

Study finds good marriages more likely for teens of happy homes

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A UT Dallas study has found that people who come from families with members who are encouraging and engaged with one another tend to have marriages with more positive outcomes later in life.

Dr. Robert Ackerman, an assistant professor in the School of Behavioral and [Brain Sciences](#), and his colleagues looked at data from participants in the Iowa Youth and Families Project. The long-term study tracked them from youth through adulthood. Ackerman examined findings regarding family interactions from the time participants were in middle school.

"The results suggest that growing up in a family that resolves conflict through clear, warm and assertive communication may have benefits for adolescents' outcomes in later marital relationships," he said.

The study was published online in *Psychological Science*. Researchers analyzed the participants' videotaped interactions with their families when they were adolescents. Those videotaped situations were coded for indicators of positive engagement: pro-social behavior, listener responsiveness, effective communication, assertiveness, and warmth or support.

The researchers then looked at questionnaires and [observational data](#) from the same participants 17 years later. They determined that participants who came from families with more positive interaction were less likely to express hostility to their spouses. Their spouses also

appeared less hostile.

About 280 participants and spouses took part in the study.

"I think that studying more positive behaviors is important because it may shed more insight on how to better enhance [romantic relationships](#)," Ackerman said.

Previous research has tended to focus more on the negative long-term effects of divorce and hostile family environments. Few studies have looked at the positive results that a happier environment could foster, Ackerman said.

"I think that one of the more impressive features of this research is that it shows that even after accounting for the continuity of individual differences, the overall nature of the [family](#) climate still matters for later marital outcomes," he said.

Provided by University of Texas at Dallas

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