



# Elevate

*Taking Your Relationship to  
the Next Level*

COUPLE WORKBOOK



[www.nermen.org](http://www.nermen.org)

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ELEVATE was developed by colleagues in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Auburn University, and in the Department of Human Development and Family Science at the University of Georgia, who are experienced in family life and relationship education.

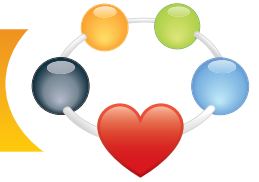


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# ENGAGE



## Engaging Support as a Couple

### “It Takes a Village”

We hear this phrase a lot, but what does it actually mean? It means that children develop in a complex system of family, friends, and experiences. Parents and couples need others that they can ask for help when raising children – don’t try to go it alone and don’t be afraid to ask friends and family for help.



### Why Connect?

The concept of “connect” is about developing social support. Strong social connections help you to build strength, develop strong personal relationships, and most importantly, they provide support for you as a couple.

Couples who have strong relationships with the people around them report stronger, healthier, and more durable relationships.

When couples feel alone in their relationship (without friends to talk with) that is often when conflict arises. Having friends and family to confide in and to go to for advice relieves stress and can be an important resource for you.

### Finding meaning and purpose

Another part of connecting is finding a greater meaning and purpose in life. Think about what the greater purpose may be for your life, both individually, and as a couple.

For some, that might mean joining a church or synagogue. Faith-based groups can offer support and other resources. For others, it may mean joining a community or support group. Finding meaning and contributing to the community have been found to work wonders for relationships. Try to get out into the community and lend a hand every now and then!





## Finding support

Support comes from friends, family, and the community. Some examples of social support are:

- Your partner
- Friends & family
- Neighbors & the community
- Faith-based center
- Social organizations
- Schools
- Division of Social Services



Can you think of other examples of support in your own life? Are you making the most of your support by letting others help you?

The more you try to go at it alone, the harder life can be. We all need help from time to time; it doesn't make you a bad partner or a bad parent. In fact, you can be an even better parent/partner just by asking for help!

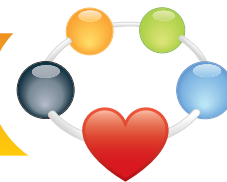
## Steps to take to connect

- Let others help you.
- Keep up close relationships with your extended family. If they don't live close, talk on the phone, send text messages or email.
- Get involved with community groups that are supportive of your relationship.
- Think about what gives your life meaning – Your faith? Values? Community service? Find groups in your area with similar values and get involved.
- Take part together in activities and organizations outside of the family.
- Be a support for others in your life, including your external family members. Has someone you know just had a baby? Take them a meal. Or show a friend going through a hard time that you care by offering to babysit.
- Create traditions that add meaning to your relationship. Attend faith-based services or arrange weekly play dates to connect with other parents.





## Growing Family Connections



Extended family members offer love and support in good times and in bad. When we spend pleasant, positive time together with extended family, we build up a reserve of good feelings. When we are having some difficult times, those good feelings make it easier to reach out for help and also offer support to others.

**Who is in your extended family? What are some ways they offer you help and support with your relationship? What are some ways you help them? List your answers in the spaces below.**

People in my family:

Ways they help us:

Ways we help them:


**How does it feel when you receive help from your extended family?**


**How does this support help strengthen your relationship with your partner? Your children?**


**How do you feel when you offer support to your extended family?**

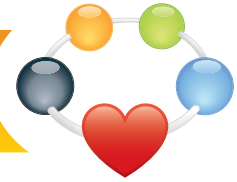

### Additional Tips

- Getting along with in-laws and relatives is not always easy. Family members can avoid hurting each other's feelings by not repeating past mistakes. Focus on the present and work together to build stronger relationships for the future.
- It is important for couples to talk about how much interaction they want with other relatives. Some couples like to spend more time with relatives, while other couples prefer to spend more time alone. Talk about your expectations with your relatives.
- Adults and children need opportunities to have fun and learn from extended family. Building and maintaining supportive relationships among family members and with people in the community is important for you and your children.

***Maintaining extended family relationships takes work,  
but it can strengthen your couple relationship!***



## Giving to Others



When an individual does a good deed, it feels good. It gives that person a sense of accomplishment. When a couple does a good deed together, it has even greater meaning. Doing things for others provides couples with a greater overall sense of connectedness, both to each other and to their community. It also gives partners more time together!

**What are some things others have done for you without being asked, or expecting anything in return? How did it make you feel?**

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**Think of the last time you did something for someone else without needing to be asked. How did it make the other person feel? How did it make you feel?**

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**What are some of your shared strengths or skills that you could put to use to help others?**

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**If you already have engaged in volunteer work or service with your partner, what did you do and how did it make you feel?**

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***Our lives are improved and our relationships are strengthened when we put our strengths to use by giving to and serving others.***



**Empower Yourself** While better health is a consequence of healthy couple relationships, attending to one's physical, mental, and emotional well-being also fosters healthier couple and marital relationships.



**Enlighten** To develop and sustain healthy relationships partners must develop and maintain intimate knowledge of each other's personal and relational needs, interests, feelings, and expectations.



**Lay the Foundation** A strong, healthy, long-lasting relationship does not just happen by chance but, instead, through deliberate and conscientious decisions to be committed, intentional, proactive, and strengths-focused.



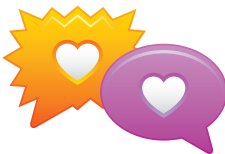
**Value** Individuals who express kindness, use understanding and empathy, demonstrate respect, and invest time to be available and open to their partner are able to maintain stable, healthy couple relationships.



**Attach** Being a healthy couple involves spending meaningful time together and fostering a shared sense of couple identity in order to sustain a close, enduring friendship based on trust and love.



**Engage** The connections that couples develop with their family, peers, and community offer a source of meaning, purpose, and support that influence the health and vitality of their couple relationship.



**Tame** Problems and conflicts are a normal part of relationships. Healthy couples use strategies to see their partner's view, accept differences, and manage stress to ensure emotional and physical safety.