

LOVE THINKS TRAINING

Marriage Works of Harford County

In July of 2009 Marriage Works of Harford County brought Dr. John Van Epp here to train nine teachers and nine community leaders, including some pastors. Dr. Van Epp is an internationally known author, teacher, speaker and creator of the curriculum, “How to Avoid Dating/Marrying a Jerk/Jerkette.” This training is also known as LOVE THINKS.

Each person who attended was certified to teach this excellent relationship skills training. Several middle and high school teachers have been teaching this “Love Thinks” training in some of our Harford County Public Schools through the Family Life Curriculum that is already in place. The students have responded very well. Janice Greenwood, middle school teacher, at Patterson Mill Middle/High School is in charge of the training for the public schools.

We aspire to train many more public school teachers so that we expand this program to every school in Harford County. We also envision teaching the parents of students special materials developed just for them by Dr. Van Epp.

Marriage Works is currently offering the “Love Thinks” training to the public at Saint Margaret Parish, Education Building, in Bel Air. We envision this training “catching on” and will be requested by churches and other organizations that want to help singles of all ages have healthy, vibrant relationships that prepare them for marriage.

This training presents a practical, easy-to-understand, and comprehensive overview of the crucial areas to explore in a dating relationship within the framework of a conceptual model of the bonding forces that produce the feelings of love and attachment. This model of adult attachment provides the overarching structure for understanding how to pace the growing closeness in a premarital relationship.

Some of the specific skills taught during a seminar:

- The balance of the HEAD and HEART in a healthy relationship.
- The Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) and how these five facets inter-relate for a healthy relationship
- The attributes of trust and the interaction between trust and reliance
- The attitude and actions of a healthy conscience
- The compelling and constraining forces of commitment
- Establishing sexual boundaries

“Teens aspire to a life of successful work and future marriage but their attitudes are often at odds with the evidence on what it takes to actually achieve these goals. Consequently they often behave in ways that undermine their ability to realize their aspirations. So...it’s time to go beyond current health-based messages aimed at influencing individual behavior and begin to pursue a hope-based strategy aimed at teaching teens about healthy relationships and marriage.” Source: Making a Love Connection by Barbara Whitehead and Marline Pearson

Research proves that the vast majority of high school seniors (82% of girls and 70% of boys) agree that a good marriage is extremely important to them. 83% of senior girls and 78% of senior boys agree that they expect to marry in the future. What they don’t realize is that the CHOICES they make as teens and early adults can incredibly affect their ability to sustain a healthy marriage. Sobering research by Jay Teachman from Western Washington University showed that premarital involvement with just one sexual partner other than the person you marry tripled the risk of divorce as compared with those who had only had sex with their husband. One study found a clear connection between the number of sexual partners before marriage and the likelihood of marital unfaithfulness.

Marriage Works of Harford County is committed to changing culture and mindsets around the institution of marriage. This type of training is life changing for teens and adults. Many of the people who need this skills training the most just cannot afford it. We encourage people and organizations to partner with us to make an incredible difference for many people in this county and region.

Norma Tilton
President
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