

CONNECTIONS

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS & PERSONAL GROWTH

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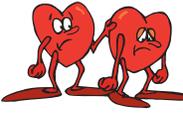
 **1 Self-Disclosure** - The ability to share strengths and limitations with another can create closeness.

2 Self-Differentiation - Partially separating (emotionally and physically) from your parents and family to create your own unique personhood allows you to maintain your own space for developing intimacy with others.

 **3 Self-Identity** - The more self-confidence and self-worth you have for yourself, the more likely you will have a healthy relationship.

4 Active Listening - Being able to truly listen and trying to understand where another person is coming from is the beginning of intimacy.

5 Paraphrasing - Being able to communicate understanding back to someone that is communicating to you lets that person know you are beginning to understand.

 **6 Empathy** - Putting one's self in another's shoes helps us understand the other person's pains and joys.

7 Self-Healing - When we get hurt in a relationship, it is important to have the ability to self-heal.

 **8 Willingness to Heal Others** - When we get hurt or see someone hurt in a relationship, it is important to be willing to help each other in the process of self-healing.

"To see ourselves as others see us is a most salutary gift. Hardly less important is the capacity to see others as they see themselves"

Aldous Huxley

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FROM THE DESK OF

Charlotte Shoup Olsen



Building Emotional Intimacy

February often brings to mind St. Valentine's Day and its focus on romance and flowers for that special person in your life. Cupid, the child-like, winged deity often associated with our modern Valentine's Day, is the son of Venus, the Roman goddess of love. Thus, we chose a theme of emotional intimacy to recognize the deeper implications of intimate and trusting relationships in our lives as we think about Valentine's Day. Hopefully this information also will give you greater understanding of the Extension family relationship

programs that are available for community educational efforts. However, we took the emotional intimacy information a step farther and its implications for your professional role as an Extension educator, helping and serving others. We always look forward to your feedback on the usefulness of the information presented in *Connections*. A quick email is always welcome.

Charlotte Shoup Olsen
W. Jared DuPree

Answers to Questions from Kansas County Extension Agents

Question:

I have heard a lot about Smart Marriages, its listserv, and annual conference. If my five-year program includes programming in family relationships, would being on its listserv and attending the annual conference help in my professional development?

Answer:

Smart Marriages is the marketing name for the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education (CMFCE) that is non-denominational, non-partisan, and non-sectarian. In its conference pamphlet it says, "CMFCE serves as an information exchange to help couples locate marriage and relationship courses; to help professionals, clergy and lay educators locate training programs and materials; to connect those with an interest in the continuing development of the field; to build community partnerships and support legislation and research; and to promote the effectiveness of the courses and increase their availability in the community." It has an extensive website at <http://www.smartmarriages.com> and has a very active

listserv (sometimes several messages in a day) in which you can be added by going to that website. Not all information that is shared on the listserv and on the website is research-based, so you have to be discriminating in what you read. However, the founder and director, Diane Sollee, pulls together the leading researchers in the field for the conference, and participants can also attend pre- and post-sessions to get in-depth training and certification in some research-based programs such as PREP and PRE-PARE/ENRICH. At each conference, I have been part of a national Extension team that gives a workshop on what is available through Extension. It is a pricey conference (\$315+) as the proceeds are the sole support of CMFCE. However, tapes are available for purchase if you would like the information without attending. This year's conference will be in Dallas, TX, June 23-26 with pre- and post-trainings a couple days before and after. I hope this is enough information to help you better understand Smart Marriages and what it has to offer.

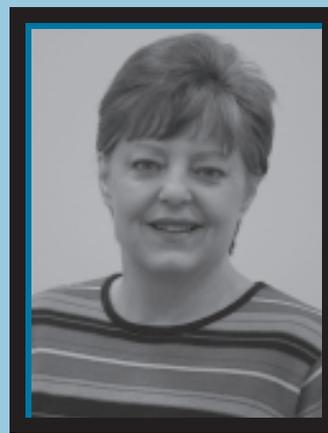
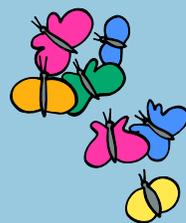
Extension Spotlight

Linda Walter

Linda Walter has spent her entire professional career as a Kansas County Extension Agent, starting out in Hodgeman County in 1979 after receiving a bachelor of science degree from Kansas State University with a double major (Foods & Nutrition and Consumer Economics). She moved to Stevens County in 1988 to also be the Family and Consumer Sciences and 4-H Agent, and then accepted her current position in Finney County in 1996 as a Family and Consumer Sciences agent.

Linda has had multiple experiences throughout these 25+ years in Extension, including her work in developing a professional community collaboration to deliver local programs. This group includes professionals from Parents as Teachers, Mexican-American Ministries, the local Prevention Center as well as K-State Research and Extension represented by Linda. For several years, the coalition used the "ReThink Anger" program to teach parenting programs and also taught several sessions of "Parenting During Divorce." The latter initiative was based on Extension's program title *'Family Change: Separation and Divorce'*. Linda summarizes these efforts by saying, "This working partnership has been personally rewarding and has touched the lives of many local families."

One of Linda's challenges is letting the public know about Extension, who we are, and what we have to offer. That is a never ending task, but her team-building efforts have many benefits in spreading the Extension word. Furthermore, she values "the working relationships and friendships with



"I especially love seeing the 'light bulb come on' in someone's eyes when they are excited about learning something new."

Linda Walter

other community professionals who trust that they can turn to Extension for information and assistance." Balancing the multiple program areas that fall under her responsibility also can be challenging, because she wants to cover content areas in depth and use impactful programming skills to reach community audiences. Programming in family well-being is one of her five-year program plans, so it will continue to be a priority in the coming years.

Linda has two active children, John, age 14, and Emily, age 11. She spends most of her spare time in the "Mom-mobile" shuttling kids to their various activities. But when she has time for herself, she loves to cook, read mysteries, and especially relishes the annual family summer vacations. Her long term goals are to enjoy her children while they are still at home and to continue to serve others with valuable, research-based Extension information.



PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

The Role of a Helping Professional



Emotional intimacy is a principle that not only influences how we relate with loved ones, but also how we deal with people in the community. Being

in a helping profession allows us to work with people on intimate levels. Because we are not robots with no feelings or past experiences, we do experience many of the pains and joys of those we work with. It is important to maintain a healthy level of intimacy with people in the community. However, professionals need to be aware that burnout is a possibility. The most common mistakes professionals make revolve around intimacy issues. Beginning professionals often experience the following cycle:

♥ A beginning professional will get very emotionally involved with his/her work.



♥ At some point, because the professional has become so involved, a tragedy or level of failure will occur in one or more of the people he/she works with in the community.

♥ The professional feels hurt, responsible, and/or overwhelmed.

♥ The professional begins to withdraw emotionally from other people he/she works with to avoid getting too involved again.

♥ The professional may become cynical, rigid, and/or burned out with the profession.

This cycle unfortunately happens to well-qualified professionals that care about people. Here are a few tips to help prevent this cycle from occurring in regards to regulating emotional intimacy with those you work with in the community:

Understand your role

Make sure that the people you work with know what you are hired to do for them and what role you play. Overextending your role is easy to do and can find a slippery slope of becoming too involved.



Set appropriate boundaries

Along with your prescribed role, setting boundaries is important. One can set boundaries by pointing people to the right professionals for different concerns. For example, if they have a financial problem, marital problem, or legal problem, offering support and educational information would be appropriate along with referring them to a financial consultant, marital therapist, or lawyer. It is important you do not become their financial consultant, therapist, or lawyer.



Take responsibility for what is yours

You are responsible for what your job requirements and objectives suggest. Look over your job description again.

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Principles of Emotionally Focused Therapy

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) has gained in popularity over the years due to its research-based practices and evidence of its effectiveness. Even though you are not a therapist, some of the underlying principles of the therapy model help us understand what makes relationships emotionally intimate, connected, and successful.

The following are a list of underlying principles based on EFT:



Intimacy is an emotional bond that provides a secure base and a source of comfort, care, and protection.

Intimacy is behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. It requires positive behaviors, realistic thoughts, and shared emotions.

The building blocks of intimacy are emotional accessibility (“Do I feel comfortable going to you when I am hurt or in need?”) and emotionally responsiveness (“When I go to you when I am hurt, do I feel you respond to me in a respectful, caring manner?”).

When conflict arises, persons in unhealthy relationships will withdraw and / or blame. Healthy relationships will use the conflict as an opportunity to understand each other, learn from each other, communicate to each other, and heal each other.

Creating connection requires changing our pattern of how we deal with each other’s pains and joys. Rather than distancing or attacking, it requires engagement and understanding.



Resources

Building Relationships Resources

Website

www.cyfernet.org

This website is given periodically in *Connections*. It is especially pertinent for Extension curricula that have been developed across the nation on relationship-building and have been peer reviewed for inclusion on the website. At the home page, click on "Parent/Family" to see a list that includes: family forms, family strengths and traditions, family stresses and coping, family wellness, marriage and couples. Click on any one of these headings to link to electronic versions of Extension curricula.

www.oznet.ksu.edu

K-State Research and Extension Resources To download these publications electronically, go the website, click on "Publications" followed by a click on "Home and Family" and then on one of the following publication titles:

- ♥ **CoupleTALK: Enhancing Your Relationships (webcourse at www.oznet.ksu.edu/ctalk)**
- ♥ **Stepping Stones for Stepfamilies**
- ♥ **Basic Family Communication**
- ♥ **What Happens Now? The Children Are Gone**
- ♥ **PeopleTALK: Enhancing Your Relationships**

The Role of a Helping Professional

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Do not take responsibility for what is not yours

You are not responsible for your community's happiness, success, health, financial status, or family problems. You may offer them guidance and education, but in the end what they decide to do is their decision.

Take time to pamper yourself

We are not superhuman robots with no needs. Take vacation time, relaxation time, hobby time, exercise time, etc.

Leave work at work

When you go home, leave your work worries there. We have no control over 90% of our worries. Take the time to enjoy your family and other non-job interests.

10 Important Principals of Emotional Intimacy

(continued from page 1)



9 Positive Behaviors - Daily positive behaviors solidify emotional intimacy.

10 Healthy Perspective - Learning from the past, living in the present, and planning for the future helps us stay away from being stuck in the past or always worrying about the future.

