

## **WHAT WE HAVE TO KNOW BEFORE WE BECOME A FAMILY?**

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**Summary:** The study of family and partnership in schools in Israel doesn't receive the attention it should. The subject of parenthood and partnership is being accelerated and is better received, but doesn't have the desired impact in schools. Universities in Israel are establishing programs dealing with gender, with the aim of raising for discussion and correcting the current circumstances of today's women, notwithstanding her skills, which are not lesser and are sometimes greater than those of men. However, there are no programs in the universities dealing with partnership and parenthood.

**Keywords:** family. Couple. Relationship. Communication.

### **Introduction**

This paper proposes to research the subject of partnership and parenthood with the intention of finding the weak links and starting programs to inform school age youths about them. In addition, the aim is to build strategies to prevent failure in life with respect to partnership and parenthood. This research is mainly qualitative and partly quantitative. It is based on relevant literature in the field of partnership and parenthood and on loosely structured open interviews with men and women mainly aged between fifty and seventy. The idea is to understand their experiences in a familial childhood setting, from the point of view of one who now has their own family. The research question was, 'Tell me about your childhood, your marriage, your children, what difficulties you encountered and what advice you would give to partners getting married.' In the formal questionnaire, the following questions were posed; 'Should the government be

responsible for education about the family? Should the parents of marrying couples go through a supportive seminar?’ and more...

The aim of this research is to find the frequent stumbling blocks that are found in many families and to discuss them with the high school students with the intention of showing the marital framework in a light of purpose and quality. This purpose demands from the couples an understanding of the patterns and expectations that lead them and are likely to bring them to unwanted places. The intention is to expand their knowledge about the causes of success or failure in the partnership and parenthood framework.

Schools are the last chance for the education system to have the possibility to contribute to the maximum number of young graduates and to cultivate their comprehension and their ability to cope with the functions of the family.

Marriage, partnership and parenthood attract a wide amount of interest. There are hundreds of people that work as counselors for marriage and parenthood. However, the Ministry of Education still doesn't implement the actions demanded by the realities – a professional approach to the scope of the conflicts and the skill set required from adults, with the intention of creating an intelligent infrastructure to prevent divorce and family separations. Each individual's emotional baggage influences the successes and failures of parenthood and partnership. The ability to recognize the obstacles and to overcome them could lead to a familial, social and economic system that thrive. Thriving families produce a strong society supporting a better economy and welfare system.

## **Preface**

A good partnership influences parenthood and creates a healthier and more thriving society. The rise in the number of divorcees, and the decrees of the welfare institutions and services, damage families and society as a whole. In 2010

about 17,500 divorce cases were opened, which meant that the stronger half of the couples were able to start out with a strong new life. They could be happier or might find themselves face the same issues they ran away from. The weaker half fall into the world of 'survival' the possibilities for development will decrease, so will their chance to fulfill their potential and their dreams.

The number of divorcees, which grows every year, in accordance with the decrease in the value of marriage, do not represent or tell the miserable story of the many married couples who continue to suffer in their failing partnerships. The parent's partnerships usually affect their children's partnerships in their adult life. Among these children, some chose to give up prematurely on the processes of improvement and empowerment, theirs and their partner's, and chose to end their relationships. Others develop the sensitivity and strategies with in the partnership and succeed in conducting a good family life.

There are programs for adolescents in Israel and throughout the world with the intention to intensively integrate the issues of life skills, dealing with working on partnerships and family. However, not all the students in the education system get the chance to attend these life preparing programs. Couples with the right tools for face crises might find an increase in the possibilities for self-expression and fulfillment as well as contribute to their personal welfare. (Erhardt, Dishevski, 1999 and Cowan, 1994).

### **My Personal Relationship to the Research**

As the daughter of a single-mother to a son of divorced parents, my marriage has sharpened within me the feeling that one's origin carries much importance. Young couples descending from parents who had lived in harmony, will be easily much more successful in managing happy lives in their partnership, parenthood and careers. This notion resembles a carriage which will better carry its weight once it

is laid on four stable wheels. The carriage resembles the parenthood and the wheels the four parents who, once needed, devote from their time and experience, enabling the carriage to proceed more smoothly.

My personal experience has brought me to believe that much suffering can be prevented, if the couples are adequately prepared. The current approach, in which couples learn about parenthood while “fulfilling their roles” as parents, or through relying on their personal experiences, invites preventable flaws and pain. The current wealth of research, together with the interviewees’ rich and diverse life experiences might contribute to those who learn how to create better partnership and parenthood.

### **The Current Situation**

Nowadays, programs educating pupils regarding sexuality, and sometimes gender, too, are taught in the school frame which is supposed to reveal the sexes’ differences and the acknowledgement of the fact that it is possible to nurture more equal lives. In addition, a program against violence in partnerships was developed; however, there is no program designed to focus on the importance of preparation for partnership and the acquaintance with this path full of ups-and-downs, troubles and difficulties. Likewise, there isn’t a discourse wide enough regarding parents’ multiple expectations from their children’s partnerships and their intervention, which is frequently misplaced, together with the pain received when these expectations aren’t met.

The image of couples as a romantic and happy frame dissolves whenever a large gap exists between the expectations and reality. Sometimes, a partner’s emotional needs create too big of a challenge for the other, thus potentially jeopardizing the relationship and bringing it to an end.

The divorces of couples with children bring large populations to depths of misery

and helplessness. These could have been saved if efforts would have been invested, both institution and parent-wise, in the field of learning how to live in a partnership and the relevant skills. Deep guidance could prevent a lot of distress and pain.

In many books dealing with partnership there is a claim asserting that partnership and parenthood should be treated professionally, together with knowledge and a diverse, rich toolbox. Despite the existence of many support centers dealing with marital issues, the problem of people's unwillingness to approach them isn't solved, since not everyone is willing to approach such institutions.

The fact that a program preparing toward partnership and parenthood will be able to introduce the diverse problems to everyone, may lead to a more professional approach toward parenthood and partnership.

### **Existing Programs**

One of the programs in the state sector run by the Ministry of Education is the program "Respectful and Respecting Adolescence", designed to prevent violence in friendship and partnership. The program was developed by the APS (Advising Psychological Service) in collaboration with the Center for Familial Care and Violence-Prevention in Jerusalem. The program is directed to develop healthy and constructive communication skills within teenagers in the frame of friendship and partnership. The program is derived from the assumption that the development of skills and testing of positions and values, regarding interpersonal communication would contribute to a decrease in violence and the founding of healthy and stable bonds in the future. The program was developed in 2001, activated in thousand schools and was meant to be broadened to all schools. The last objective, however, was never achieved.

In addition, the Amit network, a religious network, operates a frame named

“Social Education”, intended to develop the pupil’s character and train him or her to handle the changing reality. “Social Education” has set the challenge of developing an autonomous person, an involved activist and a social contributor, with the ability to hold a position and influence (without emphasizing the marriage and parenthood, though).

The Hertzog College – “Daat” – for Judaism and Spirituality Studies, contains a program with some participating rabbis, named: “Toward a Family: Partnership, Love and Education for Family Life” and another program called: “Creating a Family”.

Amiad Seminary operates the program “Things within the Heart”, in addition to seminars open days for boys and girls, lectures and conversations with educators, male and female rabbis and female psychologists. Additionally, there are programs designed to acquire skills in how to choose a partner, starting a family and familial care of adolescents.

A virtual library can also be found, located at the pedagogic institute of Bar Ilan University’s School of Education. Alongside it there is also a tape, composed of nine videos, each one and a half minutes long, demonstrating situations of conflict in a family including their solutions.

Yanar Center in Jerusalem is designated to the Ultra Orthodox sector, its programs encompass partnership together with treatment presented and analyzed by the students in the course of their studying.

Lastly, there is also “A Bridge to a Contact” (“HagesherLakesher”), an educational program for adolescents, immigrants from the former USSR and Ethiopia. The program’s goal is to provide the participants tools in order to cope with the new reality, the inter-cultural change and the encounter with new mentality in the notions of partnership and sexuality.

## **Bodies Dealing with the Promotion of the Family Structure**

### **A New Family – the organization for the promotion of family rights**

The goal of the organization is to assist, mainly legally, and promote equality and tolerance for all family types. Nowadays about 42% of all families are classified as non-traditional, who deal with a system which doesn't match nor catch them or their needs. The organization aids by holding civil marriage ceremonies and offers a guide for financial funding, a guide to partnership and a guide to Partnership Rights, Chapter B.

### **The Israeli Union for Family Planning - The Open Door (anagram EITCHEM)**

EITCHEM is a leading body in Israel for the promotion of the rights of the individual for sexual health. The union is operated with the help of hundreds of volunteers and first class professionals from the fields of welfare, health, education and absorption and immigration nationwide. It intends to assist youngsters with cultural and social sensitivity. This is a national network with 15 information centres with consultations and treatment for teenagers, youngsters and their parents, on issues of puberty,, partnership, love and preventing sexual violence for youths at risk. It is for Jews, Arabs, the religious, the secular, the established and the newcomers, and the physically handicapped. The World Health Organization awarded 'Open Door' as one of the best frameworks in the world.

The Institute for Research for Educational Care – managed by Prof. Haim Adler

The Change Institute – The Israeli Centre for the Process of Change in the Family, the Individual and the Organisation.

The Green Institute for Advanced Psychology – Dr. David Green

The Open Line – For Students Appeals to the Ministry of Education, managed by DrBilhaNoi

The National Council for Childcare – The Centre for Research and Development  
Alumah – The Centre for Consultation and Treatment in Family Life

### **The Aim of the Research**

To identify the main stumbling blocks in married life and to create a model that is designed to aid a wide range of teenagers to recognise and develop awareness about those recurring issues which exist in many relationships. The research is meant to create tools for thought and understanding, that marriage and relationships are built from experience and what the partners bring to the relationship and which undergo metamorphosis under the influence of the dynamic created between the partners and their openness to be familiar with different models for conducting a healthy partnership. In addition it is designed to create the possibility for an arsenal of tools to help couples dealing with the many stumbling block that they will have to overcome as a couple living under certain conventions. In the meanwhile, every step they have to make, meaning, relationships, marriage, buying a flat, childbirth and dealing with a career that can be unstable, will be looked at from a new perspective.

### **The Research is intended to answer the following questions:**

- a) What are the most effective ways to improve the current partnership structures?
- b) What experiences shaped you the most in your childhood, marriage and parenthood?
- c) What would be the methodology of the course (lectures, conversations, films etc.)?
- d) What are the core compulsory subjects for high school students regarding

partnership and parenthood?

e) What are the core meaningful (but secondary) subjects for high school students regarding partnership and parenthood?

### **Survey of Sources**

### **The Important Elements Required for a Successful Partnership and Parenthood**

#### **Children Mean Joy and Hard Work**

Nowadays, there isn't a clear mapping of the set of potholes existing along the timeline in the couple and familial system. Although there are many researches dealing with partnership and parenthood, these remain a research system designated to the interested. A responsible, agenda-sustaining, society, is ought to present a proper preparation to expected and unexpected scenarios in partnership and parenthood, where there is a clear and unequivocal intention to prevent crises and situations vacuuming the good out of people, leaving them to bleed and manage without proper tools. The ability to deal with a decrease of the personal welfare, in terms of both time and financial and emotional resources, causes individuals to frequently give up and shake off any difficulty the partnership and parenthood contains. Bengston, Rosenthal and Burton (1990) indicate a U relation between the quality of marriage life and its length. The quality of marriage tends to be higher at the beginning of the way, to decrease with the child birth and the period of raising the children, and to rise again with their adolescence. Later on, it continues to rise gradually. Kremmer (1985) supports this notion, having studied the affect of retirement on partnership and parenthood. Her findings show a stability, and even a rise, of the couple and parental function when the children leave home. Furthermore, the research indicates no instances of decrease of the quality of the couple structure. Every parent knows that raising children contains

great and tough work. Children will only start acknowledging the service and dedication after scores of years, if any. “Children mean joy” is a belief becoming a convention. Without it, society will apparently remain static and there will be a bankruptcy in terms of childbirth (Gilbert, 2007). Nonetheless, when measuring the real satisfaction of people with children, a different story is revealed. Most couples begin their marriage life with relatively much happiness, but their satisfaction decreases during their shared life, and especially during raising the children, and comes near the original levels only when the children leave home (Walker, 1977). Despite the writings in the popular press, the only known symptom of “The Empty Line Syndrome” is an increased tendency to smile (Myers, 1993). The rise of satisfaction after the departure of the children characterizes women (who usually look after the children the most) more than men (Feeny, 1994). Meticulous researches regarding women’s feeling during conducting their daily activities show they are less happy while looking after the children, then while eating, exercising, shopping, napping or watching television (Kahenman, 2004). Actually, looking after children is slightly more delightful than carrying out the housework.

### **Love, Pleasure, Flexibility, Adaptation, Bearing Pressure, The Ability to Lead.**

The deepest basis of success in partnership and parenthood is the **ability to love**. Boskaliya (1985) argues that living life of love is the biggest challenge in the human’s life. Notwithstanding, most of us never learn how to love. We play love; imitate lovers; refer to love as a game. Many suffer loneliness, feel anxiety and dissatisfaction resulting from the ignorance of loving. Every person has a potential to love, yet this will never become realized without work. Love in partnership and parenthood is a basic element.

### **Pleasures**

Pleasures are of a key importance in creating the glue connecting between couples, a notion projecting on their parenthood (Reznik, S., 1998). Different types of pleasures must exist in partnership and parenthood. Society tends to underestimate the value of pleasure. We perceive pleasure as a type of “fun” and game, or as an escape from reality and seldom also as a goal by itself. In fact, there is no awareness that essentialism – or an energy deriving from a good feeling, assists running life full of satisfaction and meaning, and especially achieving deep and satisfying relationships.

### **Flexibility of Thought**

Flexibility of thought is an important feature in partnership and parenthood (Rabin, 1991). Crises are a normal part in each marriage. Whoever perceives divorce as a solution to a crisis, will more likely tend to use this solution. Divorce, or the new beginning, entails another chance to meet the same contradicting universal needs and the need to balance them in the marriage life. We expect highly of marriage – we want love, friendship and proximity, yet we lack preparation or aid to achieve these ideals. Not every person owns good models for partnership and parenthood. People who show high performance in their job find themselves helpless against home problems. People who naturally believe that change is possible are more optimistic in their approach as oppose to fixed-minded people who tend to perceive the finding of a new partner as the sole solution.

### **Strong Adaptation Skills**

Strong adaptation skills are a key parameter influencing the partnership and parental structure in the family (Berger & Kelner, 1964). Each partner brings to the partnership a different baggage, i.e., the culture of the family in which one was

brought up, upon its variety of thoughts and beliefs. Partnership demands from each partner to give up on certain parts of the past in order to produce a “correspondence” with the other’s perception. The internal “scenarios” adopted by each partner prior to the partnership must alter in order to create a new shared scenario, one which contains a couple dialogue. Therefore, the mutual understanding in the essence of the relationship is crucial and important. In the composition of the shared “scenario” there are a battle of forces and a competition regarding the perception of the most suitable reality to govern the shared emotional territory. A good partnership is one in which the scenario answers fairly both partners’ needs.

#### **An Awareness to Varying Systems of Stress**

Awareness to varying systems of stress which couples are ought to encounter might bring to a better coping should the couples cultivate such skills (Carter & McGolderik, 1980). There is cyclicity in family life: “horizontal” and “vertical”. Vertical stresses pass through the generations. They are bonded with unresolved emotional problems existing in one of the partners or both. The dilemmas (such as alcoholism, drugs etc.), are inherited from the families of origin. The horizontal stresses appear in the normal challenges innate in the cycle of life. Once vertical and horizontal stresses collide, it is risky the partners will be able to contain them.

#### **A Strong Awareness of Wear**

A strong awareness of wear derives from lack of coping tools (Malakh-Piness, 1987). Successful marriage requires a directed effort and constant awareness to the dangers lurking at the doorway and to the actions required to avoid them and promote the relationship.

### **Determination Ability and Leading of Actions**

The ability to decide and the leading of actions are notable components in partnership and parenthood. Culture today is a part of a change or general evolution in which man is more responsible, able to decide, able to lead processes according to his or her needs, has a higher self esteem and additional nutritive connections (Satyr, 1975).

### **Boredom and Excitement**

The opposite of boredom is pleasure, but excitement, the desire for excitement is innate deep in humans and in men particularly. The ability to bear monotonous life is ought to be acquired during childhood. The child has to create himself the pleasures in his surroundings using effort and a certain creative skills. Happiness life must largely be quiet life, for it is only in tranquility that true joy prospers (Russell, 2010).

### **The Time and the Place**

The time and the place influence the partnership and parenthood. Is there a clear consent regarding the role of parents in the family? A research of secular Jewish adolescents has revealed an embarrassment as far as the roles of parents in the post-modern age are concerned. Part of the adolescent pointed to a distancing from traditional parental roles and others to an adherence to them (Rapoport&Yanai, 1989).

### **The Motivation for Success**

The partners' motivation influences a successful partnership and parenthood (Shemer, Rabin, 1991). Researches demonstrate a high prediction ability

regarding parental motivation within men and women alike. Researchers claim there is a positive connection between positive positions and parental motivation.

### **The Parental Intensiveness and Belonging to a Group as an Influencing Factor**

Men's quality of life isn't homogenously influenced by the phrases they experience in life, whereas women's quality of life is lower at the stage of "midlife" (Weiss, 1994).

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