

Running head: marital conflict and longevity

Literature, Russian Literature



Running head: MARITAL CONFLICT AND LONGEVITY Marital Conflict and Its Effects of the Longevity of Marriage Abstract Regardless of situations in one's life there comes a time when they are going to be faced with conflict. Conflict is inevitable, even in a marriage. However, it is how the conflict in a marriage that will determine how it affects the longevity of the marriage and the effects it has on any children involved and if the affects become detrimental to the parties involved. When there is unresolved conflict in a marriage it not only has an effect on the emotional well-being of those involved but also has an effect on the mental, spiritual and physical well-being of all individuals involved. This paper will discuss how conflict in marriage affects those involved as well as the longevity of the marriage itself. Studies have shown that conflict and disagreements within a marriage have and affect or couples and the relationships versus couples who are willing to confront their issues and talk their problems out. Individuals were studied over a ten day period using two separate groups to see how they dealt with conflict. The first group consisted of 128 individuals and their conflicts for a ten day period were recorded. The second group consisted of 75 couples in a laboratory setting. The couples were monitored to see how they related to their mate and how they responded to conflict in which they faced. This was to measure the commitment level of each of the mates before the discussions they had and after their discussions (Knee, Patrick, Vietor, & Neighbors (2003). According to Knee, Patrick, Vietor, & Neighbors (2003), " In some cases, people may feel relatively better about the process of resolving the issue, which they may interpret as becoming further invested in their relationship" (Knee, Patrick, Vietor, & Neighbors (2003). All

marriages are different there are not going to be two marriages identically the same. Couples will face many situations alike and common within many marriages but each individual and couple will handle the situation differently. Some will look at conflict as only being a negative aspect of the relationship while there are others that look at conflict as being a growing process in the relationship. When there is constant conflict occurring within a relationship and the conflict is never dealt with many couples are quick to just end the marriage as they do not feel like the relationship is worth saving. When a marriage occurs it takes two to make a marriage they unite as one, so therefore when conflict occurs they should be willing to work together to come to an amicable resolution. In any marriage or relationship you will get out of it what you are willing to put into the marriage, key importance here is that it takes two to truly make the relationship work. When a couple marries not all are going to come from great backgrounds. How an individual has been raised within their own home during their upbringing can have a great effect on that individual as they enter into marriage. If they have seen constant conflict within their home and the parents never dealing with the conflict that has become their way of thinking and perceiving that a situation should be take care of. The actions of parents have an impact on their children entering into marriage. Children learn from the relationship situations and how their parents respond to situations. For this child entering into adulthood this becomes their belief system of how situations including conflict should be handled. When a couple is in a relationship and they put effort into the relationship to ensure that conflict is resolved and situations are handled together the reward in the long run seems to bring about more

satisfaction among each member in the relationship. When mates in a relationship can work together as a team to resolve conflict it gives them a sense of security and self-worth within the relationship. One must be committed and put into a marriage in spite of conflict in order to ensure longevity of the marriage. When one is willing to put all they can into the marriage will be what comes out of the marriage. Conflicts can arise from finances, how to discipline the children, working situations long hours of either one or both spouse or just feeling that as a spouse your needs are not being met. When conflict arises some partners not knowing how to deal with the conflict effectively with feel that ending the marriage will be more beneficial than trying to work through the conflict. When conflict occurs within a marriage it is important that the conflict is resolved when it occurs and in a timely manner as unresolved conflict can have a negative impact on the marriage as well as children involved. Unresolved conflict in a marriage causes feeling of hurt, anger, bitterness, and depression. When these feelings occur they can pour out through actions to others around us whether intentional or unintentional. When conflict goes unresolved because it takes a toll on our emotional state it will begin to change the person we are and how we respond to others in situations. One cannot expect a marriage to be conflict free; conflict in a marriage is actually healthy if dealt with in a proper manner. It can be a learning process for the couple and helps the relationship to grow and become stronger and bonded by working together for a final solution. In working together to resolve resolution it builds a bond and making both feel more secure in being able to work together as a team and not just one striving to keep unity within the

marriage. According to Fincham (1999), conflict within a marriage can lead to problems such as depression, eating disorders, alcohol abuse and physical and mental abuse among partners (Fincham, 1999). Unresolved conflict within a marriage can lead to depression as feelings are suppressed and this can begin to make the partner begin to feel overwhelmed and discouraged within the marriage leading to depression as they feel hopeless in the situation. Eating disorders can occur whether it is over eating or becoming anorexic. Many times when faced with the feelings and impact that unresolved conflict has on the partner they may begin to over eat from the stress they are feeling they begin to over eat or become so overwhelmed they make themselves sick and not eat at all. Eating disorders can also be brought about by the depression. Some partners in the marriage will turn to alcohol in order to hide from the pain within the marriage, which in reality will cause more conflict within the relationship. When alcohol becomes a part of the life of one of the spouses this can lead to abuse, physical or emotional. The partner trying to deal with unresolved conflict by drinking their troubles away can cause these feelings to be brought out and when drinking lash out at the partner expressing the real pain that is bottled up on the inside. In a relationship unresolved conflict can lead to health issues if the conflict is not dealt with in a proper manner. Unresolved conflict can lead to health problems because of the stress as stress can lead to a numerous other mental and physical issues. With unresolved conflict there are unhealthy feelings that are suppressed and can lead to heart issues, cancer, chronic pain, eating disorders, and even anxiety. If a person remains stressed and carries the weight of the unresolved conflict day after day without it being

dealt with effectively it begins to take a toll on the body and can actually lead to a heart attack. According to Fincham (1999), " Marital conflict is also associated with important family outcomes, including poorer parenting, poorer child adjustment, problematic attachment to parents, increased likelihood of parent-child conflict, and conflict between siblings. " (Fincham, 1999). There are at times going to be situations that arise within the family unity whether it is a direct result of problems between the spouses or problems with the children. How this marital conflict is handled has an effect on the parenting skills, the adjustment children will have to situations and some situations may lead to parent- child conflict if not dealt with in a healthy way. If there is a child in the home that displays defiant behaviors, it can bring about much frustration for the parents in trying to deal with the situation and the stress that it causes. This is a time when both parents should be willing to work together in trying to come to a resolution and being a team in getting help to get the situation resolved. The parents as a team will have to be on board as far as strategies, treatment, discipline, and any other areas of concern that need to be addressed. Situations such as this can have an impact not only on the marital relationship but also on any other children in the home. Many times so much time and energy goes into situations such as this that other children whether intentionally or unintentionally may feel neglected. As a child growing up we face a situation as this is our own lives. My older brother would become very violent at times, my parents would seek out help and therapy for him in any way they could. It seemed in my eyes for many years that my brother always got more attention than I did and that it seemed he was always the focus. I realized as

I got older that my parents were having just as hard of a time in dealing with the conflict it was causing as the conflict I felt feeling left out. However, now knowing that my brother has autism and there was a rough time for a while it was worth it in the end because of the fact that they always tried to work together to ensure that conflict among decisions, therapy, and addressing the behaviors was a team effort. However, this kind of situation can be detrimental on a marriage if it is not handled in an appropriate manner.

Children that are exposed to high levels of conflict which occur between their parents can lead to a greater distress level for children and will cause them to gain a more negative impact on how they will handle conflict themselves.

Conflicts which children are exposed to from their own parents and how those conflicts are handled can have an effect on the child even into their own marital relationships. Many conflicts that occur within a relationship that are resolved in a fashionable manner usually will not impact the child in carrying conflict into their own relationships (Davies, 2006). According to Browning (2006), the emotional adjustment of a child is dependent on the way in which parents handle conflict within their own marital relationship.

For the child when conflict is handled and the conflict does not continue to carry out unresolved it brings about a sense of security in the home for children, this also helps the emotional health of the child as they mature into an adult and enter into relationships (Browning, 2006). A study involving 226 parents and their children ages 9-18 was conducted to determine the effects of marital conflict on the child. This study continued for a period of three consecutive years and involved different forms of marital conflict such as “ personal insults, defensiveness, marital withdrawal, sadness or fear, set in

motion events that led to later emotional insecurity and maladjustment in children, including depression, anxiety, and behavior problems" (Browning, 2006). A second study consisting of 232 parents and children around the age of 4-6 years of age, to show that conflict within the marriage can bring about insecurity and maladjustment for the child in later years (Browning, 2006). The relationship between parents and how conflict is resolved has a great impact on the well-being and the sense of security for the children in the home. Children need to feel a sense of security and love in order to feel secure. When conflict resolution occurs and it is dealt with this brings about a sense of security to the children in the home as it does not bring about stress and a sense of being fearful because of situations surrounding them. There are times that conflict in a marriage can lead to abuse within the home, when this occurs the child will feel insecure and be afraid that the abuse they are witnessing may happen to them as well. When a child has to live with this insecurity and live in fear because of unresolved conflict in the home they carry these insecurities with them later in life and into their own marital relationships. This can cause them to carry insecurities into their own relationships, having a fear that if conflict arises there is going to be abuse in handling the conflict. This is something that would be important for those who have grown up with in their life to deal with effectively before entering into a marital relationship themselves. There has been research conducted that shows when conflict occurs in a marriage which leads to divorce in the marriage, so children will display behavioral issues following the divorce. The amount of behavioral issues that will be displayed will be determined by the degree of which the conflict occurred (Aldrich, nd). Many types the types of

behaviors in which the child was seeing within the relationship are many times the type of behaviors they will begin to display. If the child was seeing physical abuse occurring as a result of unresolved conflict they many times will lash out in hitting other when they don't agree with things because this is how they have been programed to handle situations, as this is what they have seen. This somewhat becomes their defense mechanism. A child's cognitive functioning is effected by marital conflict. When a child sees conflict in their environment they tend to respond to that conflict. Many times the child will take the blame on themselves for the conflict that is occurring (Aldrich, Nd). For the fact that it is hard for a child to understand exactly what is going on and why conflict is occurring or in their minds, why mommy and daddy are fighting, they will many times blame themselves and feeling like they are the reason that the fighting is occurring. Children do not ask to be brought into the conflict among their parents, parents may try to hide the conflict from the child but the most important thing is for the child to be able to see how conflict is handled between their parents and how conflict is handled between parent and child. If a parent handles the situation with violence then this is what the child is going to learn in responding to others through conflict. When conflict arises within the marriage many times that conflict brings about feelings of hurt, bitterness, and anger and leaves hard feelings. It is important that when conflict arises within the marriage not only to ensure that the conflict is dealt with effectively but to also ensure that forgiveness among the spouses takes place. Forgiving does not mean that the other person is right but in coming to a resolution and forgiving one another it brings peace to the situation at

hand quicker than continuing to argue and bicker with one another. In a marriage we may not fully agree with the view that our spouse has in a situation but it is more important to come to reasonable terms with one another but not always having to completely agree with the scenario that caused the conflict in the first place. It is important that one do not hold on to unforgiveness in the situation as this can lead to more marital conflict later and possibly having to face the same conflict over and over again. It is important to forgive and allow God to heal any hurt or anger that you may be feeling in the situation. According to Fincham (2004), " Without injury there is nothing to forgive" (Fincham, 2004). There must have been an offense that has occurred in which we realize that we have been hurt or offended in order for there to be forgiveness to take place. When we find ourselves in the middle of conflict and the emotional state that we many times find ourselves in while in the midst of the conflict we find it hard to forgive. Ephesians 4: 26 states, " And don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry. " Regardless of the conflict which we have faced it is important not to ever go to bed at night or leave time in between situations carrying unforgiveness in your heart. You may go to bed angry with your spouse and one of you may not wake up the next day and how would you feel having to carry around the unresolved conflict and the fact of not forgiving your spouse with you for the rest of your life. It is something that no spouse should take for granted and ensure that situations are handled when they occur and not put off until a later time, it is important sometimes to tend to agree rather than disagree. When forgiveness can occur within a relationship this in itself can bring strength

and unity to the marriage. When conflict resolution can be brought about in an amicable manner this will help these partners to function better at each other's level rather than constantly going at each other over situations in their relationship. Fincham (2004) states, " Conflict resolution is integral to a successful relationship and it can be argued that resentment engendered by partner transgressions is likely to fuel couple conflict and impede successful conflict resolution" (Fincham, 2004). When forgiveness can occur and resolution to the conflict can be brought about it seems that closure comes much more easily in the situation. The longer the conflict last the more hard feelings it will cause and the longer it will take for true resolution to come about. It affects the relationship of the marriage when conflict resolution becomes a long drawn out process. According to Fincham (2004), " Forgiveness may prove to be an important element of marital transactions precisely because spouses often hurt one another and, in the absence of forgiveness, it may be common for lingering effects to exert their influence on subsequent efforts to resolve marital problems" (Fincham, 2004). Unresolved conflict can have very negative effects on a marriage. If conflict remains unresolved and there are feelings of anger and bitterness that begin to build up among the partners because of the unresolved conflict it can cause that partner to begin to lash out in other ways. The partner may lash out with destructive behaviors or even begin to shut down all lines of communication with their spouse because of the unresolved conflict between the two of them. It is important that each spouse respond to one another in a peaceful manner and deal with conflict resolution as it arises and not let it continually carry out. For the longevity of a marriage to be one that will last

until a couple can grow old together it is important to ensure that there are healthy goals put into place in order to maintain an open door of communication so that when conflict does arise that it is possible to work through it together and not allow it to go unresolved and eat at you like a deadly disease which would possibly lead to destruction of the marriage. People can seem to have what we may see as the perfect marriage but one must remember that there is no marriage that is perfect. At some point in a marriage there is going to be conflict. What determines the outcome of that marriage is how the situation and the conflict is handled. We should be aware of the needs and the ways of our partners, and we should be willing to compromise at times not feeling that the situation always has to be the way that we perceive it should be but a solution that would be feasible to both parties involved. Marital conflict can bring about growth and healthy living to your marriage or it can be the downfall of the marriage. However, in a marriage just as it takes two people to make a marriage, it takes two people to hold that marriage together and bring about peace and happiness.

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