An Instructional Manual for Community Family Life Educators

Long Live the Healthy Family!

A Program for Building and Maintaining Strong Latino Marriages and Families

K-STATE
Research and Extension

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About the Cover: The Essence of Latino Families

The images speak of the importance of marriage and the bonds within the Latino community, including children, parents, grandparents, other members of the extended family, and friends.

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Overview and Introduction to the Program

This curriculum was designed to address the needs of Latino couples and families in the United States. It has been developed within a cultural context using information about cultural characteristics and research currently available about healthy marital and family relationships within the Latino culture of the United States. The research base allows us to have more confidence that the information presented will assist Latino couples in sustaining committed marital and strong family relationships over time.

Four lessons for adult participants have been created to address building and maintaining strong marriage and family relationships. A family activity at the conclusion of each adult session reinforces that session's learning objectives and involves children in learning the content.

Lesson titles:
1. Our Latino Family Roots
2. Our Latino Family in the Community
3. Communication and Problem-Solving in our Marriage and Family
4. Supporting our Marriage and Family

In Lesson 1 of this curriculum, participants will explore the making of their relationship as a couple and the building of their family. Participants will examine their shared family history, family traditions and legacies they are forming, and results of supporting and loving each other.

In Lesson 2, participants will examine their Latino family within the context of a community. Specifically, participants will explore how community influences such as religion, friends, and extended family can support the couple and the family. In addition, couples will discuss how some outside influences can be disruptive and create conflict within the family.

Lesson 3 focuses on strategies and skills that help families problem-solve and support each other. Couples will learn practical skills that help them address common areas of concern. In addition, couples will be given the opportunity to think about everyday behaviors toward each other and their commitment to spending time together.

In Lesson 4, the focus is on building a lasting couple relationship. Couples will discuss ways they support each other and the value of having meaningful routines or rituals between themselves. Finally, couples and their families will look toward the future as they think about building and maintaining strong marriages and family relationships.

Information and activities to build positive relationship behaviors permeate the curriculum. Furthermore, individuals in the community who are implementing the program will want to study the background information starting on page 8 to present the information in a culturally appropriate way.

This program was also developed based on four main assumptions about the participants:

1. All couples and families have existing strengths. We are working to provide information and skills that Latino couples and families can use to further enhance those strengths.

2. Human beings are dynamic — always changing and growing — and have the ability to make changes in their behaviors and thinking patterns.

3. An individual needs to feel or believe that he or she is capable of control (self-efficacious) and has the ability to make changes before information and skills can be adopted.
Latino participants have a cultural and linguistic heritage that influences behaviors in couple and family life. It is important to acknowledge and build upon this heritage.

**Background Information**

**Delivering Family Life Education to a Culturally Specific Audience**

Family life educators need to have an understanding of the role that culture plays in family life among potential participants in their communities, especially if the targeted audience has a cultural background different from the educator. Culture affects many areas of one’s life, including family, school, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, employment, immigration situation, and socioeconomic status. It can be defined as “a way of life or the totality of the individual artifacts, behaviors, and mental concepts transmitted from one generation to the next in a society. It is visible and invisible, cognitive and affective, conscious and unconscious, internal and external, rational and irrational, and coercive and permissive at the same time” (Pederson et al. 2002). Thus, it is important to realize that learning about cultural characteristics of community residents and applying educational strategies that are consistent with their cultures will more likely ensure programming success. This section is designed to offer some ideas and key concepts to assist in presenting this curriculum to Latino couples and families.

**General Concepts Regarding Culture**

It is important to note that there is a difference between stereotyping and understanding culture. There needs to be a balance in recognizing individual differences as well as common cultural characteristics. One way to do this is to try to understand culture through the eyes of the participants by learning about their perceptions of who they are and how they think they may be different even from those of the same ethnic background. At the same time, there may be some commonalities to take into account that may apply to most members of a cultural group. Here are some general concepts to consider when familiarizing oneself with the cultural background of program participants.

**Concept 1. When learning about a participant’s cultural background, be aware of unique individual differences as well as more broad cultural traits.**

It may be easy to make a judgment about someone because they come from a certain ethnic group or background. They may act a certain way that might cause one to make assumptions, based on their cultural background, about motivations for participating in the class, how they treat their partner, and/or levels of responsibility. A preferred guideline is to learn first about who they are by giving them time to become comfortable with you, asking sincere questions to understand their point of view, and empathizing with their situation.

**Concept 2. Seek to learn about and understand a person's culture rather than make judgments based on appearance or stereotypes.**

It is important to understand that no one culture is better than another culture. There may be differences or beliefs that you may not understand, but respecting another person’s culture, point of view, and way of living will bring a program educator much closer to assisting a participant. When understanding culture, the goal is not to change a participant to fit your culture. The goal is to assist participants within the boundaries of their own culture, aspirations, and points of view.
Concept 3. Seek to assist individuals within the context of their own culture rather than seeking to change an individual’s culture.

In the context of offering family life education, a key question is: What shapes family ideas within a cultural context? As stated before, culture can develop through a number of different avenues. More specifically, how one defines family, gender roles, husband/wife roles, marriage, etc. can also come from many different arenas. Here are some basic questions to keep in mind when trying to understand how each participant defines family roles:

1. What were the participant’s family, community, school, and church like while growing up?
2. What were men/women expected to do in the family, community, school, and church?
3. How did men and women interact in the family, community, school, and church?
4. What were the participant’s examples of marriage while growing up?
5. What is the participant’s current point of view on marriage, family, work, fun, etc.?
6. What is the participant’s point of view on fatherhood/motherhood?

Latino Cultural Characteristics

Latin American families originate from many countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean. Most Latin Americans come to the United States in search of better economic opportunities. It is important to note that although there may be some general cultural characteristics, each country and region brings its own uniqueness and individuality. Most Latin Americans are mestizos (mixed Indian and Spanish descent). Therefore, their culture stems from Indian beliefs as well as European ideas.

Four specific cultural values are commonly found among the Latino population (Fernandez Diaz 2006). Familismo (familism) refers to family commitment, loyalty, solidarity, reciprocity, and unity, including special persons not necessarily biologically related such as godparents and special friends (Gloria, Ruiz, and Castillo 2004). Personalismo (personalism) emphasizes personal connections and relationships, fostered through a communication style of caring and concern, with both family members and others outside the family (Gloria et al.). Individualismo (individualism) is about a person’s uniqueness and talents that can be shared with family, friends, and community, such as a mother being a good cook that benefits everyone around her. It focuses on cooperation rather than competitive individualism that is common in United States culture (Fernandez Diaz). Fatalismo (fatalism) implies that “a divine providence” governing the world gives individuals little control over what happens in their lives (Paniagua 1998).

Importance of Family

For most Latinos, the family is highly valued and viewed as a source of joy and support. Many would also say the family is central to one’s identity (Hofstede 1980). Many Latinos say things like, “Family is everything to me,” or “My family is always there for me.” Family members typically provide social, emotional, and financial support as needed and promote close relationships among family members. There is an emphasis on cooperation and interdependence among family members, and individuals are encouraged to sacrifice individual needs for the benefit of the family (Falicov 1998; Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, and Gallardo-Cooper 2002; Skogrand, Hatch, and Singh 2009).

Most Latino families are also embedded in an extended family network that includes grandparents,
Aunts, uncles, cousins, and may include friends. Close friends of the family are even called “uncle” or “aunt.” A high degree of closeness and hierarchy are common in many Latin American families with all life cycle events seen as family celebrations. The oldest male tends to have the greatest power. Autonomy and individuality are not emphasized, but honesty and preservation of one’s dignity seem to be strong values. Most families indicate an affiliation with the Catholic Church stemming from Spain’s early influences (McGoldrick, Pearce, and Giordano 1982). This Catholic influence may be evident even if couples and families are not practicing the faith. Some researchers indicate that this Catholic influence has affected many aspects of family life such as family size and attitudes about marriage and divorce (Falicov 1998).

Gender Roles

Typically, the husband assumes the role of provider and the wife assumes the role of caretaker/homemaker. In the past, there has been an emphasis on machismo as a dominant philosophy in the Latino culture. Machismo is traditionally viewed as a belief that men have certain rights or power over women related to decision-making. However, research suggests that many Latinos in the United States do not follow this paradigm. In one study of strong Latino marriages, couples typically followed traditional gender roles, but power was shared in decision making (Skogrand, Hatch, and Singh 2009). Experts in Latino gender roles recommend that educators should not assume machismo or even use the word in order to avoid a self-fulfilling prophecy. (For more information, see Falicov 1996; McGoldrick, Pearce, and Giordano 1982; McLoyd et al. 2000; and South 1993.)

Role of Children in the Family

Children are highly valued in Latino families. Children and family relationships often are more important than the couple’s relationship (Skogrand, Hatch, and Singh 2009; Vega 1995). Children are the glue that holds the family together and for some there is no marriage without children. Parents typically will not attend an event without their children; therefore, in order for Latino couples to attend family life educational programs, children need to be invited, cared for nearby, and included in some aspect of the programming (Skogrand, Barrios-Bell, and Higginbotham 2008).

It is also very important to Latino parents that their children enjoy an event. If the children do not want to attend, the parents probably will not attend (Skogrand, Riggs, and Huffaker 2008). Consequently, it is important that children enjoy the first event in a series of classes so they will want to keep coming. The parents will attend, not only for themselves, but because they want to bring their children who are eager to return.

In many homes, the father tends to be the disciplinarian while the mother tends to be the nurturer. Hierarchies are clearly defined and most parents would not want to be friends with their children as that type of relationship might interfere with parental roles. They typically demand a level of respect and expect children to help with household duties. They tend to give less emphasis on achievement, and focus more on each child’s individual strengths (McGoldrick, Pearce, and Giordano 1982).

Cultural Transition

Acculturation, the process of adapting to another culture while attempting to hold onto one’s original culture, occurs when Latin American families come to the United States. Some common stressors in the process relate to family separation, including the distance from family they left behind and their ability to be in contact, lack of power due to language barriers for the parents, loss of respect among children as they become more independent from the family, marrying into another culture, premarital pregnancy,
etc. (DuPree et al. 2008; McGoldrick, Pearce, and Giordano 1982). Other factors influencing family stress are immigration status, lack of employment to support the family, and being isolated from families with common migration experiences. These stresses affect couple and family relationships.

It is important to encourage members of the Latino community to feel positive about and maintain their cultural heritage (Skogrand, Hatch, and Singh 2009). There is evidence that knowing about one’s cultural history and how people in that culture dealt with struggles is effective in being resilient and capable of handling difficulties in life (Delgado 1998). In other words, one’s cultural heritage is a source of strength in dealing with problems. In addition, researchers suggest that being bicultural and continuing to maintain one’s original cultural values contributes to one’s mental health (Falicov 1998; LaFramboise, Coleman, and Gerton 1993). Since knowing one’s heritage and utilizing cultural practices in family relationships are important for couple and family well-being, it is essential for couple and family life educational materials to be developed within a cultural context (Skogrand et al.).

Spanish Language

Latinos in the United States use Spanish to varying degrees with as many as 90 percent of Latinos using Spanish to some degree (Dana 1993). Often Spanish is spoken at home and may be viewed as an integral part of the culture, with English being spoken at school or in the workplace (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, and Gallardo-Cooper 2002). It is important, therefore, to determine the preferred language when delivering family life education to Latino couples and families.

Personal Relationships

Personalismo is the warm, friendly, and somewhat informal, interpersonal relationships that are an important part of Latino culture (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, and Gallardo-Cooper 2002). There are often lots of hugging and expressions of affection among people who are Latino. This focus on warm and positive interpersonal relationships is especially important when developing new relationships with people outside of the Latino culture.

Personalismo is also evident in how Latino people learn (Skogrand, Barrios-Bell, and Higginbotham 2008). Lots of talking, discussion, and interaction are evident in culturally appropriate learning environments. Any gathering of Latino couples and families usually involves a meal.

Because some Latinos are undocumented, the development of trust is extremely important. Government raids on undocumented residents have made many Latinos cautious about participating in events that they think might require a social security number. There may even be concern about providing their name and address, which could lead to arrest and deportation. It is important, therefore, to develop trusted personal relationships with Latinos in order to encourage participation in any community event.

Since personalism is important in the Latino culture, personal and trusted relationships need to be developed as part of recruitment for couple and family life education. One study found that a personal invitation was the most effective way to make Latinos feel welcome (Skogrand, Riggs, and Huffaker 2008). This invitation could come by way of a telephone call, but participants in the study preferred a visit to their home. This type of invitation begins to build a personal relationship, but also helps the families trust that the event is a safe place for their children and themselves. In addition, these researchers found that this personal connection helps people feel that they are truly welcome and will not experience discrimination.
Implications for Practice

The cultural characteristics described above have implications for the structure and process for Latino family life education. To create an atmosphere that is inviting for Latino families and will support Latino cultural values, the following recommendations for couple and family life education should be considered.

Recruitment

Invite the entire family to the event. Children typically will not be left with a caregiver since children characteristically attend events with their parents. Furthermore, some families may not attend unless the grandparents are also invited, especially if they are helping to raise their grandchildren.

Focus some aspects of recruitment on the children. For example, recruitment flyers might say, “Lots of fun activities for the children.” If parents anticipate their children will enjoy the event, the family is more likely to attend.

Focus on family language when marketing the educational program. For example, a title “¡Viva La Familia Saludable!” (Long Live the Healthy Family!) is likely to be more inviting than a title such as “Enhance Your Couple Relationship.”

Indicate that legal status is not important in recruiting. Let potential participants know that this event will be a safe place for their family.

Consider providing a personal invitation on the part of program facilitators by visiting potential participants’ homes. This will begin the building of personal relationships, so important in the Latino culture. This type of invitation also results in an atmosphere of trust and will let potential participants know they are truly welcome.

If flyers are used in recruitment, they should be in Spanish and English. Although it is likely most Latinos will prefer Spanish, some may only read English, depending upon the amount of time in the U.S.

Recruit potential participants through organizations that are already trusted by members of the Latino community. These organizations might include schools, social service organizations, churches, and markets that target the Latino community.

Location of the Course

The course should be taught in a location that is considered safe and is already being used by members of the Latino community, such as schools or community buildings. Catholic churches, or other churches frequented by members of the Latino community, are especially inviting to Latinos since religion is so highly valued.

The location should accommodate both adults and children since the entire family is likely to attend. Rooms for children should be near the adults as Latino parents and grandparents typically do not want to be far from the children.

Staffing and Space Needs

Staffing and space needs for programming with Latino couples and families is greater than is typically needed when providing programming for European American populations. Having a meal and including children requires staff for organizing the meal, accommodations for children of various ages, and space for a meal.

Including Latino children in adult programming requires staff available to care for children of all ages. There may be children under 1 year of age that need almost one-to-one care, with the likelihood that there also will be children as old as 16 or 17 years. One might expect that there will be at least two children attending with each family. Typically
children in Latino families speak English and, therefore, staff caring for children need not speak Spanish. Teens who attend might be invited to help with younger children’s activities. It may be useful to have one large room or two smaller rooms to accommodate children of various ages with activities and toys appropriate for these various age groups.

It is also useful to have someone assigned to setting up, serving, and cleaning up the food. The number of people needed depends on the degree of preparation needed and the number of people attending. Because children are likely to attend the event, planning a meal should include the likes and dislikes of children.

The person leading the adult sessions should speak Spanish if the audience prefers it. Although it is preferable to have a native Spanish speaker, someone who is not native, but speaks fluent Spanish, is preferable to using a translator as translations can result in inaccuracies. Furthermore, it is recommended to not use children of the adult participants as translators during recruitment or any phase of program implementation.

Delivery

★ The cultural heritage of the participants should be supported and celebrated in all aspects of the course content.

★ Because family is most important in Latino culture, the content should center on family life even if the focus is on couple and marriage relationships.

★ If grandparents and other extended family attend the classes, include them in the activities and give them suggestions on how they can share this information with other family members who are not in attendance.

★ Couples and family members may be experiencing cultural transition stressors such as language issues, separation from family members, employment, and deportation problems. These stresses may result in participants feeling overwhelmed.

★ Be prepared to know how to deal with situations when the class content appears to be touching on issues that are emotionally difficult to handle for a participant. One way to bring down tension may be to merely reflect feelings and empathize (e.g., you seem frustrated right now . . . that must be difficult . . . this must be really important to you, etc.). Usually this can calm an individual down. At that point, it may be advantageous to shift the discussion to the issue in general and provide closure in some way for the individual. If problems arise that are beyond the educational nature of this program (e.g. domestic violence, addiction, etc.) and it is inappropriate for the participant(s) to continue taking the class, be prepared to know how to make a referral to a professional who is trained to address the specific issue.

★ It is preferred that the class leader have a knowledge of Latino culture, although not required, as well as knowledge or education about the specific subject matter in the family area. It would be helpful for the educator to have a degree in a social science field and/or be a Certified Family Life Educator.

★ Each class should allow ample time for discussion and interaction rather than lecture. This facilitation style allows for relationships to be developed with other members of the class, too. Optimal class size is 12 to 20 persons, as a larger number of people might make some participants less likely to join in class discussion. However, too few numbers can set the stage for participants to inappropriately disclose personal information beyond the scope of an educational class. If
persons attend without partners, including grandparents, attempt to match them with each other or with the program leader for the couple activities, preferably females with females and males with males.

★ The course time should include a meal for the families to eat together, preferably at the beginning of each class. Traditional foods typically eaten by the target population tend to be the most popular. A meal contributes to the development of warm and personal relationships among participants and with the program staff and those who will be leading the classes.

Retention

Because personal relationships are important in the Latino culture, it is important that the program staff develop a personal relationship with participants. Taking time to personally talk to each participant and getting to know everyone at a personal level are ways to do this. Avoid going directly into a “business mode” when the instruction begins, but maintain that personal connectedness.

It is useful for the family life educator who conducts the class to contact the participants personally if they miss a class. It is likely that this contact will be especially meaningful since there is already a personal relationship in place. The family is more likely to feel that someone really cares about their participation.

Summary

Because each Latino community will have unique cultural characteristics depending on country of origin, degree of acculturation, socioeconomic status, and other factors, each target population may differ in terms of the appropriateness of the above recommendations. It is important to understand the unique characteristics of the Latino population one is planning to serve. Typical methods in which a family life educator can become more knowledgeable about a Latino cultural group, if not one’s own, is to become immersed in the community and its events, read literature about Latino families, observe the mass media directed towards the target population, and/or learn from a Latino/a cultural mentor within the community.

Additional Readings


Program Design

As indicated earlier, the four lessons in this curriculum should be offered in the following order as each lesson builds upon the previous one.

Lesson 1. Our Latino Family Roots
Lesson 2. Our Latino Family in the Community
Lesson 3. Communication and Problem-Solving in our Marriage and Family
Lesson 4. Supporting our Marriage and Family

Lesson Plan Format
Each of the four lesson plans contains the following:

Timelines
Deliver main points of each lesson. Each lesson has been geared to a 2- to 2½-hour workshop that includes a family activity at its conclusion. Children are to be involved in supervised, age-appropriate, non-structured play for the remainder of the time when their parents are in the workshop.

Lesson objectives

Lesson supplies

Lesson script in bold type
It can be used verbatim or adapted to the class setting.

Educator cues in italicized type
Gives instructions and recommendations for enhancing the learning process.

Lesson PowerPoint slides
Are available in the appendices and on CD.

Handout masters
Are available in the appendices and on CD.

Program evaluation instruments and instructions
Are available in the appendices and on CD.

Theoretical Foundations of the Program
The two theoretical foundations of this course are the ecological model of individual and family functioning and the family strengths framework. These two foundations highlight the numerous environmental and social influences and the multiple strengths of families and its individual members.

The ecological model of individual and family functioning identifies several factors of influence on individual behaviors, such as the background and characteristics of the person, the individual’s family as a whole, the relationships within the family, the individual and family’s interactions with the community, and the larger social, cultural, and political climate (Klein & White, 1996).

Latino families are affected by all these influences, including family and culture from their country of origin. A husband and wife, for example, may have ancestral roots in different Latino cultures, which, in turn, bring differing expectations and influences to the couple’s relationship.

Each person within a family will interpret the multiple experiences from these diverse influences differently, thus affecting family relationships. Also, community influences will differ among and within Latino families, depending on each family member’s level of assimilation and acculturation in the U.S. culture. An accumulation of these influences affects an individual’s well-being, the couple relationship, the parent-child relationship, as well as the family’s interaction with the community and are, therefore, addressed throughout this educational program.

A family strengths perspective assumes all individuals, couples, and families have strengths (Stinnett, Sanders, and DeFrain 1981). This
program was conceptualized and designed with this assumption. Each lesson’s strength-building activities for the couple and their family are designed to encourage cognitive, emotional, and behavioral awareness as a step to embracing skills that enhance marital and family well-being.

**Program Evaluation**

This program can be adjusted to better meet the needs of Latino families by feedback from persons who participate in *Long Live the Healthy Family* and educators who deliver it in their communities. We encourage you to administer the participant pre- and post-surveys during the first and last sessions. They are provided in the appendices and on the enclosed CD. Also included is a survey for the educator to complete. This data collection allows us to not make assumptions about the program impact, but to have documentation on actual program effects and to modify the program in the best interests of families that will be participating in the future. If you are interested in receiving information on program outcomes, please contact Charlotte Olsen. Thank you for taking the time to go through this process.

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Lesson 1
Our Latino Family Roots

Timeline for Lesson
150 minutes

- Introduction and getting to know each other — 15 minutes
- Our Latino family heritage — 15 minutes
- Building positive memories and feelings — 15 minutes
- A Latino couple tells their story — 40 minutes
- Break — 10 minutes
- Summing it up — 10 minutes
- Supporting and loving each other — 20 minutes
- Closing for the adult session — 5 minutes
- Family activity — 20 minutes

Lesson Objectives

- Build group cohesiveness
- Support Latino couples and families in having pride in their families and culture
- Realize how we can learn from others in our culture who have strong marriages and families
- Identify and validate existing strengths and shared experiences, including family traditions and legacies
- Promote awareness of the importance of building and maintaining a strong couple relationship that will benefit the family
- Assist participants in thinking about ways to support and love each other within a marriage and family

Lesson Supplies

- Handouts
- Markers, crayons, and writing equipment
- Poster paper
- Writing paper and/or coverstock paper
- Bouncy ball
Lesson Plan
Introduction and Overview

A slide show has been prepared for this curriculum. If a computer and projector are not available, the slides can be duplicated on overheads or written on poster paper large enough for the group to view. The script will indicate when each slide is to be shown.

[Slide #1] Welcome to this class designed for Latino couples who want to learn more about how to have strong marriages and families. We realize everyone comes here with strong Latino roots, having positive memories, and experiences and skills for building strong families. We are looking forward to learning from each other as we seek to build even stronger couple and family relationships.

Having a strong relationship with each other is important for raising healthy children. In addition, strong relationships help people feel better about themselves and their families. This class will help you identify strengths in your relationship and ways to continue building couple and family bonds.

Remind the participants that the intent is to provide helpful information — not therapy — that can be put into use to build strengths in their relationship and to help them in raising their family together. If a couple does need therapy, make appropriate recommendations.

This slide [Slide #2] shows the focus of each of the four sessions and the following slide [Slide #3] provides an outline of what we will cover during this session. Please remember that each of us needs to be assured that our discussions regarding personal issues are confidential and will not be repeated outside of this classroom. This helps all of us to be more willing to share during our class activities. Thank you for remembering to not repeat to others what you may hear your fellow class members talk about.

Getting to Know Each Other

Let’s get to know each other by each person introducing him or herself, telling us about your family, and then sharing one family activity that you enjoy doing with your partner or the rest of your family.

Begin this activity by introducing yourself first and a favorite family activity and conclude by asking if anyone was surprised by the activity that his or her partner reported. If you have another icebreaker that might be more effective in helping the class to know each other, please feel free to use it.

Our Latino Family Heritage

When two people come together to form a relationship, not only do they bring unique individual traits and experiences, they bring the traditions and heritage of their own family’s culture. Understanding, respecting, and appreciating each other's family experiences and culture is important in building one’s own family. We also learn from those in our culture, especially those who are older, about having strong marriages and families. In
addition, forming our own family traditions and legacies enhances a strong family life.

**Our Latino Family Roots**

- What family traditions did you experience in the family that you were born into that you would like to continue in your own family?
- What traditions and/or characteristics would you like to have in your own family?

**Slide #4**

Repeat the following questions and have them visible for everyone to see [Slide #4]. If the group is large, ask them to divide into groups of four to six people and have them record their answers on a large piece of paper, preferably adhesive poster paper so answers can easily be read. If the group is small, use these questions for the entire group to answer.

1. Each of you brings unique histories and legacies from the family in which you grew up. What family traditions did you experience in the family that you were born into that you would like to continue in your own family?

2. In addition, each family is developing their own history. What traditions and/or characteristics would you like to emphasize in your own family?

As a group, discuss what each couple learned as they discussed their Latino family histories. In addition, discuss what new traditions they would like to establish. Finally, discuss how thinking about family and cultural traditions help build strong families.

**Building Positive Memories and Feelings**

The purpose of this activity is to help couples identify experiences and personal traits that have helped the couple form a relationship. Focusing on positive experiences of initial attraction (physical, emotional, etc.) helps strengthen relationship satisfaction and intimacy.

Since we just focused on our families, both past and present, now we will begin to focus on your relationship with each other. Most of you can remember how great things were when you first got together. When couples first meet each other, there are things that attract them to each other. Remembering these things may help a couple feel closer to each other. Let’s take some time for you to think about your history with each other and why you were initially attracted to each other.

**Slide #5**

Give each person the handout that contains the following questions. State the questions and also have them visible for all to see [Slide #5]. Ask the participants to write down their answers or just think about them. Depending upon your audience, either ask each couple to take their chairs wherever they would feel the most comfortable in the room for a couple conversation or have a group discussion. For a group discussion, it might be more engaging to have two lines of chairs facing each other and ask each couple to sit across from each other if the group is no more than 12 to 15 persons. Use a large ball to toss to a participant to share his/her answer. Indicate that a participant can pass if uncomfortable in sharing.

Here are the questions:

1. How did you feel when you first met your partner?
2. What did you like about the way your partner looked?
3. What did you enjoy doing together?
4. What things did you do as a couple that were the beginnings of shared traditions?
5. When did you realize that your partner was someone special?

At the conclusion of this activity, take some time to discuss it. Here are two suggested questions to guide the discussion:

1. What were you thinking and feeling as you listened to your partner talk about your early relationship?
2. Why is it important to remember the good times in a relationship?

Announce that there are guests in attendance who will be sharing some aspects of their own marriage history. Take a short break if you need to prepare for this next activity.

A Latino Couple Tells Their Story

The purpose of this activity is to provide an example of a strong Latino marriage, and how this couple brought traditions and family history into their relationship. Some of what they brought with them into the marriage may have been cultural traditions and some may be traditions unique to their own family. The couple will also talk about challenges in their marriage and how they addressed those challenges. They will also talk about the benefits of being married and what children brought to the marriage.

We have asked (names) ____________ to talk about how they have built a good marriage over the years. They will tell us briefly how their relationship started and will answer some prepared questions. During the presentation, if you would like to ask a question, write it down on a card that you have been given. We will gather the cards at the end and ask the questions as time allows.

Give the guest couple some time to share how they first met, traditions they brought into the marriage, some of the early obstacles in their relationship, and the benefits of being married over the years. In addition, ask them to address how they have built a strong marriage. Make sure the couple has the questions before the class so they can each answer the questions more completely.

Here are the prepared questions:

1. What helped you during the early years to build a strong marriage?
2. Were there any specific traditions that you brought into your marriage that made it stronger?
3. How did you work out differences in traditions?
4. How were each of you accepted into the other's family and how did that affect your relationship?
5. What things did you learn from your parents, other family members, or others about having a strong marriage?
6. What were some major problems that you had to overcome in your marriage?
7. How did you overcome these problems?
8. What helps you to maintain your relationship today?
9. If you have children, what did children bring into the marriage?
10. What have been the benefits of being married?
11. How would your life be different if you weren't married?

Gather up the cards and sort through the questions to assess the appropriateness of each question. Spend time asking questions as time allows.

Thank you for taking some time to share with us about your experience in beginning and maintaining a strong marriage relationship.

Break while the invited couple prepares to leave.
Summing It Up

Let's talk about some of the things our speakers shared with us about building a strong relationship over the years.

1. What did they do in the beginning of their marriage?
2. How did they work out challenges in their marriage?
3. What resources did they rely on to keep their marriage strong?
4. What role did traditions, cultural history, and extended family play in their relationship?

Supporting and Loving Each Other

The purpose of this activity is to become aware of and develop skills in supporting each other in order to enhance relationships. It is important to use language that suggests improving and building upon already gained skills and strengths rather than assuming they are just beginning to build a strong relationship.

So far today, we identified family legacies and traditions that you have brought to your family. We also looked at what brought you together as a couple, what you thought about when you first started seeing each other, what attracted you to each other, and what some of your hopes were at the time. We looked at what worked for one Latino marriage and identified behaviors that can build and maintain a strong marriage on a daily basis.

As we can all see, we have a lot upon which to build. Although you may have some challenges in your couple relationship and your family, you have many positive experiences and strengths. Let's take some time to think about specific ways that we can build stronger marriages and families. We can all learn from each other and become better parents, spouses, and couples.
other’s progress. What are some ways you can offer positive support to the other one in taking these first steps of change?

Closing for the Adult Session

As we come to a close to this part of the class, what was helpful during this session? What have you gained from this session? How do you look at your relationship differently?

We hope that you will take some time during this next week to think about the activities and information provided during the session and use these ideas with your spouse. Give them the final handout. Your homework assignment is to focus on taking two steps toward the personal change that you identified earlier in the session for strengthening your relationship with your spouse and family.

Now the children and other family members that may have come will join us for the final activity of the session. We will talk about what makes a strong family by giving everyone, children and adults, a chance to share thoughts within your own family group.

Family Activity

The purpose of this activity is to identify positive characteristics of strong families. It gives the opportunity for the adults and children to hear each other’s perspectives. Be sure to include other family members (e.g. grandparents) if they have come with the family.

While you children have been involved in activities together, the parents have been talking about strong marriages and families. Now it is time for each family to get back together and talk among yourselves. Each family can choose anywhere to go in this room to ask the question, “What makes a family strong?” Each family will get one bouncy ball to pass around to each one of you to get your opinion to the question. When a person has the ball, it is his/her turn to talk without interruption and without disagreement. Remember there are no right or wrong answers. It is a time for each of you to hear what other family members have to say. You will notice that there is blank paper, markers, and crayons on the table if your family would like to each draw a picture to answer this question and then explain your picture to each other.

After the families have given each person time to share, bring the group together and conclude the activity with these questions, encouraging all to respond:

1. What did you learn from each other?
2. What were common things that several of you mentioned?
3. How did you like this activity as a family?

Thank you for sharing your answers and you can take the ball home with you. We hope this activity has given each of you a chance to think more about things we can each do to make a strong family. We look forward to seeing you next time.
Lesson 2
Our Latino Family in the Community

Timeline for Lesson
120 to 150 minutes*

- Introduction and review of previous lesson — 10 minutes
- Fingertips warm-up activity — 15 minutes
- How the family is influenced by the community — 20 minutes
- Common sources of conflict — 20 minutes
- Break — 10 minutes
- Setting limits — 20 minutes
- A Latino couple tells their story (optional activity) — 30 minutes
- Closing for the adult session — 5 minutes
- Family activity — 20 minutes

* Depends whether you use the optional activity

Lesson Objectives

- Promote awareness of community influences that could weaken or strengthen couple and family relationships
- Facilitate the identification of positive and negative consequences of various outside influences on Latino families (e.g., work, church, family, friends)
- Promote the identification of appropriate limits in preserving and strengthening the marriage and the family
- Identify strategies to deal with conflict related to these types of issues

Lesson Supplies

- Blindfolds — one per couple
- Paper, pencils, markers
- Drawing materials
- Handouts
Lesson Plan

In Lesson 1, the focus was on specific steps for building a strong marriage and family. Lesson 2 addresses the community's impact on the family. Specifically, influences of school, work, religious, and community institutions will be explored. Finally, strategies to deal with conflicts associated with these various issues will be discussed.

Introduction and Review of Previous Lesson

Welcome to our second session on strong and committed couple and family relationships. During our first lesson, we talked about ways to strengthen your relationship with each other and how you can take steps to build it. We listened to a couple talk about the benefits of a strong marriage, and we discussed ways we would like to change to make our marriages and families even stronger.

Discuss what they learned from the previous lesson by asking such questions as: What were your thoughts about the last class meeting? Did you have a chance to talk with each other about the first lesson? How did the homework assignment work for you?

In Lesson 1 many of you shared ideas and experiences that helped us understand how a family can be strengthened. In Lesson 2, we are going to examine how the family interacts with the community. We will talk about how church, work, school, and other family members affect our relationships. In addition, we will begin to address some problem areas, too. Here are the questions we will address this session:

1. How can the community strengthen or weaken the family?

2. How can the couple deal with community influences in order to build family relationships rather than damage them?

This slide [Slide #8] provides an outline for this session.

Remind participants that the intent is to provide helpful information — not therapy — that can be used to build strengths in their relationship and to help them raise their family together. If a couple does need therapy, make appropriate recommendations. Also remind participants that information shared during the session is confidential among the group and should not be shared with others not a part of the group.

Fingertips Warm-Up Activity

To help us start thinking about how we depend on each other in our marriages, I'd like to do an activity with you. You will do this activity as a couple. Each couple will be given a blindfold; one of you needs to wear the blindfold. Stand facing each other and touch all 10 fingertips together. The person without the blindfold needs to lead the blindfolded partner around the room without running into others or objects. At the same time, you must continue touching all 10 fingertips.

If people have come to the session without their partners, try to pair them up with someone who is also alone or one of the facilitators. Make sure you set the room with a few obstacles to navigate around, over, or under. After a few minutes ask the pairs to exchange roles and lead around the room again.
Spend a few minutes discussing the exercise and its relationship to a couple's trust in each other, using these discussion questions:

1. When you were blindfolded and being led around the room, what were you thinking? Feeling?
2. When you were not blindfolded and leading your spouse, what were you thinking? Feeling?
3. Were you able to continue touching and stay connected when you ran into objects? Were you able to keep touching each other's fingers? Or did you have to stop and get reconnected?
4. Was it easier to do this activity after you switched roles? Why or why not?

This activity was a way to get us thinking about how a couple depends on each other for many things. Sometimes, things interfere with our relationship with each other and we have to work to reconnect to make our marriage strong. We will also learn today that it sometimes takes much thought and effort.

How the Family Is Influenced By The Community

Our families come in contact with various influences from the community, including people from schools, places of employment, churches, etc. In addition, we have relationships with friends, neighbors, and extended family. All of these relationships can both strengthen and, sometimes, weaken our marriage and family.

Let's identify how different relationships influence our marital relationships. Identify one side of the room where participants can move about freely. Ask participants to stand near that wall. Ask them to determine if they agree or disagree with the following statements on a continuum of 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). Instruct them to feel free to move along the wall in response to each question. If you would like, post the number “1” at one end of the wall and number “10” at the opposite end. Ask them to not be influenced by where their spouse stands, as this information could be helpful in learning about each other. After each question, briefly ask the group to voluntarily share why they chose their position along the continuum of strongly disagree to strongly agree. Do not expect each person to share for each question, as they could lose interest in the activity.

1. Faith is important to our relationship and our marriage. Ask the participants how this can be positive (i.e. gives hope when times are tough) as well as negative (i.e. too much time with church activities and friends).

2. Activities and relationships connected to work affect our marriage in “positive” ways. An example might be that coworkers have become family friends. Feel free to provide your own example.

3. Activities and relationships connected to work affect our marriage in “negative” ways. An example might be that work can create so much stress that it is difficult to come home relaxed and ready to spend time with family.

4. Activities and relationships connected to friends affect our marriage in “positive” ways. An example might be that spending time with friends adds fun and laughter to our lives.

5. Activities and relationships connected to friends affect our marriage in “negative” ways. Negative examples may be spending time with
friends takes so much time that there is little family time left, jealousy or infidelity issues, etc.

6. Activities and relationships with other family members — like our parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins — affect our marriage in “positive” ways.
Positive examples would be sharing celebrations and successes, emotional and financial support, showing love to others, etc.

7. Activities and relationships with other family members — like our parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins — affect our marriage in “negative” ways.
Some negative examples may be spending too much time with other family members, sharing marital problems with extended family members, not being accepted by each other’s family, etc.

Thank you for taking part in this activity. We left out technology as a possible influence, like computer games, the Internet, cellphones, and texting . . . how do they affect your marriage and family? Allow for a brief discussion. In summary, how did it feel to think of all these influences upon your marriage and family? Were there any surprises from observing the reactions of your spouse?

Sometimes we can forget how important others are to our marriage and family. However, sometimes we can be very negative when something happens and we are quick to jump to negative thoughts that turn into negative emotions and negative behaviors.

Common Sources of Conflict
Let’s take a closer look at some conflicts that can arise from the community around us: conflict with other family members, spending too much time with outside friends or activities. Any others? Something may happen in a relationship. For example, one spouse may think that the other is flirting with others. Thoughts of jealousy may be followed by strong emotions like fear or maybe anger. Or a person might get angry before even thinking. All of these things may influence the couple to act in a way towards each other that might not have happened if there had not been any jealous thoughts and/or angry emotions. However, let’s remember that some levels of jealousy are normal and can help the couple learn how to grow stronger. Other times, jealousy is harmful and leads to revengeful and mean actions. Let’s take some time to understand how jealousy and other conflicts affect our relationships and what we can do to help us work with difficult things that affect our families.

Read each scenario to the group and allow them to discuss the situation. Questions to encourage discussion follow the scenario as well as points to make as the discussion comes to a conclusion.

Scenario 1
Rosa has been married to Héctor for about six months. Her parents divorced because of her dad having a girlfriend. Héctor has never had a girlfriend and has no desire to be with anyone but Rosa. Lately, Rosa has been moody and has been accusing Héctor of flirting with other women. Héctor and Rosa never really seem to be able to talk about this without one or the other getting upset. Hector is confused about Rosa’s accusations because he really loves her and is not interested in the other women. She is his wife and he is committed to their marriage.

1. Where do you think Rosa’s feelings are coming from?
2. What kinds of thoughts and emotions are each of them having? How is each of them acting because of these thoughts and emotions?
3. How can past relationships sometimes influence our present relationships?

4. What type of advice would you give to Rosa? To Héctor?

Points to focus on:
1. Jealousy can come from past experiences.
2. Past experiences may need to be dealt with so we can avoid behaviors that can be hard on a marriage.
3. Trust can be built as a couple shows each other supportive behaviors over time.

Scenario 2

Lately Miguel has been spending quite a bit of time playing futbol with a local club. His wife Maria recognizes that lately Miguel has been having a lot of stress at work and he has been playing with two club teams. He rarely comes home during his free time. Maria enjoyed how they used to talk about their stresses when they first got married. Lately, she barely knows what is going on with Miguel. In addition, their two kids rarely see Miguel even on the weekends when he doesn't have to work. Maria loves Miguel and wants to be supportive, but doesn't know how.

1. Why do you think Miguel is playing so much futbol? What do you think is happening to Maria and Miguel's relationship over time?

2. Is there a way that Miguel can still play futbol and have a good relationship with his family?

3. How can Miguel learn to rely more on his family to relieve some of his stress rather than distancing himself from his family?

Points to focus on:
1. Talk to each other when stressful things are happening to the family rather than distancing oneself from the family.
2. Couples that help each other during times of stress become closer.
3. A combination of individual, couple, and family coping mechanisms is more effective than relying solely on an activity outside of the family.

Thank you for your discussion on the tough issues that surfaced in each of these scenarios. After the break, we will talk about setting limits within the couple relationship so that outside influences will strengthen rather than damage our family lives.

Setting Limits

When we are in a marriage and family, we begin to understand that we now have other people in our lives as well as ourselves. A strong relationship comes when we realize that we have to help take care of each other. We begin to share things with our spouse to help them be a part of our life. We also begin to make some things in our lives private that are not shared with others as we strengthen our relationship. We also know that it is important in a relationship for each individual to have some “me” time and “we” time. It's also important to know what should only be shared with your immediate family and what can be shared with others [Slide #10].
As you prepare to leave this session, please think about the community influences that are helpful to your marriage and family and the community influences that are not helpful.

Please take time right now to think about the helpful and the not so helpful influences on your marriage and family. Do this separately and then share your lists with each other.

After the couples have had time to share with each other, have a group discussion addressing the following questions. Make sure that couples do not leave the session with strong and negative feelings over their partner’s lists.

Let’s think about these questions:
1. How similar were your lists?
2. Were there influences that your spouse listed that were a surprise to you?
3. How easy was it to share your thoughts and feelings about the helpful and not helpful influences that you listed, especially when they were different from what your spouse listed? Did you learn new information about your spouse’s thoughts and feelings about outside influences that will help you this coming week work on your relationship with each other?

OPTIONAL

A Latino Couple Tells Their Story

The purpose of this activity is to provide an example of a strong Latino marriage and how this couple has dealt with community influences in their marriage.

We have asked (names) ____________ to talk about how they have maintained a good relationship as they have interacted with outside influences such as school, extended family, friends, church, hobbies, and work. They will tell us briefly how their relationship started and then they will answer some prepared questions. During the presentation, if you would like to ask a question, write it down on the card that you have been given. We will gather the cards at the end and ask as many questions as we have time for.

Give the couple some time to share how they first met, some of the early obstacles in their relationship, and the benefits of being married over the years. In addition, ask them to address how they have dealt with the following issues: jealousy, time management, maintaining good relationships with extended family, spending time with friends, participating in church activities, spending time on one’s hobbies or areas of interest, and acculturation issues. Make sure the couple has the questions before the class so they can answer them more completely. Here are the prepared questions:

1. What community influences like your church, other family members, work, friends, and school have benefited your marriage and family?
2. Which of these community influences have created problems in your marriage and family?
3. How have you been successful in addressing these problems?
4. Have you had times when you have had to reach out to others to help you through difficult times? Please describe those times.
5. What suggestions do you have for couples and families in addressing outside influences?

Gather up the cards and sort through the questions to assess the appropriateness of each question. Spend time asking the questions as time allows.
Closing for the Adult Session

Today, we explored how families interact with outside influences in the community, such as church, school, work, extended family, and friends.

What was helpful during this session? What have you gained from this session?

We will now have a family activity where members of the entire family can talk about outside influences.

Family Activity

The purpose of this activity is to have the entire family talk about how they view the benefits of outside influences. Children may have a different view about these influences than adults. It is important that adults listen to their children and support them in sharing their feelings. Be sure to include other adult family members if they have come to the session, too.

Please sit together as a family. I am giving each of you something with which to draw. I would like each of you to think about other people or activities that make your life as a family great. For example, it might be that when grandpa and grandma come to visit, everyone has a great time. Or it may be that when one of the children in the family is involved in school activities, the entire family gets excited and celebrates the child’s accomplishments. Draw a picture of the best thing you can think of. When everyone has finished, share your pictures with the others in your family. Tell others what your picture is about and why it makes your family great.

After the families have given each person time to share, bring the group together and conclude the activity with these questions, encouraging all to respond.

1. What did you learn that you didn’t know from other family members?

2. Did you identify similar people or things, or were they different?

3. How can you make sure that every family member gets to experience what they feel are the positive influences from the community?

Thank you for sharing your answers. We hope that you will think more about both the positive and negative community influences and how they affect your family life. We look forward to seeing you next time.
Lesson 3
Communication And Problem-Solving in Our Marriage and Family

Timeline for Lesson
150 minutes

• Introduction and review of previous lesson — 15 minutes
• Friendship warm-up activity — 15 minutes
• Spending time together — 20 minutes
• Learning more about each other — 15 minutes
• Break — 10 minutes
• Problem solving model — 30 minutes
• Problem solving together — 20 minutes
• Closing for the adult session — 5 minutes
• Family activity — 20 minutes

Lesson Objectives

• Promote awareness of the benefits in spending quality time together as a couple and as a family
• Promote awareness of the importance of knowing activities that your partner likes as a way to build and maintain the relationship
• Facilitate the identification and application of an effective problem-solving process

Lesson Supplies

• Paper and writing materials
• Handouts
Lesson Plan

In Lesson 1, the focus was on specific steps for building a strong marriage and family. Lesson 2 addressed the community’s impact on the family. Specifically, influences of school, work, religious, and community institutions were explored as well as strategies for dealing with conflicts associated with outside influences upon the marriage and family.

Lesson 3 addresses how to build and maintain strong marriage and family relationships with commitment to spending time together, attention to everyday behaviors, and effective problem-solving communication.

Introduction and Review of Previous Lesson

Welcome to our third session on building and maintaining strong marriages and families. In our first session, we talked about ways to strengthen your relationship with each other. Last time, we talked about outside influences that can strengthen and, sometimes, weaken our relationships. We also discussed strategies for dealing with conflicts related to outside influences.

Discuss what they learned from the previous lesson by asking such questions as: What were your thoughts about the last class meeting? Did you have a chance to talk with each other about the second lesson?

Today we are going to talk about doing things together as a couple, attention to everyday behaviors, and using effective communication and problem-solving skills when there are disagreements. For each couple and family, those issues might be different.

The slide [Slide #11] provides an outline for this session.

Remind the participants that the intent is to provide helpful information — not therapy — that can be put into use to build strengths in their relationship and to help them in raising their family together. If an unresolved and difficult issue begins to surface during a session, suggest that they contact a counselor, religious leader, or therapist for intensive work. The leader should have a resource list available at the meeting.

Friendship Warm-up Activity

To help us start thinking about doing things together in our relationships, each couple will be given a sheet of plain paper for the two of you to work on together. Draw circles like you see on the screen [Slide #12].

Hand out blank pieces of paper and writing tools. Class members will need a hard writing surface to put the sheet of paper on, resting it on both of their laps as they sit facing each other. Allow five to 10 minutes for each couple to complete the activity. If couples prefer not to write, they can share the same information verbally.

Now facing each other with the paper between you, fill out the outer circle closest to you with interests, hobbies, people you like to be with, and other interests you like or would like to pursue. Each one of you is to list these personal preferences on your own. Please do it at the same time. It is important to keep in mind that having individual interests and friends is fine as long as they do not interfere with your relationship. This activity may help you discover new things about your partner and to recognize common interests that the two of you may not have known.
After each of you has filled your circle on the outside, look at each other’s list, and decide the people, interests, hobbies, and interests you would like to pursue together and list them in the center circle. Your “couple” list may be completely different from your individual lists or there could be many similarities. Keep in mind as you look at each other’s individual preferences that you also can be thinking of something you would like to learn from or share with your partner (e.g. how to knit, how to change the oil in the car).

**Allow time for each couple to complete this activity before bringing the group back together.**

1. How did this activity work for you as a couple?
2. What did you experience as you were working on the “couple” part?
3. How can you use this information in the future?

### Spending Time Together

Part of working together is maintaining a connection with your spouse. In addition, it is important to maintain a connection with all of your children. Spending time together without conflict is one of the best ways to help couples and families protect their relationships with each other. It builds a foundation that will help when problems arise or stress is high. Families can actually become stronger as they successfully work together through a problem or stress in their lives.

As a group, let’s talk about the following questions [Slide #13]: If you prefer that they break into small groups, please feel free to conduct this learning activity in a way that would work best for the audience.

1. What has been the best time you have spent with each other in the past month?
2. How do you regularly spend time as a couple?
3. How would you like to spend time together?
4. How could you spend time together that would improve your communication with each other?

**Conclude the discussion with the following questions:**

1. Why is it important to spend time without conflict with your spouse as well as with your family?
2. How can these experiences help when problems arise?

Ask each couple to determine a time in which they will spend time communicating with each other with as little interruption as possible in the coming week. Ask them to determine what issues they will not talk about so it is an enjoyable time together. Remind them of this homework assignment at the end of the session.

### Learning More About Each Other

Spending time together is important, but how we interact during these times together is the key to strengthening a marriage and family life. It may not seem important how you talk and act toward each other everyday, but it is these small daily interactions that pull us together or pull us apart, especially when conflict arises. Oftentimes one member of a couple may not realize what is important to the other partner. Take a few minutes to talk to each other by taking turns to complete these sentences.

1. When you come home, I feel loved and appreciated when . . .

Have these sentences visible [Slide #14] for everyone to see.

1. When you come home, I feel loved and appreciated when . . .
2. When you leave the house, I feel loved and appreciated when . . .

3. When I make a mistake, it makes me feel good when you . . .

4. When I want to talk to you about a problem, I feel valued and appreciated when . . .

Talk about the group's reactions to the activity. Use any or all of the following questions to help guide your discussion.

1. How did it feel to share these thoughts with your partner?

2. What kinds of themes did you see in each of your responses?

3. How do you see that this information will be helpful to the two of you in your everyday life?

Now it is time to take a break. After the break, we will work on a process that can help a couple and their family solve problems while protecting their relationships with each other.

Break

Problem-Solving Model

It is natural that married couples and families will not agree on everything. That is just human nature. What is important for a strong marriage and family is how conflicts are handled when an issue does come up. Let's talk as a group about our experiences in handling tough times in our marriages and families.

1. How have you solved problems together that worked for your family?

2. What things have you done that did not work when a problem came up?

3. What did you do and what did your spouse do that helped solve the problem or helped your family live with the problem, even if the problem did not disappear?

As a group, we are now going to work through a process [Slide #15] that can be helpful in solving problems between persons. It serves as a model for couples and families working through large or small issues.

Let's identify a problem that might come up for a married couple.

Let the group come to a consensus on a problem to talk about (i.e. paying the bills, discipline decisions, housework, etc.). If the group does not talk, you might have several problems on different pieces of paper and ask them to draw one problem out of a hat.

As we talk about this problem, what could be some ground rules that a couple might consider before they begin talking about the problem?

Possible suggestions are always show respect, no blaming, willingness to listen even if not agreeing, taking turns to talk without being interrupted, making sure each one understands exactly what the other is saying, not bringing up old issues, etc.

The next step is to provide an opportunity for each person to give thoughts on why this is a problem. Let’s brainstorm why this could be a problem with the wife and the husband.

Allow the group the opportunity to suggest reasons for the conflict from the husband's point of view and the wife's point of view.

After each person thinks that his/her perspective has been presented and is understood by the other, now it is time to brainstorm possible solutions to the problem. During this step, it is important that neither person offers judgment on
the suggestions. What is important is thinking about all possible alternatives.

Break the group in smaller groups of two to four persons. Let them discuss all the possible solutions that they can think of. Ask the small groups to share their lists of solutions.

The next step is thinking about the pros and cons of each suggestion. Both the husband and wife should feel comfortable in offering their opinions in an atmosphere of respect, knowing that each idea will not instantly be judged as right or wrong by the other.

Again, allow the group to give their perspectives on the pros and cons of each suggestion by breaking into the same small groups. However, before you begin this discussion, you might consider asking two volunteers to do a two-part role play. Part I would be role playing in an environment where each person does not feel he or she can offer an opinion without immediate judgment. Part II would be the opposite in which they listen to each other's opinions and encourage each other in offering more ideas within an environment of respect. If you do have a role play, ask the actors at the end how they felt during each part of the role play. When the role play is finished, the small groups can resume sharing their opinions of the pros and cons of each solution.

Now that we have shared the positives and negatives of each suggestion, it is time to come to a consensus on a preferred solution. Remember that it might take compromise on the part of both persons.

Have the smaller groups come to a consensus on one solution and talk about the compromises that might be needed.

The next step required in this process is for the couple to make a concerted effort to try the chosen solution. They would need to discuss specifics on how they are going to implement the solution. They also would need to set a timetable when they would check back with each other to determine the effectiveness of their preferred solution. If it is not working as they would like, they would need to repeat the process to determine another possible solution.

Ask the group the following questions:
1. How would this process work in your family?
2. With what issues might it work well?
3. With what issues might it not work well?

This process requires “slowing down” a conflict by taking time to go through each step. In review, the steps are:

Have this information displayed for all to see.
1. Define the problem.
2. Determine ground rules for working through the problem.
3. Brainstorm reasons for this problem.
4. Brainstorm possible solutions to the problem.
5. Discuss pros and cons for each potential solution.
6. Agree upon one solution.
7. Decide how to put into action the chosen solution.
8. Set a timetable to check back with each other about the solution's effectiveness in solving the problem.
9. Repeat the process if the solution is not working.

Problem Solving Together

We are going to take time for each couple to think of a small issue in which you can work through the first eight steps. Please take your chairs anywhere in the room where you can be
comfortable in working through these steps with your partner.

Give each person a handout that lists these steps. Be alert to any couple who might need coaching in implementing this process. Be sure that no couple leaves the session with heightened tension as a result of this activity. Bring the group back together to discuss this activity using the following questions:

1. How did this activity work for you as a couple?
2. What did you experience as you were working on each step?
3. Which steps were the hardest? The easiest?
4. How can you use this problem-solving model in the future?

Closing for the Adult Session
As we come to a close for this session, the homework you have as a couple is to find a time to do something enjoyable together. It could be as simple as watching a movie together after the children have gone to bed. The second part of the homework is to take another small problem that can be used to solve problems at home. The problem to be solved during this family activity is deciding what to do for a special family night together. First the parents will lead each family in setting ground rules so everyone feels their ideas are respected and included. Then your family will discuss the reasons for planning a special family night, brainstorm any ideas you can think of, talk about the pros and cons of each idea, come to a family agreement on which idea would work the best, and set a timetable to have the family night.

After the families have been given time to complete each step, bring the group together and conclude the activity with these questions, encouraging children as well as adults to respond.

1. How did this process work in your family?
2. Which steps were the easiest? The hardest?
3. With what other issues could this process be useful in solving problems in your family?

Thank you for sharing your answers to these questions. The last step in this process is reviewing your choice after you have had the family night to determine its success and how these steps can be used for planning other special family nights. We look forward to seeing you in the last session.
Lesson 4
Supporting Our Marriage and Family

Timeline for Lesson
150 minutes

• Introduction and review of previous lesson — 10 minutes
• Icebreaker — 15 minutes
• Daily behaviors that strengthen a relationship — 30 minutes
• Closing for the adult session — 15 minutes
• Family activity and ending celebration — 80 minutes

Lesson Objectives

• Promote awareness of what it takes to build a strong marriage.
• Facilitate the process of partners sharing what behaviors they like from each other
• Promote awareness of the value of everyday behaviors and routines or rituals for strengthening a marriage and family
• Facilitate the celebration of each couple’s marriage and family and their future together

Lesson Supplies

• Paper and writing materials
• Paper sack or container to collect responses
• Handouts
• Miscellaneous materials for the family activity (for example, aluminum foil, old magazines, poster paper, drawing materials, string, newspapers, glue, tape, paints, children’s toys, dress-up clothes, etc.)
• Camera, computer, printer, picture frames
• Certificates of completion
Lesson Plan

In Lesson 1, the focus was on specific steps for building a strong marriage and family. Lesson 2 addressed the community’s impact on the family. Specifically, influences of school, friends, extended family, work, religious, and community institutions were explored as well as strategies for dealing with conflicts associated with outside influences upon the marriage and family. Lesson 3 addressed how to build and maintain strong marriage and family relationships with commitment to spending time together, attention to everyday behaviors, and effective problem-solving communication. Lesson 4 focuses on building a lasting couple relationship. Couples will discuss ways they strengthen each other and the value of having meaningful routines or rituals in their couple relationship and family life. The session will end with a family celebration as each family thinks about the future.

Introduction and Review of Previous Lesson

Welcome to the final session of the class for building our marriages and families. In our previous sessions, we talked about ways to strengthen your relationship with each other, about outside influences that can strengthen and, sometimes, weaken our relationships during the second session. We also discussed strategies for dealing with conflicts related to outside influences, about spending time together, paying attention to everyday behaviors, and using effective communication techniques and problem-solving skills to help us work respectfully together as couples and families.

Discuss what they learned from the previous lesson by asking such questions as: What were your thoughts about the last class meeting? Did you have a chance to plan an enjoyable time together? If so, how did it work? If not, what kept you from having this time together? Also did you have a chance to practice the problem-solving model on a small problem that the two of you have? If so, how did it work? If not, what kept you from working on a small problem together?

The slide [Slide #16] provides an outline for this session.

Icebreaker

Please stand near the walls. Half of you be prepared to walk to your left and the other half walk to your right. As you meet other class members, greet them in ways that they know you are paying attention to them. When I clap my hands, reverse directions and do not acknowledge your class members in any kind of way. Do not look at them, smile, or greet them in a friendly way. Let’s begin.

After the activity is concluded, ask them how it felt to be acknowledged and ask them what behaviors meant the most to them (i.e. smile, verbal greeting, eye contact, etc.). When they were told to not acknowledge their classmates, ask them to describe the behaviors they noticed and how those responses made them feel. Relate the two types of behaviors to a couple relationship and how it can feel when you are acknowledged or not acknowledged.

Making a Relationship Strong

Why do marriages or relationships survive despite problems?

Hand out pieces of paper for each participant to put a written response or draw a picture as an answer to this question. Gather up the slips of paper in a paper bag or
some type of container and mix them up. Pull each piece out of the container and ask a participant to read the response if he or she is comfortable with that. Ask if there are similar themes among the responses.

Here are some things we know from persons who study what make marriages strong.

Have this information for all to see [Slide #17]. Emphasize similarities with the group’s responses.

**Slide #17**

Couples are more committed to each other when they:

- See the long-term benefits of their relationship with each other.
- Expect the best of each other.
- Are positive about each other.
- Agree upon what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors for their marriage.

Couples Grow More Committed to Each Other When They:

- Show their support in specific ways.
- Go out of their way to avoid saying and doing negative things.

**Slide #18**

Couples grow more committed to each other when they:

- Show their support in specific ways.
- Go out of their way to avoid saying and doing negative things.

Use these lists to have a group discussion by asking the following questions:

1. Which of these ideas would be the most difficult to practice in a marriage?
2. Which would be the easiest?

**Daily Behaviors that Strengthen a Relationship**

Another thing to think about are the small everyday behaviors that show respect to your spouse. It might be as simple as saying thank you, smiling at each other, and being affectionate. It also is important to mention how your spouse reacts to these behaviors, by for example, saying, “you’re welcome,” responding positively to a touch, or smiling back. Furthermore, if we show interest in what the other person says or does, whether or not it is directed at us specifically, it helps to build a marriage, too. For instance, if your spouse notices a nice car driving by the house or sees something to buy during a TV commercial and makes a comment, you can either 1. ignore it, 2. be sarcastic, saying something like “You better not think we can afford that!” or 3. respond in a way that shows you recognize what your spouse is saying, “So you like that? It is nice.”

Engage the group in the following questions [Slide #19] to talk about everyday behaviors that strengthen a marriage and family.

**Slide #19**

1. What kindnesses do you appreciate the most from your spouse?
2. How do these behaviors help you feel respected?
3. When your spouse does something nice for you, why is it important to respond positively?
4. What messages are sent when we respond positively to each other?

These examples that you have been sharing build respect and trust between a couple. For example, we know that a couple is showing respect
for each other when they tell each other where they have been and there is the trust in the relationship when each one believes the other is being truthful.

Have you ever watched a sports team or a show on TV or a church choir where the people have special activities that they always do? It connects them. A sports team or church choir may take time to hold hands before they go out to perform and to hear words of encouragement from their leader and each other. Sometimes we forget that as couples, we need to have regular routines, too. They are important for establishing a connection over the years. They do not just happen — they have to be planned and enjoyed by both. What are special routines and why are they important? [Slide #20]

* They connect you to each other.
* They are repeated over and over.
* They are predictable.
* They must be agreeable to and appreciated by both of you.

These routines may change with time, too. For instance, a couple may enjoy a few minutes together after putting the children to bed, not using the time to fight or talk about problems, but to share experiences of the day. Then one of the partners gets a night shift and that alters the routine that both of them had come to enjoy. It takes effort to figure out another time for that type of connection.

Here is a handout with some special routines that couples have been known to adopt. Can you name more special routines that are important to the two of you or to other couples you know?

Since this is our last session, this will be a homework assignment that you will not have opportunity to talk about with the group. However, take time to talk to each other about regular activities that are meaningful to both of you. Perhaps you will learn more from each other about which daily routines are important and meaningful to both of you.

Closing for the Adult Session

Each of these sessions we have had involved hard work. We are going to take time to review the ideas that have been presented throughout all of our classes that can help families and couples stay strong. Think about the ideas, principles, and experiences that have meant something to you during all of the sessions.

Spend time as a group using the board or large poster board to incorporate the principles that the group has learned throughout all the sessions. You may want to incorporate these principles into some sort of drawing or you can list the principles as the participants talk about them. Some examples may be drawing a foundation of a house with a family inside and writing down the principles in the foundation, drawing a large heart with a family inside and writing the principles inside the heart, or drawing large figures of a family holding hands and writing the principles inside the family.

So now it is time to celebrate! However, before we start that activity with your family, are there any ways that you would like to continue getting together as a group?

Help the group to brainstorm ways in which they could continue to connect with each other to reinforce the family strengthening activities that have occurred during these sessions. An example is meeting once a month as families or using a community event to get together. It would be helpful to have a volunteer agree to organize the next event.

Congratulations on your interest in staying connected. This could be very helpful in supporting each other’s families. Now we are going to do an activity where you and your family can
celebrate your marriage and relationships together to help you look to the future.

Family Activity

The purpose of this family activity is to celebrate both the marriage and the family and to help the family think about their future together.

Please sit together as a family. I am giving you a handout with the same instructions as this slide [Slide #21] that gives your family several choices on what you would like to do.

You may need to use the problem-solving process that you learned last session if it is hard to come to a family decision. Take some time and decide on one of these activities. There are materials scattered around the room to help you work on your celebration project. When you are finished, your family will be asked to present it to the group.

Give them the handout that lists the following suggested activities for celebrating their marriage and family that they would like to share with the group. Talk about each of the choices and answer any questions they might have.

1. Make a painting or poster together that describes your family and your plans for the future. Use magazine pictures, paint, drawings, words, etc. to make a painting or poster together. Be prepared to explain it to the group.

2. Write a song or poem or a story about your family and your plans for the future and be prepared to sing or deliver it to the group.

3. Prepare a skit that explains your life together as a family and your plans for the future.

4. Create a statue or a sculpture that describes your family and your plans for the future. Be prepared to explain it to the group.

Give them approximately 15 minutes to work on their project, and then have each family present it to the group. Be encouraging and celebratory as each family works to define themselves and their future together. Continue this celebratory atmosphere during the rest of the session.

Ceremony

Thank you for the work you did as a group in celebrating your family and your future together. We are going to take a picture of each of your families now and we will put it in a frame for you to take home. Also we are going to take a picture of the entire group to send home with you also. Please be sure to get information from each other to help you organize future events so that you can stay connected and be supportive of all of your families.

Take some time for the participants to share what they have experienced throughout the class as a way to bring closure and to begin the separation process from the class.

Now it is time to present each family with your own certificate that represents the time and commitment you have given to learning how to make your family stronger. Congratulations to each of you [Slide #22].

Conclude the ceremony in a way that is fitting for the group. If the participants are to complete evaluations, have them do that before families leave.
Bibliography


Appendices

- Instructions for administering the surveys
- Pre- and post-program participant surveys
- Educator survey
- Handout(s) for each lesson
- PowerPoint slide handout for each lesson

Also available on the CD
Long Live the Healthy Family!

Instructions For Administering Participant Surveys

• Kansas State University has approved the participant and educator surveys and the instructions for administering them through its Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects.

• Please allow approximately 10 to 15 minutes at the beginning of the first session for completing the ‘Participant Pre-Survey’ and at the end of the last session for participants to complete the ‘Participant Post-Survey’.

• Please tell the participants that filling out the surveys is completely voluntary. Distribute the “Participant Pre-Survey” for them to complete. Explain to them that there will be four classes on information and activities related to building and maintaining strong family and couple relationships. Indicate to them that they will be asked to voluntarily complete another survey at the end of the final class. Indicate that they are not compelled to finish either survey. Surveys will be available both in English and Spanish.

• Persons delivering the lesson will be asked to complete a survey at the conclusion of each of the four lessons. This survey will only be in English.

• Please explain to the participants and class leaders that the information is being used to determine how effective the program is and to make changes when necessary. At no time will their names be identified in reports and publication of the results, and no information will be shared with other family members.

• Please indicate to the participants and class leaders that they can contact Charlotte Shoup Olsen at any time with questions and concerns about the program, or requests to receive survey data. Her contact information is:

Mail surveys to:

Charlotte Shoup Olsen
Kansas State University
School of Family Studies and Human Services
343 Justin Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506
colsen@ksu.edu
785-532-5773 office
785-532-6969 fax
Please take a few moments to complete the survey below. You will be asked to complete a similar survey at the end of these four classes. Your answers will help us know if the information is helpful to you. Thank you for completing this survey — your comments will be kept confidential.

Please mark the correct answer to the following questions.

1. What is your sex?  [ ] Male  [ ] Female

2. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
   [ ] Elementary School
   [ ] High School/GED
   [ ] Technical School
   [ ] Some College
   [ ] Bachelor's Degree
   [ ] Master’s or Doctorate
   [ ] Other: (please specify) _____________________

3. What is the arrangement between you and your partner?
   [ ] Married
   [ ] Not married
   [ ] Other: (please specify) _____________________

Please complete the following with the appropriate number.

4. How long have you been in this relationship? _________

5. How many children do the two of you have? _________

6. How many of your children live with you? _________
7. How many other family members live with you (your parents, aunts and uncles, cousins, etc.):

__________

8. Please mark your answer in the appropriate column after reading each statement. If you agree with the statement, mark column 5 “Strongly Agree” or column 4 “Agree,” depending on the intensity of your response. If you do not agree with the statement, mark column 1 for “Strongly disagree” or column 2 for “Disagree.” If you do not know, mark column 3 “Don’t Know.”

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1 Strenghtly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Disagree</th>
<th>3 Don't Know</th>
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<td>We do not let other people or activities get in the way of our family.</td>
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*Thank you very much for taking part in these classes and completing this survey.*
Long Live the Healthy Family!
Participant Post-Survey

Please take a few moments to complete the survey below. Your answers will help us know if the information has been helpful to you. Thank you for completing this survey — your comments will be kept confidential.

Please mark the correct answer to the following questions.

1. What is your sex?
   - [ ] Male
   - [ ] Female

2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   - [ ] Elementary School
   - [ ] High School/GED
   - [ ] Technical School
   - [ ] Some College
   - [ ] Bachelor’s Degree
   - [ ] Master’s or Doctorate
   - [ ] Other: (please specify) ______________________

3. What is the arrangement between you and your partner?
   - [ ] Married
   - [ ] Not married
   - [ ] Other: (please specify) ______________________

Please complete the following with the appropriate number.

4. How long have you been in this relationship? __________

5. How many children do the two of you have? __________

6. How many of your children live with you? __________
7. How many other family members live with you (your parents, aunts and uncles, cousins, etc.)?

________

8. Please mark your answer in the appropriate column after reading each statement. If you agree with the statement, mark column 5 “Strongly Agree” or column 4 “Agree,” depending on the intensity of your response. If you do not agree with the statement, mark column 1 for “Strongly disagree” or column 2 for “Disagree.” If you do not know, mark column 3 “Don’t Know.”

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Please complete the following with the appropriate number.

9. There were four classes in this program.
How many classes did you attend? __________
How many classes did you and your partner attend together? __________
If you have children, how many times did your children come with you? __________

Please answer the following questions.

10. What did you like about these classes?
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

11. What did you not like about these classes?
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

12. What did you learn that will be helpful in your relationship with your partner?
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

13. What did you learn that will be helpful with your family?
______________________________________________________________________________________________
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Thank you very much for your assistance with these classes and for completing this survey. Your comments will help us know how to improve the program.
Long Live the Healthy Family!
Educator Survey

Please complete a survey after each class to help us understand how the classes are going. Send the completed surveys at the conclusion of the program to the address given on page 44.

Please mark the correct answer to the following questions.

1. What is your sex? □ Male □ Female

2. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
   □ Elementary School
   □ High School/GED
   □ Technical School
   □ Some College
   □ Bachelor’s Degree
   □ Master’s or Doctorate
   □ Other: (please specify) _____________________

3. What is the arrangement between you and your partner?
   □ Married
   □ Not married
   □ Other: (please specify) _____________________

Please complete the following with the appropriate number.

4. How long have you been in this relationship? __________
5. How many children do the two of you have? __________
6. How many of your children live with you? __________
7. How many other family members live with you (your parents, aunts and uncles, cousins, etc.)? __________
Educator Survey
Lesson 1: Our Latino Family Roots

What was the date of your class? ________________
What was the location of your class? ________________
How many couples attended? __________
How many persons attended without a partner? __________
How many children attended? __________
Did you have a co-teacher? __________

Please look at the objectives on the first page of the lesson. How well do you think these objectives were met?
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Which activities worked well?
______________________________________________________________________________________
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Which activities did not work well?
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

How relevant was the information for the participants?
What suggestions do you have for improving this lesson?

How did you recruit couples and families to attend the classes?

Other comments:
Educator Survey
Lesson 2: Our Latino Family in the Community

What was the date of your class? ______________________
What was the location of your class? ______________________
How many couples attended? __________
How many persons attended without a partner? __________
How many children attended? __________
Did you have a co-teacher? __________

Please look at the objectives on the first page of the lesson. How well do you think these objectives were met?
______________________________________________________________________________________
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Which activities worked well?
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Which activities did not work well?
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How relevant was the information for the participants?
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What suggestions do you have for improving this lesson?
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How did you recruit couples and families to attend the classes?
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Other comments:
______________________________________________________________________________________
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______________________________________________________________________________________
Educator Survey
Lesson 3: Communication and Problem-Solving in Our Marriage and Family

What was the date of your class? ______________________
What was the location of your class? _________________________
How many couples attended? __________
How many persons attended without a partner? __________
How many children attended? __________
Did you have a co-teacher? __________

Please look at the objectives on the first page of the lesson. How well do you think these objectives were met?
______________________________________________________________________________________
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Which activities worked well?
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Which activities did not work well?
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How relevant was the information for the participants?

______________________________________________________________________________________
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What suggestions do you have for improving this lesson?

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

How did you recruit couples and families to attend the classes?

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Other comments:

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
Educator Survey
Lesson 4: Supporting Our Marriage and Family

What was the date of your class? ______________________
What was the location of your class? ______________________
How many couples attended? __________
How many persons attended without a partner? __________
How many children attended? __________
Did you have a co-teacher? __________

Please look at the objectives on the first page of the lesson. How well do you think these objectives were met?
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Which activities worked well?
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______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Which activities did not work well?
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______________________________________________________________________________________
How relevant was the information for the participants?

______________________________________________________________________________________
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What suggestions do you have for improving this lesson?

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______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

How did you recruit couples and families to attend the classes?

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______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Other comments:

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
Please mark your answer in the appropriate column after reading each statement. If you agree with the statement, mark column 5 “Strongly Agree” or column 4 “Agree,” depending on the intensity of your response. If you do not agree with the statement, mark column 1 for “Strongly disagree” or column 2 for “Disagree.” If you do not know, mark column 3 “Don’t Know.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The level of participation among the class was good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The quality of the discussions was good.</td>
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<td>I felt comfortable leading the class.</td>
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<td>My training for teaching these classes was good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The quality of the materials was good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like to offer this class again.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It was easy to recruit couples to come to these classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most of the activities worked well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The family activities were beneficial.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What other general comments do you have that would help these classes be more beneficial to the participants?

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time and effort in offering these classes and completing the surveys. Your answers will help us revise the course to make it more useful for couples and families.
1. How did you feel when you first met your partner?

2. What did you like about the way your partner looked?

3. What did you enjoy doing together?

4. What things did you do as a couple that were the beginnings of shared traditions?

5. When did you realize that your partner was someone special?
Lesson Summary

When you got married, each of you brought traditions from your own family. It helps to understand and appreciate each other’s family when you raise your own children. Each of you may have traditions from your childhood that you want to continue. A married couple needs to have a strong relationship with each other, too. This is important for raising healthy children. You also will feel better about yourself and your family. Sometimes you need to take time to remember the positive experiences that the two of you have had. It makes you feel better about your marriage when you share these memories. Marriage requires hard work. Sometimes it requires that each of you make changes. These changes may help make your marriage and family stronger. The following homework assignment will help you think about the changes you can make.

Homework Assignment

1. If you could easily change or improve one thing about yourself as a spouse, what would you change? Choose something that has been particularly difficult for your relationship, but that you also have some control over changing.

2. How would you know you had changed this one thing? Describe how you will look or act differently after this change is made.

3. How would this help you in your relationship as a spouse? Think about how your partner will feel or react to this change.
Lesson Summary

Your family has many influences in your lives. It may be work, school, friends, and other family members. Your faith and your church may be very important to your marriage and family, too. All of these influences can help your marriage in many ways. They can help your family be stronger. Sometimes, though, these influences can cause problems. For example, you can spend too much time away from the family. It is helpful for the two of you to discuss any problems. You may be surprised at what bothers your spouse. It may require that the two of you agree to change certain things. You need to agree on what family information can be shared with others, too. You may need to talk about having more time together. A strong marriage comes when we realize that we have to help take care of each other. Your children will benefit from your strong marriage.

Homework Assignment

We talked about outside influences during class. Please continue to talk with each other about these influences. If they are hurting your marriage and family, be willing to listen to each other. Be ready to think about changes that can be made.
Problem-Solving Model

1. Define the problem.

2. Set ground rules for working on the problem.

3. Brainstorm reasons for this problem.

4. Brainstorm possible solutions to the problem.

5. Discuss pros and cons for each possible solution.

6. Agree upon one solution.

7. Decide how to put into action the chosen solution.

8. Set a time to check back with each other on the solution’s success in solving the problem.

9. Repeat the process if the solution is not working.
Lesson Summary

The following problem-solving model can be used for little problems. It can be used for big problems. The steps are:

1. Define the problem.
2. Set ground rules for working on the problem.
3. Brainstorm reasons for this problem.
4. Brainstorm possible solutions to the problem.
5. Discuss pros and cons for each possible solution.
6. Agree upon one solution.
7. Decide how to put into action the chosen solution.
8. Set a time to check back with each other on the solution's success in solving the problem.
9. Repeat the process if the solution is not working.

Homework Assignment

1. Find time to do something fun together. Do not work on a problem during this time.
2. At a different time, take a small problem that comes up between the two of you. Use the problem-solving model that you practiced during class. The steps are above.
Below are special routines that some couples use to connect to each other every day. Look over the list and see if you and your spouse have a daily special routine that is not on the list.

**Possible Special Routines for Couples**

- Kiss each other as they go their separate ways in the morning.

- Greet and hug each other when they come home at the end of the day.

- Rub each other’s back before going to bed.

- Have a cup of coffee with each other after the evening meal while the children find other activities.

- Ask each other how the day went when they see each other after returning home.

- One spouse gets up first, prepares the coffee, and brings a cup to the bedside while the other spouse is getting up.
Lesson Summary

Many things can make your marriage and family strong. It helps when you can see the long-term benefits of your marriage and your family. You also need to expect the best of each other as a married couple. Be positive about each other. Take time to talk about what both of you should or should not do to protect your marriage. Show your support to each other in small ways. For example, say please and thank you to each other. Remember to avoid saying and doing negative things, but be ready to work on problems together. Always be respectful even when you disagree. Also, couples in strong relationships often create regular activities for themselves. You might already have these routines without realizing it. Both of you need to appreciate the activity. It can be as simple as how you say good-bye to each other when you go to work. These types of activities connect you to each other. You come to expect them. You also need activities that you repeat over and over with your family. Most likely, you are already doing this. Examples are eating meals together or a bedtime routine. What you do depends on the age of your children. These types of activities are important for strong marriages and families.

Homework Assignment

Since this is our last class, we hope you will keep the handouts from each class. From time to time, please read them and do the homework again. Also we hope that families in your class will decide to continue getting together. It helps couples and families to connect with others who are working hard to have strong marriages and families. Congratulations on completing this class!
Take some time and decide on one of these activities as a family. There are materials scattered around the room to help you work on your celebration project. When you are finished, your family will be asked to present it to the group.

1. Make a painting or poster together that describes your family and your plans for the future. Use magazine pictures, paint, drawings, words, etc. to make a painting or poster together. Be prepared to explain it to the group.

2. Write a song or poem or a story about your family and your plans for the future and be prepared to sing or deliver it to the group.

3. Prepare a skit that explains your life together as a family and your plans for the future.

4. Create a statue or a sculpture that describes your family and your plans for the future. Be prepared to explain it to the group.
Congratulations!

Long Live the Healthy Family!

A Program for Building and Maintaining Strong Latino Marriages and Families

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Facilitator

Date

K-State Research and Extension

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
Long Live the Healthy Family!

A program for building and maintaining strong Latino marriages and families

Four Lessons

- Our Latino Family Roots
- Our Latino Family in the Community
- Communication & Problem-Solving in Our Marriage and Family
- Supporting Our Marriage and Family

Lesson 1
Our Latino Family Roots

- Getting to Know Each Other
- Our Latino Family Heritage
- Building Positive Memories and Feelings
- A Latino Couple Tells Their Story
- Supporting and Loving Each Other
- Family Activity
Our Latino Family Roots
Lesson 1

- What family traditions did you experience in the family that you were born into that you would like to continue in your own family?
- What traditions and/or characteristics would you like to have in your own family?

Building Positive Memories and Feelings
Lesson 1

- How did you feel when you first met your partner?
- What did you like about the way your partner looked?
- What did you enjoy doing together?
- What things did you do as a couple that were the beginnings of shared traditions?
- When did you realize that your partner was someone special?

Supporting and Loving Each Other
Lesson 1

- If you could easily change or improve one thing about yourself as a spouse, what would you change?
- How would you know you had changed this one thing?
- How would this help you in your relationship as a spouse?
Letter or Greeting Card
Lesson 1

- Tell your partner something you like about him or her.
- Describe the thing you want to change about yourself.
- List two steps you plan to take in the next week to start this change.

Lesson 2
Our Latino Family in the Community

- Fingertips Warm-Up Activity
- How the Family is Influenced by the Community
- Common Sources of Conflict
- Setting Limits
- A Latino Couple Tells Their Story (optional)
- Family Activity

How the Marriage is Influenced by the Community
Lesson 2

- Faith and church
- Work
- Friends and neighbors
- School
- Extended family members
Setting Limits
Lesson 2

Some things in our families are shared with others and other things are not to be shared in order to protect our marriage and family relationships.

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Lesson 3
Communication and Problem-Solving in Our Marriage and Family

- Friendship Warm-Up Activity
- Spending Time Together
- Learning More About Each Other
- Problem-Solving Model
- Problem-Solving Together
- Family Activity

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Friendship Warm-up Activity
Lesson 3
Spending Time Together
Lesson 3

- What has been the best time you have spent with each other in the past month?
- How do you regularly spend time as a couple?
- How would you like to spend time together?
- How could you spend time together that would improve your communication with each other?

Learning More About Each Other
Lesson 3

- When you come home, I feel loved and appreciated when…
- When you leave the house, I feel loved and appreciated when…
- When I make a mistake, it makes me feel good when you…
- When I want to talk to you about a problem, I feel valued and appreciated when…

Problem Solving Model
Lesson 3

- Define the problem.
- Determine ground rules for working on the problem.
- Brainstorm reasons for this problem.
- Brainstorm possible solutions to the problem.
- Discuss pros and cons for each potential solution.
- Agree upon one solution.
- Decide how to put into action the chosen solution.
- Set a timetable to check back with each other.
- Repeat the process if the solution is not working.
Lesson 4
Supporting Our Marriage and Family

- Making a Relationship Strong
- Daily Behaviors that Strengthen a Relationship
- Family Activity
- Family Celebration

Couples are More Committed to Each Other When They:

Lesson 4

- See the long-term benefits of their relationship with each other.
- Expect the best of each other.
- Are positive about each other.
- Agree upon what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors for their marriage.

Couples Grow More Committed to Each Other When They:

Lesson 4

- Show their support in specific ways.
- Go out of their way to avoid saying and doing negative things.
Daily Behaviors that Strengthen a Relationship

Lesson 4

• What kindnesses do you appreciate the most?
• How do these behaviors help a person feel respected?
• When your spouse does something nice for you, why is it important to respond positively?
• What messages are sent when we respond positively to each other?

Special Routines

Lesson 4

• They connect you to each other.
• They are repeated over and over.
• They are predictable.
• They must be agreeable to and appreciated by both of you.

Family Activity
Please choose one of the following:

Lesson 4

• Make a painting or poster together that describes your family and your plans for the future.
• Write a song or poem or a story about your family and your plans for the future.
• Prepare a skit that explains your life together as a family and your plans for the future.
• Create a statue or a sculpture that describes your family and your plans for the future.
CONGRATULATIONS!
Notes
Notes