

What Are Some Key Principles and Processes in Developing a Healthy Marriage?

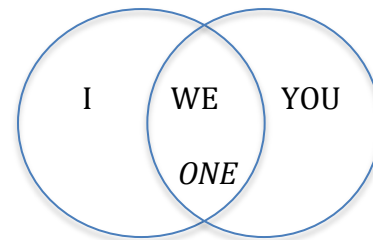
When two become one, we bring with us our backgrounds and personalities, strengths and vulnerabilities. Which key attitudes contribute to a deeper relationship and a more well-functioning team? How do we interact in a healthy way with our extended family members to bring the best for us and our children? How can different aspects of communication bring deeper intimacy into our relationship?

Ole-Magnus Olafsrud serves with the Navigators in Norway, the Baltics, and through various European networks. He became a Christian when he studied veterinary medicine. Since then he has been involved in developing the Navigators in Norway and beyond. He served in student ministries for 20 years as Director of the Navigators in Norway. He spends half of his time as an along-sider (mentor), seeking to encourage and equip younger leaders in generational disciple-making. He has had more than 20,000 couples in seminars on family life in different countries. He has written two books on family dynamics and is an experienced family counselor. Ole-Magnus also serves on the European Lausanne leadership team as point person into nine countries to stimulate application of the Cape Town 2010 Commitment. He has written four books; two on family relationships, one on relational evangelism, and one on along-sidering in disciple-making. His closest friend and partner is his wife Kari and they enjoy their three married sons and eleven grandchildren.

I. I – You - WE

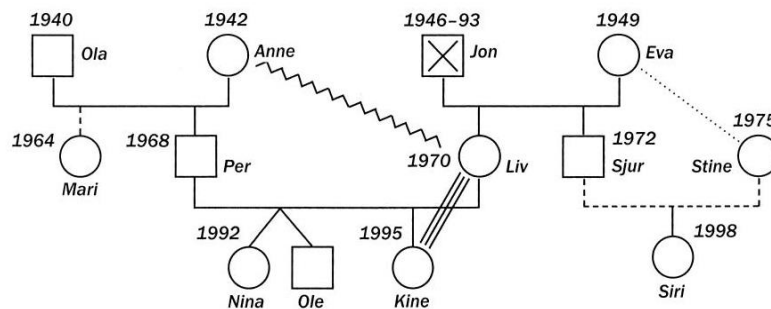
A. *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh”* Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:5 and Eph. 5:31

1. Leave
2. Be united
3. Become one flesh - WE
4. ONE and TWO at the same time



II. The family as systems

A. Extended Family

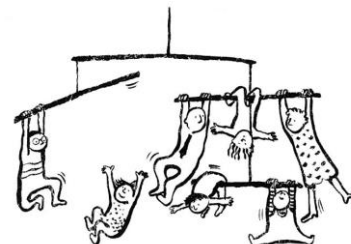


1. Genogram with 3 generations

- a. What are some positive values and experiences we bring with us?
- b. Examples of
 - Too close relationships ... little freedom
 - Distant relationship ... little intimacy
 - Conflictual relationship ... loss of relationship
- c. More than 50% of challenges in marriages are due to unhealthy dynamics in the extended family

B. Core Family

- a. What has happened?
- b. What is each one's contribution?
- c. A complementary team



III. Our marriage - a strong team built on differences

Different personalities, preferences, temperaments, interests, gender, etc.
Move from polarization and conflicts to complementarity and synergy.

A. 3 possible attitudes when we experience our differences

1. Try to change one another
2. Withdraw and resign
3. Respect one another
 - a. *Re-spectare* (latin): Look once more. Curiosity – keep and regain it
 - b. Psalm 139:13-15 “... *created my inmost being ... knit me together ... woven together ...*”
 - c. Live with unmet needs and longings
 - d. What did we fall in love with? Where is this trait now? Why?
 - e. Develop a team spirit – build on one another's strength

B. “*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you ...*” - Rom 15:1-7

1. The strong and the weak. How do I use my strength?
2. How to please and build up our spouse?
3. Endurance and Encouragement from the Scriptures and God himself.
4. Unity and hope

IV. Our background influences each one of us and our relationship

A. Created by God (Psalm 139) and influenced by our environment

1. Strongest influenced by those who are closest early in our lives
2. A healthy self-esteem - but also unmet needs, wounds, unresolved conflicts become part of our marriage relationship.

B. Self-esteem – Self-confidence – Self-image

1. Self-esteem – my inner core of identity. Who am I? Strengthened by AFFIRMATION
2. Self Confidence – what I do. What am I good at? Affirmed by PRAISE
3. What was the balance between AFFIRMATION and PRAISE as I grew up? With low self-esteem I tend to be insecure and demanding in close relationships.
4. We affirm as we grow through:
 - a. Affirming words
 - b. Eye contact
 - c. Physical touch
 - d. Concentrated time

Affirmation needs to continue in our marriage, and is even more vital if we did not get enough of it as we grew up.

C. Processes of change in areas of need in our adult lives

1. Acknowledge what happened
2. Express sorrow over loss and injustice
3. Leave parents and other figures of authority
4. Come to a point of forgiving
5. Get new mirrors and experience

D. What we do become aware of, we can often do something about. What we are unaware of, does something to us all the time

V. Communication – the name of the game.

Open communication is part of being created in God's image. The majority of those who divorce or struggle often, say that poor communication is at the core of their problem.

A. The gender factor

B. Some important aspects

1. Nonverbal signals are the strongest elements of our total message
2. Clear message
 - a. Time factor – Prov. 25:11
 - b. Be responsible for my thoughts and emotions
 - c. “I ...” not “YOU ...” messages
3. Active listening: Reflect back what we heard of content and emotions – to be sure that we understand one another.

C. The 5 love languages

1. Words of affirmation
2. Gifts
3. Acts of service
4. Quality time
5. Physical touch

VI. Take care of ourselves and our relationship in the busyness of life

- A. Awareness of being “spirit, soul and body” (1 Thess. 5:23-24). All three dimensions need to be taken care of in us and in our relationship. The way God met with his servant Elijah in 1 Kings 19 shows how God treats us as he created us

- B. Totality of our lives – our heart (Prov. 4:23) and life arenas

- C. We need to monitor and respect our energy level

1. Giving out
2. Energy leakages
3. Resourcing
 - a. Different personalities
 - b. Together and individually
 - c. Time (Cairos in Eph. 5:15)
 - as a couple,
 - as a family,
 - with friends
 - alone

