

# NERMEN

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT



Coming Fall 2008

## *The National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Model (NERMEM)*

*Co-editors: Francesca Adler Baeder, Auburn University and Ted G. Futris, University of Georgia*

With both the demand and the need for relationship and marriage education, consideration should be given on providing effective programming that is research-informed. In an effort to move Cooperative Extension Services forward in this program area, The National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Network presents The National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Model (NERMEM). This research-based, theoretically grounded and best-practice informed model will help educators design, deliver and evaluate programs that support healthy couple and marital relationships. The model presents key patterns of thinking and behaviors associated with healthy, stable couple relationships and marriages that can be taught in an educational setting. The core components of the model are strengths-based, process-oriented, and infused with cognitive, affective and behavioral elements that build relationship quality.

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## NERMEM CORE COMPONENTS

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**Choose** — The central importance of intentionality:

- Decide to make the relationship a priority
- Set limits on thoughts and behaviors that would harm one's self, the partner, and/or the relationship
- Make a sustained commitment to effort in the relationship
- Emphasize individual and partner strengths
- Explore what it means to create a healthy relationship
- Envision a healthy future together

**Know** — The development of intimate knowledge of partner:

- Develop what you know and believe about a partner
- Move from idealized knowledge to intimate knowledge
- Develop attentive awareness and knowledge of partner's life, thoughts and feelings
- Understand partner's pressures and needs
- Remember and value meaningful relationship experiences
- Express sincere interest, physical attraction, and emotional closeness
- Self-disclosure and sharing intimate thoughts and feelings with partner
- Share ideas and expectations of a desirable relationship

**Care** — Demonstrating kindness, affection, understanding, respect, and caring support:

- Expressions of fondness/affection, appreciation and positive thoughts
- Intentional expressions of kindness and support
- Perspective taking and empathy for partner's view
- Tolerance and making allowances for continuing differences
- Cultivate positive feelings toward partner and relationship
- Soothing troubled or negative feelings
- Being respectful in accepting and valuing differences
- Openness of heart to partner needs and interests
- Being present and accessible to partner
- Listening and turning towards partner in times of challenge or frustration

**Care for self** – Maintaining physical, psychological, and sexual health and wellness as an individual:

- Develop skills for maintaining physical wellness (e.g., eating, sleep, physical fitness, substance abuse, and individual sexuality)
- Develop effective stress management skills for chronic and acute stressors
- Develop skills for identifying and managing threats to psychological (emotional and mental) well-being

**Share** – Developing and maintaining friendship and sense of “we”; spending meaningful time together:

- Find and cultivate common interests and activities
- Develop reciprocal exchanges of affection and love with partner
- Spend time together that builds intimacy
- Participate in couple rituals that build the relationship
- Protect the relationship from negative outside influences
- Cultivate a mental awareness, appreciation, and optimistic view of the relationship
- Engage yourselves in a common purpose

**Manage** – Strategies of engagement and interaction around differences, stresses, and issues of safety:

- Manage differences that occur in values, beliefs, expectations
- Utilize perspective taking and empathy for partner’s view
- Develop a positive emotional climate that is supportive and caring
- Use constructive engagement and interaction strategies
- Manage the stress response during conflicts
- Maintain positivity (more positives vs. negatives) and avoid expression of negative communication patterns (defensiveness, contempt, criticism, withdrawal, etc.)
- Use positive interpretations, judgments, assumptions, and attributions
- Use soothing and supportive behaviors
- Use team-oriented decision-making strategies
- Adopt a willingness to accept influence
- Use forgiveness skills; welcome repair attempts
- Maintain emotional and physical safety

**Connect** – Engaging social support, community ties, and sources of meaning:

- Draw upon support from a social network
- Cultivate relationships with extended family members
- Participate in a community supportive of your relationship
- Connect to sources of meaning (i.e., spirituality, values)
- Engage jointly in extra-familial organizations and systems
- Identify what is noble outside of the couple and celebrate it
- Identify and invest yourselves in service together
- Offer support/service to others, including external family members

## Contributing Authors

*Francesca Adler-Baeder, Auburn University*

*Andrew Behnke, North Carolina State University*

*Sean Brotherson, North Dakota State University*

*Ted Futris, University of Georgia*

*H. Wallace Goddard, University of Arkansas*

*Brian Higginbotham, Utah State University*

*Jennifer Kerpelman, Auburn University*

*James P. Marshall, University of Arkansas*

*Anthony D. Santiago, Iowa State University*

*Karen Shirer, University of Minnesota*

*Charlotte Shoup Olsen, Kansas State University*

*Linda Skogrand, Utah State University*

*Angela Wiley, University of Illinois*

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For more information visit

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