

Inoculate Your Marriage Against Divorce

Most parents go to great lengths to ensure their child's health. They make sure they are inoculated against diseases such as polio, diphtheria, tuberculosis, measles, mumps and rubella. Believe it or not, it isn't just what you do with your child that directly impacts their health.

"I tell parents all the time that vaccinations, healthy food and regular exercise are important, but the best thing they can give their children is a strong marriage and healthy family," said Dr. Larry Gee, Family Practitioner. "If your marriage falls apart it will strongly impact your child's emotional and physical health effecting school performance and all areas of their life. I have been studying this for 34 years since my own parent's divorce and my experience and the research clearly show the negative impact is long-term."

Recently, the Center for Disease Control released information stating that married people on the whole are healthier. Research indicates that for men, staying married boosts the chance of surviving to age sixty-five from about two out of three to almost nine out of ten; for women, wedlock ups the likelihood of surviving to old age from about 80 to more than 90 percent.

"Additional information shows that children who grow up in a home with their two, married biological parents have better health because they have the emotional and psychological support of both parents, they are more closely supervised and have the benefit of a more extended network of relatives and family friends, " said Dr. Gee.

"Divorce itself appears to be literally making some children sick," said Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, authors of *The Case for Marriage*. "Using the National Health Interview Survey to track the health of children prior to and following parents' separation, one researcher found divorce made it 50 percent more likely a child would have health problems. The health advantage of married homes for children remains sizable, even after taking into account the lower average education and income of female-headed families. Whether or not parents get and stay married can have long-term consequences for their children, and even their children's children."

Research shows that on average, children of married parents are physically and mentally healthier, better educated and enjoy more career success later in life than children in other family settings. Children with married parents are also more likely to escape some of the more common disasters of childhood and adolescence. So are there really certain things you can do to inoculate your marriage against divorce? According to many researchers and relationship experts, the answer is a resounding yes! Consider the following:

- If you are preparing for marriage, make sure you participate in premarital education classes and/or counseling.

- Take your marriage in for a tune up at least every two years by taking advantage of marriage enrichment programs, marriage retreats, and classes in the community that have the potential to enhance your relationship.
- Find a healthily married couple that has been married 15+ years to share their wisdom, words of encouragement, and experience with you along the way.
- Spend time with people who support you in your marriage relationship.
- Be intentional about spending time together talking about your goals for your marriage journey.

No doubt, there are situations where separation or divorce may be the answer to making the best of a bad situation. However, based on all the latest research about the benefits of marriage for adults and children, it certainly should give one pause to think what can be done to make the most of one's marriage relationship because it is in the best interest of everyone involved.

To strengthen your marriage, read other articles on our website, or click on the "events" tab to find a marriage education class being offered in an area near you.