



PLEASE SAY YES?

Marriage Proposes to Sex Ed

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PLEASE SAY YES: WHY MARRIAGE SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN MODERN SEXUALITY EDUCATION CURRICULA IN ONTARIO AND ACROSS CANADA

INTRODUCTION

Is marriage going out of style? The statistics suggest yes. What hasn't gone out of style, however, is love and relationships. We have more dating apps than ever before, and sexuality is featured prominently in movies, art, advertising, and music. Perhaps because of this focus on sexual and romantic love all around us, we need more than ever to teach healthy relationships. Parents and educators alike concern themselves with the concept of healthy relationship—which can be difficult for adults and youth alike to attain.

Messaging around healthy relationships is important. Inevitably, this involves conveying a sense of restraint in relationships for youth, who are more susceptible to making rash relationship decisions. This is partially what teaching on consent aims to convey: the idea that one must always think through relationship choices and ascertain with certainty the degree to which the other is interested in engaging in relationship.

Marriage is the highest standard for consensually entered, safe relationship. In the ideal, it brings with it connection on every level, economic and spiritual as well as physical. Sexuality within marriage holds the promise of lifelong love in a way that no other relationship form does. A discussion of healthy relationships, particularly where lifelong love is a goal, needs to include marriage. A good marriage brings benefits; a bad marriage brings lifelong heartache and problems. Understanding what creates healthy marriage is critical.

In spite of marriage's waning popularity, it's clear that youth still desire to be married at some point—as we outline in this report. Youth desire the security of lifelong love. Streaming this desire in a productive fashion will help field many questions youth have, rather than avoiding them.

At the same time, we can recognize that marriage continues to be the subject of controversy. The questions many have include whether marriage is still relevant and whether it's possible to remain married for a lifetime, even today. Youth will naturally have questions from their own family backgrounds.

Certainly, any discussion of marriage and relationships must be broached with compassion and empathy. Ignoring research is neither compassionate nor empathetic. We know marriages, in spite of high divorce rates, are more likely to stay together than cohabiting unions. We know good marriages bring with them a host of physical and mental health benefits. Channelling desire into marriage by promoting the healthy aspects of marriage is important information for our kids. At the same time, we should certainly discuss where marriages go wrong today, as well as where the institution has gone wrong in history.

In short, this recommendation for marriage to be included within sexuality education is based in research, not religion. It's a recommendation for intellectual dialogue around an institution that does an admirable job of keeping relationships together, in spite of divorce. And it's an institution our children deserve to understand and have an opportunity to consider, not least for the implications for their future children. Education is about the future—and nowhere is that more true than in sexuality education.

If healthy relationships matter, then marriage matters, and must be part of the sexuality education curriculum.

IS MARRIAGE STILL RELEVANT TO CANADIAN YOUTH?

As Canada's emerging generation decides the goals they want to establish for their lives, they face various choices: career advancement, volunteer opportunities, hobbies, and travel. Included in this list are relationships. As youth think about the role of love and relationships in their future, any healthy discussion of relationships should include consideration of marriage.

Discussing healthy relationships without mentioning marriage is a bit like trying to teach about healthy eating without discussing what nutrients are in various foods. Neglecting to mention marriage, or even love, when teaching youth about sex does a disservice to our children and youth as they grapple with issues of connection, sexuality, stability, attachment, love, and family.

Marriage remains a major factor when thinking of building families, in the mind of the next generation. In a 2016 Nanos Research survey, 72 percent of Canadians age eighteen to twenty-nine saw marriage as a positive or somewhat positive contributor to a positive family life.¹ The same survey found that 93 percent of Canadian adults of all ages reported that having a positive family life is very important to them.²

While Canadian young adults think marriage is nice, they don't believe it is necessary. Data show that young Canadians are more likely to view marriage as an outdated institution.³ They are part of a larger shift across Canada that increasingly feels this way: In 2002, 73 percent of Canadians did not view marriage as an outdated institution. In 2016, that number fell to 56 percent.⁴ While young adults are generally positive about marriage, it remains as only one option among many. There is little knowledge of the larger public meaning of marriage or the benefits it bestows on society.

One conclusion is that young people have little access to Canadian family-related information on why marriage matters: for building stable families, for creating stronger communities, for protecting against poverty, and even for protecting physical and emotional health.⁵

Although perspectives on marriage are shifting, research suggests that young people remain interested in love and commitment.⁶ Over the past thirty years, the proportion of the population in couples has not shifted considerably.⁷ Young adults continue to pursue partnerships. What has shifted is when and how they're choosing to structure those relationships, whether through marriage, or cohabitation. Despite the shift away from marriage over the past few decades, a majority of Canadians continue to view marriage as "a more genuine form of commitment" than cohabitation.⁸

Equipping young Canadians with information about marriage empowers them to make informed decisions about their future relationships.

1. Peter Jon Mitchell, "Canadian Millennials and the Value of Marriage," Cardus, August 24, 2016, 4, <https://www.cardus.ca/research/family/reports/canadian-millennials-and-the-value-of-marriage/>.

2. Mitchell, "Canadian Millennials and the Value of Marriage," 10.

3. Andrea Mrozek and Peter Jon Mitchell, "The Canada Family Life Project," Cardus, June 1, 2016, 13, <https://www.cardus.ca/research/family/reports/the-canada-family-life-project/>.

4. Mrozek and Mitchell, "Canada Family Life Project," 13.

5. Mrozek and Mitchell, "Canada Family Life Project," 19.

6. Mark Regnerus and Jeremy Uecker, *Premarital Sex in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 169.

7. Statistics Canada, Government of Canada, "Marital Status: Overview, 2011," July 9, 2013, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-209-x/2013001/article/11788-eng.htm>.

8. "I Don't: Four-in-Ten Canadian Adults Have Never Married, and Aren't Sure They Want To," Angus Reid Institute (blog), May 6, 2018, <http://angusreid.org/marriage-trends-canada/>.

ISN'T MARRIAGE A PRIVATE MATTER?

One reason to include marriage in sexuality education is because throughout history, marriage has served a public purpose. Although it has taken varied forms, marriage has been present in most cultures because it benefits wider society.

We might not think of marriage as particularly biologically primed, as only 3 percent of mammals are pair bonding.⁹ That said, anthropologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy points out that human beings are “born to attach.”¹⁰ We are born to attach to our mother as babies and children, and adult spouses are also intended to attach to one another for the purposes of staying together to raise children—a lengthy proposition. The universal social institution of marriage was adopted primarily to meet the unique challenges of raising children.

While many modern people marry, without too much consideration as to why, marriage has long been the subject of deep and thorough consideration. Some of these ruminations are part of Aristotle’s oeuvre, who suggested that marriage is “an older and more fundamental thing than the state.”¹¹

Enlightenment philosophers also considered the place of marriage within society. Thomas Hobbes viewed marriage as part of the transition from “the state of nature to society, from barbarism to civilization.” It was only with the development of “matrimonial laws,” he said, that fathers would join in on the childrearing proposition. John Locke spoke of the bond between man and wife as “the first society,” calling this bond the seedbed of all human society.¹²

The idea of marriage as a first society, as a civilizing force, is an important one. The question for Jonah Goldberg, author of *Suicide of the West*, is not whether marriage is natural or unnatural, or even what definition is “the best,” but whether it works. He concludes, “We made traditional marriage normal through centuries of civilizational trial and error because countless generations of wise people figured out that it was a best practice for society.”¹³ In a chapter called “The Family’s Losing War Against Barbarism,” he lays out the importance of the family, which is grounded, if not in marriage, then at least in monogamy.

The thesis of Goldberg’s book is that many of the advances we enjoy today are *unnatural*—be it democracy or the free market. If they were natural, they would have appeared earlier in history to help relieve poverty and misery. In a bit of a Hobbesian moment, he states that “poverty, hunger, violence, tribal hatred, and an early death” are natural. Monogamous marriage may not be natural in Goldberg’s view, but it does represent an advancement from some of the harshness that was once a normal part of the human condition.

The delineation marriage provides for kinship, for understanding where we come from, and for links to economic wealth and wealth transfer were for centuries cornerstones of marriage. While marriage may not be natural, among modern societies it still provides stability and an array of benefits for individual members and for the common good.

9. David Blankenhorn, *The Future of Marriage*, reprint ed. (New York: Encounter, 2009), 30.

10. Blankenhorn, *Future of Marriage*, 34.

11. Blankenhorn, *Future of Marriage*, 23.

12. Blankenhorn, *Future of Marriage*, 23–26.

13. Jonah Goldberg, *Suicide of the West: How the Rebirth of Tribalism, Populism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics Is Destroying American Democracy* (New York: Crown Forum, 2018), 266.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE?

A significant body of research points to just how much good can come from healthy marriages, benefiting both individuals and society. Marriage links relational and economic elements that generate capital and overall well-being. Sociologist Brad Wilcox writes that the institutional model of marriage “seeks to integrate sex, parenthood, economic cooperation and emotional intimacy into a permanent union.”¹⁴

Married adults are generally happier and healthier mentally and physically compared with those who are single, separated, divorced, or widowed.¹⁵ This “marriage advantage” lends substantial health benefits to those who choose to marry.

The continuous commitment and attachment found within marriage is proven to improve health outcomes. Married people experience better physical and emotional health when their spouse provides “interpersonal closeness, emotional gratification, and support in dealing with daily stress.”¹⁶ Medical research shows that in contrast with those who are single, cohabiting, divorced, separated, or widowed, people in a good marriage have a 20 percent increase in cancer survival rates, improved mental health, and reduced chances of having a heart attack.¹⁷

The distinct benefits of marriage for women include lower probability of living in poverty,¹⁸ lower levels of depression among mothers compared to cohabiting and single mothers,¹⁹ and lower risk of experiencing domestic violence compared to cohabiting and dating women.²⁰ Married women also have a lower likelihood of being victims of crime compared to single and divorced women.²¹

There are also unique benefits for men. Scholars have found that married men are more likely to have higher labour productivity and more rapid salary increases compared to unmarried men.²²

14. W. Bradford Wilcox and Elizabeth Marquardt, eds., *State of Our Unions 2010: When Marriage Disappears: The New Middle America* (New York: Broadway, 2011).

15. Susan Martinuk, “Marriage Is Good for Your Health,” *Cardus*, September 2016, 7, <https://www.cardus.ca/research/family/reports/marriage-is-good-for-your-health/>.

16. Martinuk, “Marriage Is Good for Your Health,” 29.

17. Martinuk, “Marriage Is Good for Your Health.”

18. Daniel Lichter, Deborah Graefe, and J. Brian Brown, “Is Marriage a Panacea? Union Formation Among Economically Disadvantaged Unwed Mothers,” *Social Problems—SOC PROBL* 50 (February 1, 2003): 60–86, <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2003.50.1.60>. Canadian researchers Finnie and Sweetman suggest in a 2003 study that “consistently, a change in family status from lone parenthood to any other category decreases the probability of moving into low income, in most cases more than halving the rate relative to those who remained single mothers.” Ross Finnie and Arthur Sweetman, “Poverty Dynamics: Empirical Evidence for Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Economics* 36, no. 2 (2003): 306.

19. W. Bradford Wilcox et al., *Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-Six Conclusions from the Social Sciences*, 2nd ed. (New York: Institute for American Values, 2005), 11.

20. Wilcox et al., *Why Marriage Matters*.

21. Wilcox et al., *Why Marriage Matters*.

22. Sanders Korenman and David Neumark, “Does Marriage Really Make Men More Productive?,” *The Journal of Human Resources* 26, no. 2 (1991): 282, <https://doi.org/10.2307/145924>.

Married men consume less alcohol²³ and are less likely to be criminally involved than their single counterparts.²⁴ Studies also find that married men show higher amounts of affection to both their partners and children than cohabiting men.²⁵ Married men are more likely to remain involved in their children's lives.

Research shows that children's living arrangements are correlated with a number of outcomes. Children born to cohabiting parents who don't go on to marry are roughly three times more likely to experience a family dissolution compared to children born to married parents who don't live together before marriage.²⁶

Marriage is correlated with social advantages for children. Young people raised by their married parents do better in school and are more likely to graduate from college and then secure employment.²⁷ They're less likely to use drugs and more likely to delay sexual initiation. The success sequence of finishing school, getting married, and only then having children is a near guarantee against poverty, routinely acknowledged on the political left and the right.²⁸

Marriage is a wealth creator and a protector against poverty.²⁹ Canadian research demonstrates that economic behaviour among cohabiters differs from married couples.³⁰ How individuals form relationships matters, whether by marriage or cohabitation. It influences individual economic well-being, and thereby the economic strength of the country.³¹

Despite the increase in the portion of cohabiting unions, marriage remains a more stable family form.³² This instability results in cohabiting couples being less likely to pool incomes or leverage wealth toward long-term joint investments.³³ Married couples are more likely to leverage income and enjoy higher net worth.³⁴ While cohabiting unions are easier to dissolve, they provide fewer legal protections than marriage, including property rights, support obligations, and inheritance law depending on the jurisdiction.³⁵

Ample research points to a connection between marriage and benefits of health and wealth, but the caveat is that marriages are beneficial when they are healthy and intact. Unhappy marriages and divorce are associated with poor health and economic losses. Nevertheless, for couples deciding their best long-term options, marriage remains the strongest and most promising choice. The negative outcomes are something to educate about as well, in order to ensure success in marriage.

23. Wilcox et al., *Why Marriage Matters*, 6.

24. Wilcox et al., *Why Marriage Matters*, 6.

25. Wilcox et al., *Why Marriage Matters*, 6.

26. N. Marcil-Gratton, *Growing Up with Mom and Dad? The Intricate Family Life Course of Canadian Children* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1998), 16.

27. Peter Jon Mitchell and Philip Cross, "The Marriage Gap Between Rich and Poor Canadians," *Cardus*, February 25, 2014, 5, <https://www.cardus.ca/research/family/articles/the-marriage-gap-between-rich-and-poor-canadians/>.

28. Wendy Wang and W. Bradford Wilcox, "The Millennial Success Sequence: Marriage, Kids, and the 'Success Sequence' Among Young Adults," *AEI*, June 14, 2017, <http://www.aei.org/publication/millennials-and-the-success-sequence-how-do-education-work-and-marriage-affect-poverty-and-financial-success-among-millennials/>.

29. Mitchell and Cross, "Marriage Gap."

30. Peter Jon Mitchell, "Social Assistance and Marital Decision-Making in Canada," *Cardus*, April 3, 2018, 6, <https://www.cardus.ca/research/family/reports/social-assistance-and-marital-decision-making-in-canada/>.

31. Mitchell and Cross, "Marriage Gap," 5.

32. France-Pascale Ménard, "What Makes It Fall Apart? The Determinants of the Dissolution of Marriages and Common-Law Unions in Canada," *McGill Sociological Review* 2 (2011): 59–60. For a summary of difference in stability and otherwise between cohabitation and marriage, see Andrea Mrozek and Peter Jon Mitchell, "New Census Data Shows Fewer Children Living With Married Parents," *Cardus*, February 14, 2018, <https://www.cardus.ca/research/family/reports/new-census-data-shows-fewer-children-living-with-married-parents-1/>.

33. Dana Hamplová, Céline Le Bourdais, and Évelyne Lapierre-Adamcyk, "Is the Cohabitation-Marriage Gap in Money Pooling Universal?," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 76, no. 5 (2014): 983–97.

34. Sonya Britt-Lutter, Cassandra Dorius, and Derek Lawson, "The Financial Implications of Cohabitation Among Young Adults," *Journal of Financial Planning* 31, no. 4 (2018): 38–45.

35. Mitchell, "Social Assistance and Marital Decision-Making in Canada," 13.

WHAT DOES SEX HAVE TO DO WITH MARRIAGE?

“Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage”—but would you say the same of sex and marriage? Many will view the counsel that marriage should be included in sexuality education curriculum as a non-sequitur, at best. In previous attempts to explain why marriage should be included in sex education, feedback included comments like, “Marriage has nothing to do with sexual education.” Others thought sexuality education should teach about the dangers of bad or abusive marriages, which is a legitimate concern.

Before going any further in explaining the benefits of marriage in general, we need to be expressly clear about the benefits of teaching about marriage within sexuality education.

First, we should acknowledge that marriage has become disconnected from sex. We see this in film, advertisements, and music videos. Talking about sex in conjunction with marriage is viewed as a vestige of a time gone by—a religious admonition for a population that no longer adheres to traditional religious norms.

Including marriage in sexuality education does not mean teaching a particular faith, nor does it mean sex can only happen within marriage. Rather, teaching about marriage alongside sex and relationships teaches about an ideal. When it comes to lifelong relationship, marriage is still the best we have, in spite of divorce, breakdowns, and other assorted abuses within marriage.

Marriage remains desirable to youth, with 54 percent of eighteen- to thirty-four-year-olds saying they would like to get married one day.³⁶ It is still a desirable idea that love can last—and marriage is a proxy for this idea. Research does tell us that marriage relationships remains more stable than cohabitation. Furthermore, adults benefit from happy marriages in numerous ways.³⁷

The relationship to sex pertains to having children, who fare best when raised by their own married parents.³⁸ Certainly children raised in diverse family structures can and do thrive, but research shows that children from lone-parent or cohabiting relationships fair less well on a number of outcomes.

Many children sitting in sexuality education classes will be contemplating their own home lives. They will come from a myriad of different backgrounds: parents living together, lone parents, recent divorces. In this context, discussions always need to be sensitive and responsive to the questions and concerns of children. That said, there is research to show that the more sexual engagement a young adult has before marriage, the less satisfying the marriage.³⁹ Research also confirms that relationship experiences during adolescence influence later partnership decisions.⁴⁰

Bad marriages are a tremendous burden on adults and children alike. And whatever good we see from good marriages, strained, tense, and difficult marriages obviously bring no such benefit. The question is, how to avoid a bad marriage? Is that done by avoiding marriage altogether? Or by taking the marital commitment more seriously than we do today?

Marriage is, of course, being delayed to later and later ages, but that doesn't mean that great fulfillment and enjoyment are found from the constant search to settle down. Dating, engaging in friends with benefits, or simply waiting for the right partner to come along all come with their own emotional, spiritual, and sometimes physical difficulties.

36. “I Don't.”

37. Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier and Better Off Financially*, reprint ed. (New York: Broadway, 2001); Martinuk, “Marriage Is Good for Your Health.”

38. Kristin Anderson Moore, Susan M. Jekielek, and Carol Emig, *Marriage from a Child's Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can Be Done about It?*, research brief (Washington, DC: Child Trends, June 2002).

39. Nicholas Wolfinger, “Does Sexual History Affect Marital Happiness?,” Institute for Family Studies, October 22, 2018, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/does-sexual-history-affect-marital-happiness>.

40. Ann Meier and Gina Allen, “Romantic Relationships from Adolescence to Young Adulthood: Evidence from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health,” *Sociological Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (2009): 308–35, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2009.01142.x>; R. Kelly Raley, Sarah Crissey, and Chandra Muller, “Of Sex and Romance: Late Adolescent Relationships and Young Adult Union Formation,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 69, no. 5 (2007): 1210–26, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2007.00442.x>.



Marriage is a valuable institution that contains and gives meaning to sexual encounters. It fuses emotional and spiritual intimacy, with a shared life together that very often includes raising children. Ultimately, marriage offers the highest level of consent for sexual encounters, because the marital institution embodies self-sacrifice for the other, something that would be rare among cursory sexual encounters.

There are many questions about marriage that remain for our culture: Can it work? Why didn't my parents stay together? Why can't I get married? Can I have a child outside marriage? The answers to these in the minds of youth and adults alike will vary substantially. Yet there is plenty of research about marriage to inform the discussion.

Marriage is an imperfect institution, as all institutions are; however, successful societies constrain sexuality in ways that bring benefits to members.⁴¹ The purpose behind the emphasis on consent is likewise to place constraint on sexuality. We would be wise to lose the negative aspects of marriage from history but hold on to the good. This is why we are recommending that a robust, non-religious, research-based discussion of marriage be included in sexuality education curriculum.

WHY TALK ABOUT ATTACHMENT?

The notion that adults have a need to attach to another person contradicts many of the modern mantras of self-sufficiency, independence, and self-love. While young adults continue to consider marriage, "they are deferring actual participation in it, opting for the non-authoritative community of cohabitation."⁴²

Ample research confirms that the human need to attach continues beyond childhood. Romantic love establishes an attachment bond.⁴³ As clinical psychologist Sue Johnson notes, "At every age, human beings habitually seek and maintain physical and emotional closeness with at least one particular irreplaceable other. We especially seek out this person when we feel stressed, unsure, or anxious. We are just hardwired this way."⁴⁴ This type of attachment is more substantial than friendship or simple companionship. "Sex may impel us to mate, but it is love that assures our existence."⁴⁵ A sexuality education curriculum that neglects to expand on the broader needs of attachment neglects to educate on the full picture of human sexuality.

Humans are innately hardwired for pair bonding. Rather than outgrowing the need for attachment as they mature, adults maintain a psychological need for closeness, nurturing, and comfort as they form romantic attachments.⁴⁶ Psychologically, humans need more than sex from their romantic

41. Blankenhorn, *Future of Marriage*; and Goldberg, *Suicide of the West*.

42. Andy Crouch, "What's Your Institutional IQ?," review of *Institutional Intelligence*, by Gordon T. Smith, Comment, November 2, 2017, <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/whats-your-institutional-iq/>.

43. Sue Johnson, *Love Sense: The Revolutionary New Science of Romantic Relationships* (New York: Little, Brown, 2013), 41.

44. Johnson, *Love Sense*, 41.

45. Johnson, *Love Sense*, 19.

46. Johnson, *Love Sense*, 20.

relationships. Sexuality education should inform young people about the sexual and emotional health benefits of secure attachments.

Studies point to the human need for love and connection to other beings. Marriage offers a stable way to meet that need.⁴⁷ Monogamy is both possible and an effective response to the psychological needs of adults.⁴⁸

HOW DOES MARRIAGE EDUCATION EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE?

A majority of Canadian young adults desire to marry someday.⁴⁹ Integrating marriage education into sexual health education empowers youth to make informed decisions about their future partnerships. With the legal recognition of same-sex marriage in 2005, marriage is a potential future partnership choice for all students.

Marriage compels the sharing of every aspect of life, rather than simply sexuality. It offers integrated commitment and stability: A couple receives more understanding of one another than a single aspect of their life. Within the constraints of the structure of marriage, there is freedom to trust and freedom from a surplus of choice. Marriage is an institution that both contains and gives meaning to sexual encounters.

HOW DOES MARRIAGE EDUCATION CONTRIBUTE TO HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS?

A key element of sexual health development is integration of sexuality into “mutually satisfying relationships.”⁵⁰ As young people navigate the complexities of romantic relationships, they continue to learn the social components of these relationships, including trust and consent, both of which are only functional when they are mutual.

Ontario’s Health and Physical Education curriculum for grades 9 to 12 suggests,

The skills that are needed to build and support healthy relationships can be found throughout the health and physical education curriculum, and especially in the Healthy Active Living Education courses. Expectations that focus on the characteristics of healthy relationships and on ways of responding to challenges in relationships introduce students, in age-appropriate ways, to the knowledge and skills they will need to maintain healthy relationships throughout their lives.⁵¹

Some have noted (and condemned) how Ontario’s sexuality education is low on talk of love. When teaching youth how to achieve nurturing, affectionate, and respectful relationships throughout their lives, marriage presents a strong formal structure for healthy relationships with negotiated and established sexual limits. Well-rounded education programs that include discussions of options like marriage can improve youth attitudes, understanding, and expectations of romantic relationships.⁵²

A short-sighted vision of the sexuality education curriculum aspires only or primarily to help young people safely traverse adolescence. However, for long-term success in relationships for the next

47. Martinuk, “Marriage Is Good for Your Health,” 29.

48. Johnson, Love Sense, 19.

49. “I Don’t.”

50. Centre for Communicable Diseases and Infection Control (Canada), ed., Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education, rev. ed. (Ottawa: Community Acquired Infections Division, Centre for Communicable Diseases and Infection Control, Infectious Disease and Emergency Preparedness Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008).

51. “The Ontario Curriculum Grades 1–8; Health and Physical Education (2015 Revised),” Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015, 71.

52. Mindy E. Scott et al., “Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Programs for Youth: An In-Depth Study of Federally Funded Programs,” Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, September 2017, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/years_task_46_final_report_finalv2_b508.pdf.

generation of Canadians, the conversation needs to capture proven methods of attaining healthy relationship outcomes in adulthood.

Marriage is an important social institution that fuses sex, intimacy, economic cooperation, and parenthood into a permanent relationship. Despite high divorce rates, marriage remains more stable than cohabitation. The US Department of Health and Human Services' evaluation of its federally funded healthy relationship programs for youth found that the programs—which are “designed to help individuals and couples achieve positive, stable, and successful marriages and intimate partner relationships”—provide couples and individuals with the tools they need to form and sustain healthy marriages and relationships.⁵³

Marriage education meets the curriculum goals for teaching about healthy relationships. Why wouldn't Canada educate its young people on marriage, the most critical and—when done right—most lasting decision of a person's life? Teaching marriage is the logical continuation of any discussion of sexual health, and of love and relationships. Where lifelong love is a goal, marriage is the gold standard.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this report is to promote marriage as a valid and positive option for our youth as they consider their futures. Family choices are an important element of life satisfaction, and for many reasons learning about marriage in sexuality education means offering a choice that increases life satisfaction.

Any problems associated with marriage today do not change the reality of what a strong and healthy marriage does for adults and children alike, as shown through a substantial body of research. If we are all navigating stormy waters in our relationships, removing healthy marriages as a valuable choice is a bit like destroying the lighthouse that would help you both find harbour and avoid crashing into the shore. Denying the information with which to make healthy, lifelong relationship choices, means we compel our children and youth to engage in relationship standards that fall below the ideal.

Survey data suggests that young adults still desire lifelong love, and that marriage remains a positive option. Decades of research show that healthy, intact marriage provides economic and health benefits for adults. Marriage is also associated with positive outcomes for children in married-parent families. Ontario's youth deserve to be empowered with this information to make their own choices about future partnerships.

Sexuality educations should assist students in envisioning a lifelong understanding of healthy relationships. Marriage education complements the province's desire to instruct students about healthy relationships. Evidence shows that romantic relationships among young adults influences the formation of later relationships, and so it is important to give students information about marriage before they reach their adult years. The institution of marriage is asking sexuality education for its hand in marriage—knowing the partnership would be beneficial and long-lasting. Won't sexuality education please say yes?

53. Scott et al., “Healthy Marriage.”



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