issue of Morality forum Update. I intend to read it as soon as my working commitments permit.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely, Simon Heffer

Associate Editor, Daily Telegraph

from page 1 MISSION REDESIGN

minds that serve as obstacles to them understanding this. And whenever I feel like I've identified an obstacle, I try to take it apart, roll it away. Move it. Demolish it, blow it up. I set myself a goal. Communicate this real clearly. The only way I know to do it is city by city, person by person, family by family. And I have faith that pretty soon enough minds are changed so that we cross a threshold."

The film was released in May 2006, got 2 Oscars in February 2007 and Al Gore received the Nobel Peace Award in Sept 2007. Now 2 years later climate change awareness is the absolute mainstream.

Our ability to live on planet Earth is what is at stake. We haven't been able to value the creation in the same way like we haven't been able to value ourselves. Our ability to live and love is at risk just as much as our ability to love has been debatable and yet necessary on the way to maturity. Now is the time. We haven't been able to value ourselves and each other and so we haven't been able to value the earth. It's a problem of values. I want to believe that whether 1000 years ago or 10,000 years later life and love are at our core. There's a lesson for all of us to learn and a way for all of us to use our creativity and grow. In the same way that we need to redesign it's also time to review the way we see ourselves, recapture all that a family stands for, remember the dignity of human life and human effort. "What a great time to be born, what a great time to be alive, because this generation gets to change everything." "The 11th hour" □

### Mediamarch Postcard Campaign

(tel 07941 947 765 and 01684 892392)



Here is our new postcards focusing on harm to children from violent and sexual media content,

and asking the government to act. Each supporter gets a sheet of 3 postcards, addressed to Mr. Brown, Mr. Cameron and their MP, with our concerns noted on them. They then add their signature, address, 3 stamps and post them. We hope you will agree that the postcards are very eye catching and easy to use.

We have many thousands of postcards that we can supply to you free of charge. We can do a talk if necessary too. There is no urgent deadline - these postcards can be used over the coming year if need be, but we would like to make a real impact now.

Bless you!

Miranda & Pippa



**True Family Values**  
(compiled by Frank van der Stok,  
continued from previous issue)

**Love for One's Nation**

**A. The Way of the Patriot.**

1. *How can a single family prosper if its nation is in chaos or is plagued by violence and war? How can we raise pure children if the nation is decadent? The misfortunes of the nation will inevitably destroy the peace of even the most godly families.*

- True patriotism is not just to fight external attacks.
- True patriotism will prevent democracy from destroying itself through its tendency to gradually enforce external equality of conditions, and conformity of behaviour and opinions.

2. *True Love, the vertical ethic, leads families to live for the prosperity, peace and development of the nation. This is also called civic virtue.*

- We receive protection, security and sustenance from our nation.
- Therefore we have a debt to our nation.
- We should pay back this debt by serving our nation with gratitude and love.
- Paying back the debt creates a deeper bond of love with our nation. This makes the base for an ever-developing relationship, energy, prosperity and happiness.
- As a result, we gain much more, including good fortune in the future.
- Society prospers when its families get involved in public affairs.
- Volunteer associations and mediating organizations.

-Churches, block associations, civic groups, charities, advocacy groups, support groups and so forth.

-Local responsibility and control is much preferable to the intervention of the state.

-Government service, military service, foreign service: a nation is represented by its leading families, those devoted to public service.

-Private, sacrificial devotion to public service, and not careers as professional politicians, is the essence of self-government.

-This is accomplished when people can govern themselves by the application of the vertical ethic (civic virtue and patriotism).

3. *Societies in which families do not have a sense of civic duty are impoverished.*

If families do not live for the nation, then the nation will be dominated by people who live for themselves.

- Christian teaching is for each of us to live for God beyond the family, nation and cosmos.

-Jesus called people to sell their possessions and give to the poor.

-Jesus spoke of the lost sheep and ministered to society's outcasts, thus pointing out our responsibility to help the poor and weak.

-American philanthropy is an expression of the Calvinist idea that wealth is a gift of God and that I can be justified in having it only if I invest it for the benefit of society.

-Unlike traditional elite's, American Protestant elite's devoted most of their wealth to creating public institutions, in particular universities, which served to raise the level of all the people in America and overseas.

4. *Patriotism does not mean narrow-minded nationalism.*

- Exalting one's own nation at the expense of other nations is evil.
- All nations prosper together in God's world.
- Ultimately, the world is my nation. Yet, I can be proud of the good characteristics and contributions of my nation. All people are proud of what their nation contributed to the world. Therefore each nation boasts of its unique inventions which have been adopted by other nations.
- Every nation can compete to excel in serving the world.

5. *Patriotism is the expansion of filial piety to the national level.*

- Just as the child of filial piety serves the family by attending his parents, the patriot serves his nation by attending the king or president. Examples of this type of patriot: Joseph in Egypt, Joan of Arc, Ulysses S. Grant

- The patriot assumes leadership in times of great trial. Examples of this type of patriot are: King David, Abraham Lincoln, Golda Meir, Lech Walesa



6. *The patriot loves his country irrespective of the qualities of its present leadership*

- If the leadership is in error, patriotism includes responsible appeals to make the ruler see his error. This should be constructive, with the heart to participate in the ruler's responsibility. It should support and protect the position and heart of the ruler, rather than seeking to dislodge him.
- Finally, the patriot unites with the leader's will, just as good sons unite with their parents.
- The patriot shares the fate of the leader and the country.
- Thus the patriot becomes the hero on the national level.
- In the ideal, the way of the nation is to serve the world.

7. *When parents are true, they will create true leaders. Therefore, the forces leading to the rejection of filial piety in the modern world will dissipate, and a restored, enlivening vertical order will be restored.*

(from the book "True Family Values" by Wilson and Pak)  
(To be continued...)

## Follow your principles, not your feelings

by Jim Stephens



“Give and Take Action” can be seen and demonstrated in the world around us and is one of the basic building blocks that God used in the Creation. All growth and development requires “give and take action”. Your body grows and develops by “give and take action” with food. Your mind and spirit grow

and develop by “give and take action” with thoughts and desires. As parents, we pay careful attention to what our children are having “give and take” with in the world around them or on TV.

Everything in the universe exists through give and take. This is because when two beings enter into a cooperative relationship, the result is energy. You cannot breathe, circulate your blood or move a single muscle without the give and take actions going on within your body. In our daily relationships, there is an energy that comes from give and take action: good feelings. However, it is very important to recognise that although we may like the feelings, that energy does NOT mean “goodness”.

For example, the members of a gang of youths experience “good feelings” in their relationships with each other. A man committing adultery with his mistress experiences “good feelings” in bed with her. The action of “give and take” itself produces energy that “feels good”.

What is the difference between the “good feelings” that these people experience and the “good feelings” that, say, Mother Teresa received when helping lepers in Calcutta? Were those feelings equivalent or similar in intensity to a drug-induced euphoria?

The answer is yes and no. They are basically an experience of energy. The energy from “give and take” feels good, regardless of the foundation of the relationship. However, one is like eating a lot of “junk food”. It tastes great and you feel wonderful and happy eating it. But then later, what have you got? Nothing! You’re not satisfied and maybe feel guilty. You are hungry again. Your energy is gone quickly and now you need another “hit”. A continuous diet of “junk food” leaves you very malnourished and susceptible to diseases. You may not know what is wrong because you are eating plenty of food, feel full, and “feel good”. In the same way there is also “junk-thinking” and “junk-morals” which leave us morally or “spiritually” malnourished.

Some people decline so far as to think, “Whatever

makes me feel good, therefore is good.” Their own good feeling becomes the standard of “goodness” - it is completely determined by the feelings of the individual. If you have children, you probably notice that line of reasoning everyday. As parents, it is our responsibility to give our children not only the best in nutritional health but also teach them the highest moral principles for the sake of their well being. Society is only a reflection of this. Are we moral toddlers, children, adolescents or adults?

What our society really needs is a new standard of what is “good” - a moral revival. We need a new objective explanation for what is “good”, not one based on “feeling good”. Many religions have already set the standard for what is good and evil on the moral yardstick. Surprisingly, these values are more similar than people realise.

We should stop letting “good” be defined by feelings and have the courage to force a public debate about good and evil. Feelings - or the energy produced through the give and take action in our daily relationships - can never be a valid measurement of what is “good” or “bad”. Don’t fall for it anymore - stop being programmed by society and start talking back. The next time someone tries to sell you something that will make you “feel good”, follow your principles, not your feelings. □

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## The Abiding Benefits Of Marriage

Amidst all the social changes over the past 30-40 years, one thing that hasn’t changed is the benefit that marriage brings to adults, children and society. For adults, marriage is associated with better health, lower rates of injury, illness and disability, less domestic violence, and longer life expectancy than more casual living arrangements.

Children thrive on the stability that comes from knowing that their parents are committed for life to each other as well as to them. Children living with their own married parents tend to have fewer emotional and behavioural problems, enjoy better health, do better academically, and have lower levels of stress, depression and anxiety. They are also less likely to smoke, drink and take drugs, and less likely to be sexually active or engage in crime.

Marriage also brings substantial benefits to society as a whole. Communities where it is the norm for children to be raised by married parents are better places to live. Marriage not only strengthens family ties, but it also strengthens communities.

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# And they lived happily ever after? ...Only *if* they attend several marriage education classes.

by Stephen Stacey from  
Laurea College, Finland



Many of us have grown up in families that sometimes didn't work too well. Sadly, today's researchers remind us that unless we actively set about trying to improve our relational skills then we are often going to make exactly the same mistakes that our parents did. Luckily for us, however, there's a fast growing new field of education - education for us adults - education that helps us understand how we can keep our couple relationships as committed and as loving as possible over the course of 50 years or more.

It's education in the sense of learning, homework and practicing new relationship skills - education gained by reading extremely insightful books and attending dynamic weekend seminars.

I teach one such extended seminar course on building a strong couple relationship. I teach it in churches, in a community college, and to social workers. I also teach it as a course in college, and the students seem to thoroughly enjoy the fact that they have finally been given a chance to look at one of the most important issues in their life - love, romance, and building a strong caring relationship. Most of them, throughout their 15 years of education, received almost no education at all about something most of them believe is the most important issue in their life - the one that will determine whether they find deep happiness or loneliness. Now, at last, they have some time to think about this fascinating issue and, at the end of the course, they almost all give me the biggest 'thank you'.

In order to help guide the course I teach I created a

group study book entitled *Understanding Marriage: Partners, Friends and Lovers*. During the 30 or more hours we spend together, it's evident that all kinds of learning and healing is going on. On one level the learning is intellectual and skills based. The book guides the students and participants through 12 different areas of the couple relationship - each of which might be improved with effort and practice - each of which can make a real difference to the quality of a lasting relationship.

*" ..Throughout their 15 years of education, they received almost no education at all about something most of them believe is the most important issue in their life - the one that will determine whether they find deep happiness or loneliness."*

We look at the important role of respect in the couple relationship (in communication and in actions). We consider the different relationship needs of men and women and how, in a strong relationship, both partners fulfil each other's relationship needs (E.g. if she likes conversation, and he likes bowling - the couple has a nice meal out before the bowling so both get something they enjoy).

We then look at how men and women can understand the common communication strategies of the opposite sex so they can start to communicate in ways that their partner can positively respond to (think Mars and Venus). We discuss how couples can hold regular couple meetings to plan and solve developing problems; how couples can develop enhanced communication skills so they can start to talk about sensitive issues without harming their relationship; and how they might solve an issue that continually causes conflict within their relationship. We then study how couples create a vision statement for the type of home they want to build, and discuss the 10 main areas where couples typically have to

find a common vision. The students reflect on the kind of 'team player' skills they have (e.g.; Can I praise my partner, do I know how to forgive quickly, do I know how to be playful with my partner, etc) and think about which other skills they might need to develop in order to become a good partner. And they then look at how they can strengthen their commitment muscle - how they can keep persevering during the temporary challenging growth times that almost all couple relationships go through. Lastly we look at friendship and romance - do I know the things that my partner really enjoys (their love buttons); do we date regularly and create really special anniversaries; and when the romancing starts, is it enjoyable, passionate and something both can continually enjoy?

As I watch the participants, however, I don't just see a growth in knowledge and skills. I also see healing taking place. In college I meet many students who saw their parents go through a divorce and now they are afraid of getting into a deep relationship, frightened of commitment, worried that they too will divorce. They have, often for the first time in their life, a chance to talk out that fear and pain, a chance to gain hope that a successful committed relationship is possible. With older couples too I see them able to finally speak about and solve some sensitive issues, issues that have continually hurt their relationship, in a safe protected environment.

Lastly, though the book guides the course and initiates the discussion on each topic, the wisest words come from the participants themselves. The collective wisdom of the whole is profound. They will share the things that they are getting right, the healthy things their parents did do - and the young can learn from the old, and the old from the young. I am often surprised at the depth of the collective knowledge - and how one piece of advice is just what another couple is looking for to enable them to move forward in their relationship.

Having read so many books on this topic, I can now clearly see the amount of knowledge that we now know about how the couple relationship works. And it deeply saddens me how we, as a society, are not

passing this knowledge on down to the next generation. Years ago, people stuck in poor marriages because of the social stigma of divorce or because of economic reasons. Now, with no barriers to divorce, people actually need to have good relationship skills if they are to succeed in this important area of their life. Society needs to adapt itself to this new reality. In this age when more than half the population goes through years of painful divorce or separation, when we know that in 10 years most children will not have both parents there to hug them when they go to bed at night, in some ways it seems completely immoral that we haven't started to change the education system to help the next generation develop the level of relationship skills they actually need to live life well.

Study after study has shown that for most young people, a lasting couple relationship is their most important goal in life. And study after study has shown that most people find their deepest happiness through good relationships within their family and friendships. It's time that we, as a society, respected these wishes and desires. Also, to help the adults do some catching up maybe the government can, for example, through the use of tax deductions, inspire many more couples to attend relationship education seminars.

If we start getting this right, we can hopefully look forward to a day when much of the £40 billion of taxpayers' money that goes on dealing with family breakdown every year is used in more positive ways, and where the love that exists between men and women can more often pass on to the children. If we don't, we look forward to a world where disrespect is commonplace, where people live much of their life in loneliness, to a world where many drown that loneliness in alcohol, anti-depressants and drugs. I know which future I want. How about you? □



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