

Hall of the House of Representatives

86th General Assembly - Regular Session, 2007

Amendment Form

Subtitle of House Bill No. 2476

"TO PROVIDE INFORMATIONAL PAMPHLETS ON MARRIAGE TO COUPLES
RECEIVING A MARRIAGE LICENSE."

Amendment No. 1 to House Bill No. 2476.

Amend House Bill No. 2476 as originally introduced:

Page 2, delete lines 12 through 25 and substitute the following:

"informational pamphlet, entitled "Information to Strengthen your Marriage" that shall be made available to any couple in Arkansas when they receives a marriage license.

(c)(1) The Administrative Office of the Courts shall have authority to receive private funds and any other private assistance necessary to design, print, and distribute the information pamphlets to the County Clerks.

(2) No public funds shall be used for designing, printing, or distribution of the information pamphlets to the County Clerks.

(d) The pamphlet shall include the following:

Creating a strong marriage demands dedication, commitment, and learning how to handle conflict and disagreements effectively. Research on marriage shows three factors predict success in marriage: (1) Communication skills, (2) Dealing with conflict, (3) Understanding expectations.

BUILDING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Good communication means saying what needs to be said, and listening with understanding. Speaking directly takes practice and skill. Spouses often assume their spouses know what they think or feel. Communication is a two-way street. Don't lecture or talk too much. Many of us do not listen well when we hear another person speak. As the other talks, we are often judging what is said and thinking what to say next. The most important thing to do when talking with your spouse is to really try to understand what he or she is saying. Agreement is less important than understanding. When you do understand, it is helpful to show your spouse that you do. A great way to show you understand your spouse is to try to put your spouse's views into your own words. This does several things: (1) It shows that you are really paying attention; (2) It allows you to check out possible misunderstandings; (3) For the speaker, it feels great to know that the listener is hearing what you have to say; and (4) It helps keep conflict from getting out of hand. It is hard to stay angry with someone who is sincerely trying to understand what you are saying. When your spouse knows that you understand his or her point



of view, it is much more likely that you will be able to deal with the situation in a way that is good for both of you.

DEALING CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH DISAGREEMENTS AND CONFLICT

Every couple faces problems in their marriage that need to be resolved. Problems themselves do not cause distress in marriage. It is how couples handle problems that matter. Early in marriage, spouses often avoid discussing "hot-button" issues because they do not want to upset their newly formed union. Soon after marriage, many couples become busy with work, parenting, or other obligations. The demands of the moment may seem more important than issues in the marriage. Yet, building a marriage requires making many decisions and planning for the future. Having good communication skills, being able to discuss and work out plans together, helps planning go more smoothly. Discussing, negotiating, and arriving at agreements that are satisfying to both spouses are crucial to keeping your marriage on the right track.

DANGER SIGNALS: SIGNS OF TROUBLE AHEAD

Couples risk big future problems when (1) They are not able to handle conflicts constructively; (2) Little disagreements quickly become big "blow-ups"; (3) Arguments, once started, are hard to stop; (4) Spouses often experience emotional conflicts; (5) Over the long term, spouses avoid dealing with significant issues; (6) Spouses often put down or insult one another; and (7) During conflicts, one spouse withdraws or avoids dealing with the issue. When people withdraw or avoid dealing with disagreements, they usually are trying to avoid conflict, not their spouses. Also, when people keep bringing up issues, they usually are not trying to nag or pick a fight. They are trying to find a way to connect with their spouses. If you notice some of these danger signs in your own relationship, you should work on communication with your spouse. To have good communication, both spouses must feel emotionally safe, not vulnerable or on the defensive. A first step is to listen to your spouse. By listening carefully, you will go a long way toward improving your couple communication. Be polite in talks with your spouse. Treat your spouse as you would a very valued friend. When you have something negative or critical to say, find the most polite way to say it. When you express your criticism politely, you increase the chances that your spouse will actually hear what you have to say.

UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS

In the early years of marriage, it is important to recognize what really matters to you and your spouse. Talking with one another about your values, beliefs, and voices" or "don't argue in front of the kids"); (3) Who has more "say" or whether there should be "equal say" in the marriage; (4) Expectations about sex; (5) Who should do what around the house; and (6) How finances should be handled. Many spouses think their spouses' expectations are similar to their own. Actually, it is more likely that you have different expectations. Remember, it is how you handle your differences that count. Working through disagreements creates intimacy and trust in your marriage. Handling conflict lays the groundwork for satisfying and fulfilling marriages.

DEVELOPING TEAMWORK AND FRIENDSHIP IN MARRIAGE

Spouses often say they want their spouse to be their best friend. Friendship is part of your marriage relationship. Friends listen to each other, show respect for each other's opinions, and are truly interested in each other's lives. Friends talk about their interests, dreams, and plans, and discuss what is important to them. Life after marriage makes it harder to keep time for friendship. As life gets expectations builds your relationship. Expectations play a big role in determining how satisfied we are in life and with our relationships. Expectations include feelings, desires, anticipations about life, relationships, "how the world works," and what is likely to happen in the future. Our expectations shape the meanings we give to our spouse's words and actions, and how we react to our spouse's behavior. When we are happy in our relationship, we tend to see only the positive. When we are unhappy, we tend to see only the negative, and it becomes difficult to see our spouse's good aspects. It is important to understand and talk about expectations. Expectations include: (1) How communication should take place in relationships; (2) How husbands and wives should handle conflicts and disagreements (such as "never raise busier, and issues come up, friendship may suffer. However, keeping friendship alive is one of the best tools for a successful marriage. Friends work as a team, making life easier and more fun. Make time for "friendship talk" with your spouse, focusing on each other's work, dreams, and interests.

MARRIAGE AS A BALANCING ACT

Individuals have many different roles in their married lives. These roles include work and family, being a spouse and a parent, and keeping a sense of self while also being part of a couple. It is important to keep a balance between these sometimes-competing roles. Doing too much of one often comes at the expense of another.

RECOGNIZING WHEN YOU NEED HELP

What are signs of marital distress? If you often have communication problems, if your arguments are more destructive than constructive, and especially if your disagreements lead to pushing or shoving or other kinds of "physical" behavior, it may be helpful to get assistance.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR HELP

If you or your spouse ever need help of any kind, knowing where to look is important. Family and friends can provide support. Often, though, expert help is useful. There are many highly qualified professionals to help you decide if you need assistance, and what kind of assistance might be most helpful. There are many resources to help develop skills and improve your marriage. Investigate programs and counseling offered by: (1) Community mental health centers, (2) Religious organizations and spiritual leaders, (3) Relationship enhancement programs (4) Marriage and family therapists. Many of these resources are available free of charge or on a sliding fee scale. All couples have the potential to succeed in making a wonderful marriage. It does not happen naturally. It takes a lot of effort. The most successful relationships are ones that spouses continually work to improve."

The Amendment was read _____
By: Representative Lamoureux
PBB/RMW - 03-14-2007 15:58
PBB070 _____

Chief Clerk