

Strenghening
Families
Initiative



Las Cruces, New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Healthy Marriage Demonstration

Grant # 90-FE0135

April, 2007 - September, 2007

For general information:

Dr. Esther Devall
(575) 646-1185
edevall@nmsu.edu

For research and evaluation information:

Dr. Marcel Montañez
(575) 646-5078
marcel@nmsu.edu

For information about programs:

Las Cruces

Lisa Shields
(575) 646-3560
lshields@nmsu.edu

Or write to us at:

New Mexico State University
Gerald Thomas Hall #309
P.O. Box 30003, MSC 3470
Las Cruces, NM 88003-8003

Albuquerque

Charolette Collins
(575) 332-3765
charcoll@nmsu.edu



I. Grant Information

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Grantee Organization: | New Mexico State University, Strengthening Families Initiative |
| Grantee Number: | 90-FE0135 |
| Grantee Type: | Institute of Higher Education |
| Authorized Activity: | 4 and 5 (Marriage skills training for couples or individuals interested in marriage, and married couples) |
| Priority: | 8 (Healthy Marriage Grants for any allowable activity) |
| Target Population: | Hispanic/Latinos |
| Service Area: | Doña Ana County and the 5-county metro Albuquerque area, New Mexico |

II. Major Activities and Accomplishments

Accomplishments at a Glance:

- 143 adults (with over 160 children) were served.
- Growth was made in 90% of the content areas.
 - Significant growth was made in couple and relationship skills.
 - Significant growth was made in parenting skills.
 - Significant growth was made in family functioning.

| Scale | Pre Mean (Sd) | Post Mean (Sd) | t-value | p-value |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------|---------|
| Couple and Relationship | | | | |
| Marital Satisfaction | 32.8 (7.9) | 33.9 (7.6) | 1.2 | .122 |
| Communication | 31.6 (8.8) | 34.4 (8.3) | 2.9 | .003 |
| Conflict Resolution | 30.3 (8.2) | 32.6 (7.0) | 2.3 | .013 |
| Personal Commitment | 11.6 (2.9) | 11.7 (2.6) | .02 | .491 |
| Moral Commitment | 41.2 (9.0) | 40.4 (8.2) | .84 | .203 |
| Structural Commitment | 55.5 (14.4) | 53.9 (14.0) | .94 | .175 |
| Parenting | | | | |
| Inappropriate expectations | 21.3 (3.7) | 21.1 (4.39) | .463 | .323 |
| Empathy | 40.0 (6.4) | 40.3 (6.0) | .281 | .390 |
| Corporal Punishment | 38.7 (7.4) | 41.0 (7.5) | 2.25 | .019 |
| Role Reversal | 22.9 (4.6) | 23.6 (5.1) | 1.01 | .155 |
| Oppressing | 18.8 (3.6) | 18.7 (4.0) | .146 | .427 |
| Family Functioning | | | | |
| Expressiveness | 4.8 (2.0) | 5.8 (1.8) | 3.62 | .000 |
| Conflict | 3.2 (2.3) | 2.4 (2.0) | 2.77 | .004 |
| Independence, | 5.5 (1.4) | 5.7 (1.5) | .892 | .188 |
| Organization | 5.6 (2.6) | 6.2 (2.6) | 2.38 | .011 |
| Control | 4.8 (1.6) | 4.9 (1.6) | .458 | .325 |
| Cohesion | 26.9 (6.5) | 27.4 (5.9) | .539 | .291 |
| Flexibility | 23.7 (6.4) | 25.8 (5.5) | 2.53 | .005 |
| Reframing | 29.4 (4.7) | 30.9 (5.4) | 1.86 | .034 |
| Mobilization | 14.1 (3.3) | 16.4 (2.8) | 4.40 | .000 |

Description of Participants

Demographics

Age. The average age of participants in the sample was 35.5 with a standard deviation of 10 years (see Table 1). The youngest person was 14 and the oldest was 63 years old. Figure 1 shows the distribution of ages for the group.

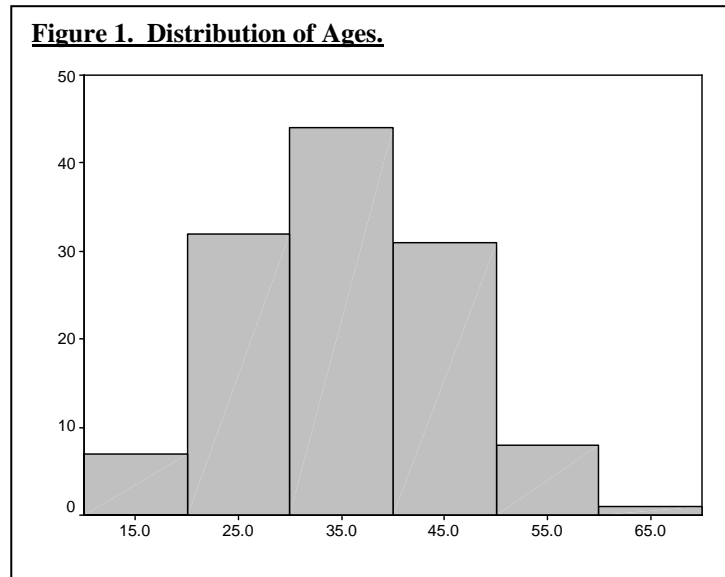


Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Age.

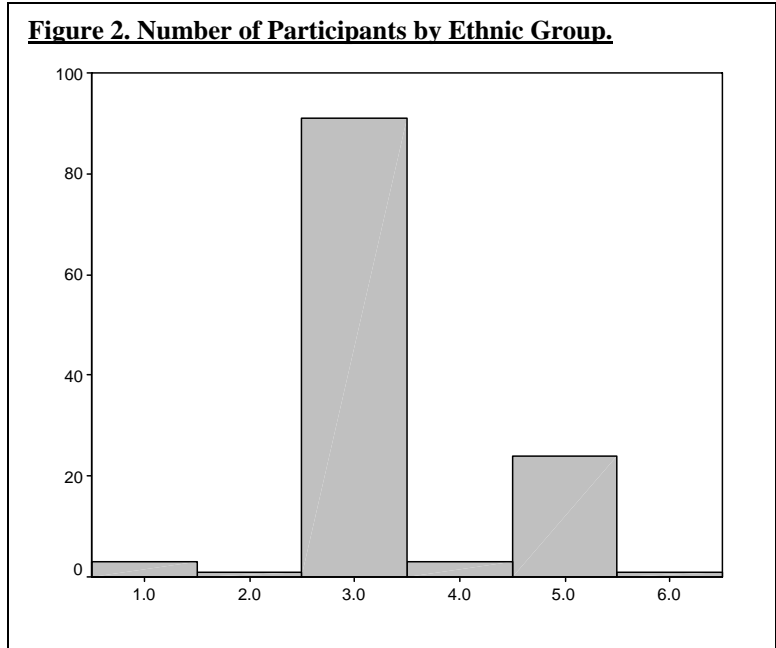
| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------------|----------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| AGE | 123 | 14 | 63 | 35.49 | 10.079 |

Sex. frequency of
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Table 2. Number of Males and Females.

| | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Males | 38 | 30.4 |
| Females | 85 | 68.0 |
| Total | 123 | 98.4 |
| Missing | 2 | 1.6 |
| Total | 125 | 100.0 |

Ethnicity. The ethnicity of the participants was gathered by self-report. Participants were asked to indicate what ethnic group best described them. The options were (1) African American, (2) Asian, (3) Hispanic, (4) Native American, (5) White and (6) Other. As can be seen in Figure 2, the overwhelming majority of participants were Hispanic, followed by White. Other groups were represented minimally.



Some participants indicated that they did not fit into any of the ethnic categories (See Table 3).

Table 3. Ethnicity of Subjects

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|
| African American | 3 | 2.4 |
| Asian | 1 | .8 |
| Hispanic | 91 | 72.8 |
| Native American | 3 | 2.4 |
| White | 24 | 19.2 |
| Other | 1 | .8 |
| Total | 123 | 98.4 |
| Missing | 2 | 1.6 |
| Total | 125 | 100.0 |

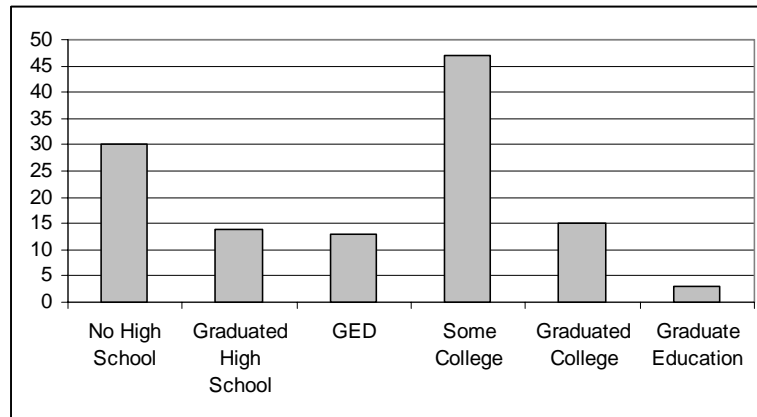
Marital Status. When asked to describe their relationship status, there was a variety of responses. The two largest groups indicated that they were either married or cohabitating. Almost equal numbers of people indicated that they were dating or widowed. The third largest group indicated that they were single.

Table 4. Relationship Status

| Type of Relationship | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------|-----------|---------|
| Married | 70 | 56.5 |
| Cohabitating | 30 | 24.2 |
| Dating | 2 | 1.6 |
| Single | 18 | 14.5 |
| Widowed | 3 | 2.4 |
| Total | 123 | |
| Missing | 1 | <1 |
| Total | 124 | 100 |

Education Level. Participants were asked to indicate the highest level of education they completed. The number of participants who did not complete a high school education was 30; 14 completed high school. Thirteen individuals earned a GED. A large number of individuals completed some college and 3 indicated that they had finished college and/or had some graduate study (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. Educational Status of Participants.



Number of Children. Participants of the program had 2.4 children on average, with a standard deviation of 1.4.

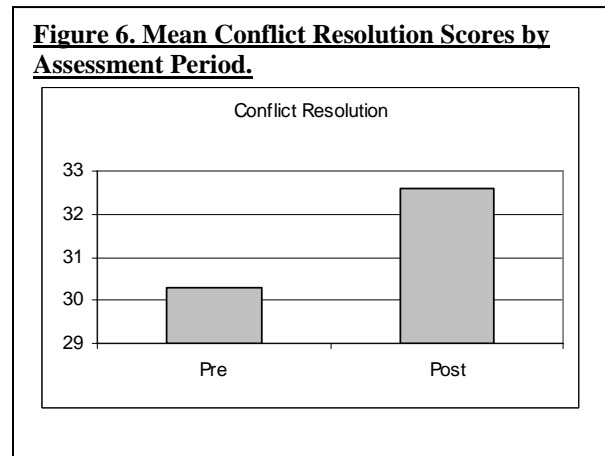
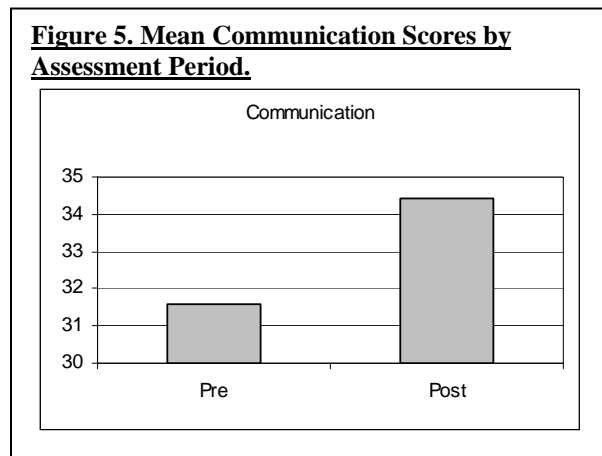
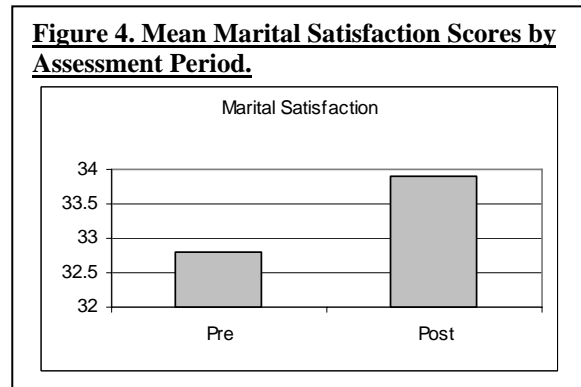
Outcomes

There were several anticipated outcomes for the marriage education program. Measurements were taken immediately before classes started and immediately after the program ended. Growth was analyzed and tested for statistical significance. The following is a statistical analysis of growth made in relationships skills, parenting skills, and overall family functioning.

Couple Relationship Outcomes

The ENRICH was used to measure three dimensions of couple relationships. The three dimensions were marital satisfaction, couple communication, and conflict resolution. There was an increase in marital satisfaction for participants from pre to post. Participants demonstrated a significant increase in communication skills ($t=2.9$;

$p=.003$). The last component of relationships measured with the Enrich was conflict resolution. Participants made significant growth in their ability to resolve conflicts in a healthy manner ($t=2.29$; $p=.01$). Figures 4 through 6 are a visual representation of mean scores on relationship skills measured by the Enrich.



The Components of Commitment Scale was used to measure aspects of couple commitment. The CCS measured three constructs within the topic of commitment—structural, moral and personal commitment. As was expected, an increase in scores was evident in personal commitment and a decrease was found in moral and structural commitment. These changes indicate that individuals’ ideas concerning commitment to their relationship became more strongly based on internal factors than external or circumstantial factors. Figures 7 through 9 show the pre and post mean scores on commitment for participants.

Figure 7. Mean Personal Commitment Scores by Assessment Period.

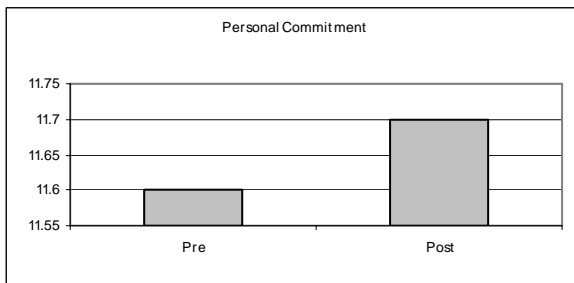
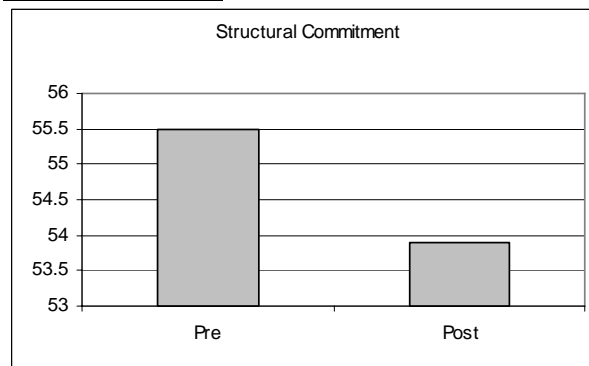


Figure 8. Mean Moral Commitment Scores by Assessment Period.



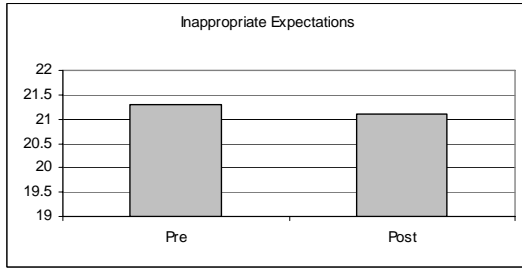
Figure 9. Mean Structural Commitment Scores by Assessment Period.



Parenting Outcomes

Parenting. The Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2) was used to assess parents in the following areas: (a) inappropriate expectations of children; (b) lack of empathy towards

Figure 10. Mean Inappropriate Expectations Scores by Assessment Period.



children's needs; (c) strong belief in the use of corporal punishment as a means of discipline; (d) reversing parent-child roles and (e) oppressing children's power and independence. Individual subscale scores for the constructs were computed (see Tables 3 through 6). For each subscale, raw scores were compared for the two measurement times. Low scores indicate a high risk for abusive or neglectful parenting; high scores are desirable. In all instances, growth was made or mean scores remained statistically the same. The largest area of growth was made in attitudes about corporal punishment, indicating that after the intervention, participants were more likely to use a discipline method that did not involve the use of corporal punishment.

Figure 11. Mean Empathy Scores by Assessment Period.

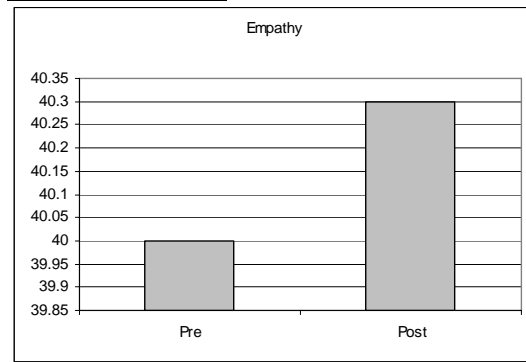


Figure 12. Mean Corporal Punishment Scores by Assessment Period.

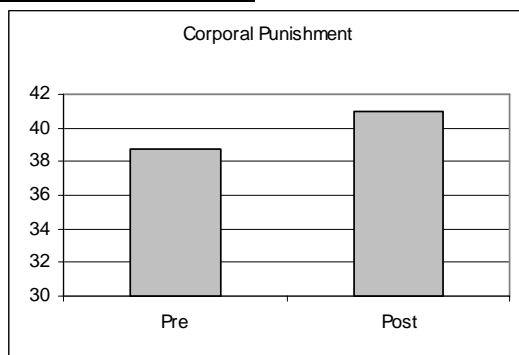
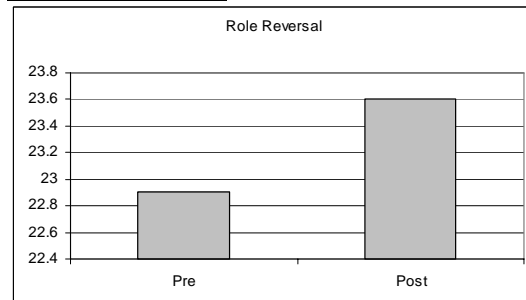


Figure 13. Mean Role Reversal Scores by Assessment Period.



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Family Functioning Outcomes

Family Environment Scale (FES).

The Family Environment Scale (FES) was used to measure social and environmental characteristics of families. Expressiveness, Conflict, Independence, Organization and Control were all measured (See Figures 14-18). These subscales account for relationships and structure (organization) in families. Because of the intervention, families showed an increase ability for members to express themselves ($t=3.62$; $p=.000$); less conflict ($t=2.77$; $p=.004$); and more organization ($t=2.38$; $p=.011$).

Figure 14. Mean Expressiveness Scores by Assessment Period.

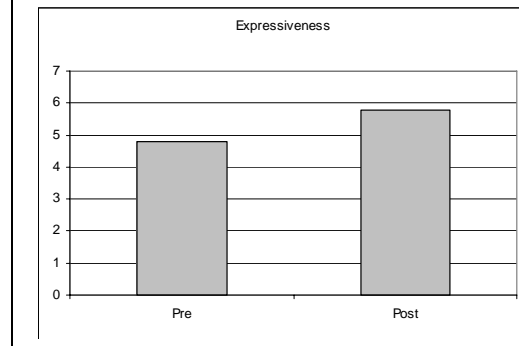


Figure 15. Mean Conflict Scores by Assessment Period.



Figure 16. Mean Independence Scores by Assessment Period.

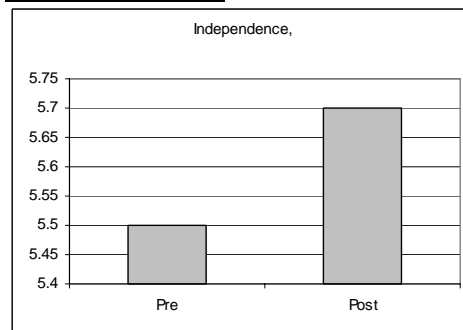


Figure 17. Mean Organization Scores by Assessment Period.

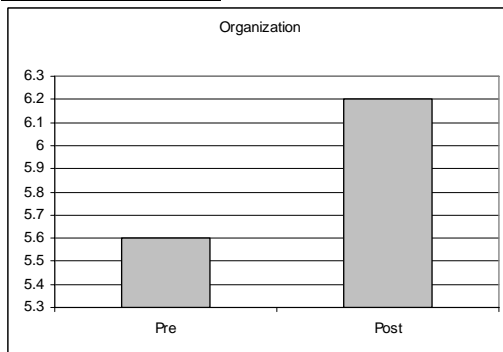
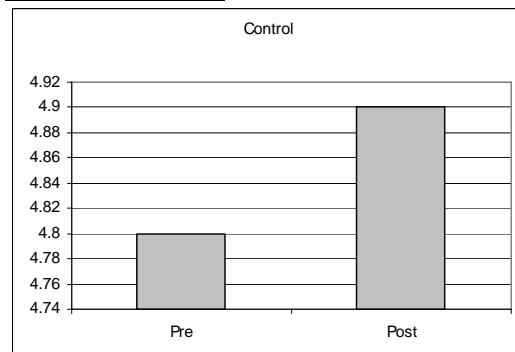


Figure 18. Mean Control Scores by Assessment Period.



FACES. The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES) IV was used to measure family functioning (Olson, 1986). Two characteristics of families were measured; cohesion and flexibility. Significant growth was made in family flexibility ($t=2.53$; $p=.005$).

Figure 19. Mean Cohesion Scores by Assessment Period.

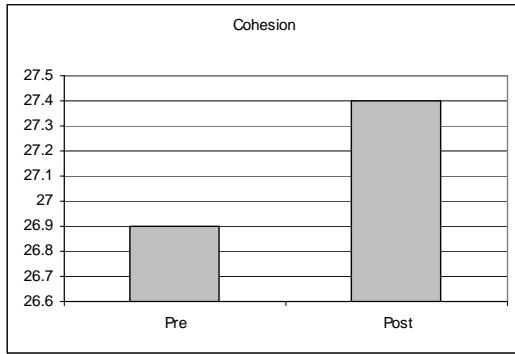
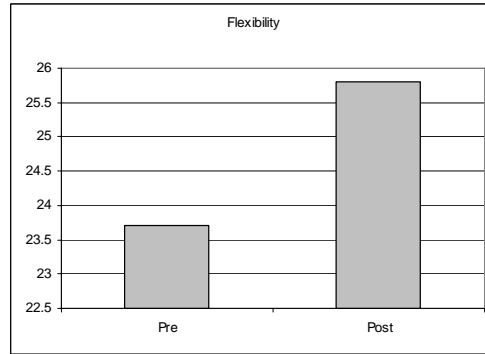


Figure 20. Mean Flexibility Scores by Assessment Period.



Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scales (F-COPES). The Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scales (F-COPES) was used to assess problem-solving and behavioral strategies. The current evaluation used two of the five subscales: reframing and mobilizing the family to acquire and accept help. Significant growth was found in families' ability to reframe a crisis ($t=1.86$; $p=.034$) and to mobilize and move towards solving problems ($t=4.40$; $p=.000$).

Figure 21. Mean Personal Commitment Scores by Assessment Period.

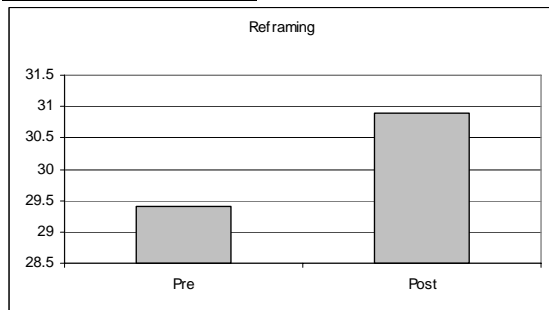
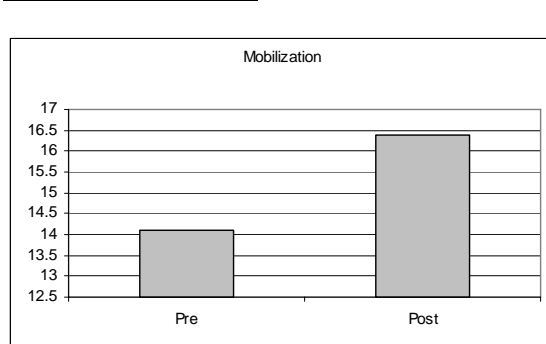


Figure 22. Mean Personal Commitment Scores by Assessment Period.



Marriage Curriculum

- Four *Family Wellness* curricula were combined to create a 12-week marriage education program. The four curricula are *The Strongest Link: The Couple, Survival Skills for Healthy Families*, *Wellness Way for Stepfamilies*, and *Skills and Strengths for Families Affected by Domestic Violence*. The curricula teach knowledge and skills about couple relationships, parenting, and family functioning. More information about the curricula is available at www.familywellness.com.
- Participants met 2½ hours each week for a total of 30 contact hours per person. Participants had to attend 75% of the class sessions to complete the program.

III. Significant Stories

We received this letter from an unmarried teen mother who took one of the Family Wellness classes:

- My name is Leslie, and I am 17 years old. I am in the 11th grade and I am a teen parent. I have a little boy who is 3 months old. I came to this class so I can learn so that when he gets older, I could know what to do with him. Pretty soon, I am going to get married with my boyfriend who is the baby's father. This class has helped me a lot with my boyfriend. We used to get into arguments and now I know how to calm down more. When my son grows up, I will be able to do the same with him.

The following are statements from various participants who attended the Family Wellness program.

1. *What brought you to the Family Wellness classes?*
 - I was at a place where I really needed something to get my family back on track – better communication, new ideas, better unity. Just as I was deciding what we needed to do, there was a flyer for the program on my door. The classes took place in the church behind my house.
 - My partner is always searching for resources to improve us as parents.
 - I was looking for a class to take when I heard about this one on Channel 4 news.
 - My son brought home a flyer from school.
2. *What kept you coming back to the classes?*
 - The information was directly applicable to my life and family. The class was really fun.
 - The information was great. We really formed a bond with our teachers and classmates.
 - Forming a relationship with the other people in the class and the teachers. Also, each class brought very useful information.
 - The commitment and the new things I wanted to learn.

3. *How has the Family Wellness program helped you?*

- Given me new way to handle and care for my family, friends, and other relationships.
- Helped me learn how to settle problem and how to communicate with other persons.
- It has help me understand why everything happened to me before, and how to cope with my work, home, family, in-laws, ex-husbands, children, the way I view my life.
- It has opened my mind to different ways to communicate with my kid, wife, and family.
- It helped me talk to my kids more and get closer.
- How to handle difficult situations with my partner and son.
- Made me re-evaluate our lifestyle and what we can do to be better parents to our child.
- It has showed me that me and my husband are normal. A lot of what we go through is normal, and it has given me other information on how to deal with situations.
- It let me see things in a whole different way.
- It has provided additional tools with which to improve my family relationships.
- By expressing my feelings and how to discipline appropriately. How to reward my children as needed. And how to not start arguments in front of my children.
- Yes, I review the book all the time.

4. *How will you use what you've learned with your children, family, and other relationships?*

- Well, the information has worked well with strengthening the relationship with family, children, and friends. It has also made it easier to find new friends with the same interest as mine and my family.
- How to listen and communicate, and not to be criticizing other persons.
- My children, my boyfriend, and myself are always first. Listen, ask, and be there for my family, and get help from outside if we need it.
- The skills that we have learned will help me all my life.
- By asking my kids what's wrong, talk to them, and listening to them.
- By speaking more often and be a part of any problem that I may have with my family members.
- Put it into practice by carrying my manual around to share the lessons.
- I will use it to evaluate what is going on and implement some of the teachings of the class to better work through the situations that are occurring.
- I will use the tools learned in this class to improve understanding and cooperation between family members.
- When something comes up, then I will use what I learned from it. I would use it appropriately when the time is needed. Example: Speaking out for myself and my children, without conflict.
- Try to listen.

5. *Name something that you've discovered about yourself through the Family Wellness program.*

- It's ok to ask for help and to take breaks for me time. It also opened my eyes to the types of things and people I want in my life and my family's lives.
- That I was on the right path by doing positive thing for everyone that surrounded us as a family.
- That I can do things different.
- That I need to stop being shy, and get involved in conversations so that other persons will listen to my opinions.
- I was trying to be a good parent, role model, guide, just as the program emphasizes and doing a good job. This program enforced my beliefs and made me realize I'm heading the right way.
- That in dealing with family situations, we pretty much handle it in a healthy manner. That possibly I need to try to devote more time toward family things.
- How to deal with my 2 kids.
- That our family does many things in a healthy manner.
- I found that I don't really speak up for myself (in relationships) and now I'm starting to.
- I can choose to use the skills that were given to me.