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Prevention of marital distress: Results of a German prospective longitudinal study

ABSTRACT

This article reports on the development and long-term evaluation of a marital distress prevention program for German couples, the Ein Partnerschaftliches Lernprogramm (EPL, A Couple's Learning Program). The EPL is a 6-session program designed to teach couples effective communication and problem-solving skills. In the current article, the EPL is evaluated in a prospective, quasi-experimental, controlled trial. The results of the 3-year follow-up are reported, contrasting 55 EPL couples with a control group of 17 couples. Significant differences emerged with regard to the couples' dissolution rates, relationship satisfaction, and positive and negative communication behavior favoring the EPL couples. These results demonstrate the utility of the EPL program in assisting happy couples who are preparing for marriage. The implications of the findings for prevention research and for the dissemination of prevention programs are discussed.

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