

INTERVIEW TALKING POINTS

Ron L. Deal



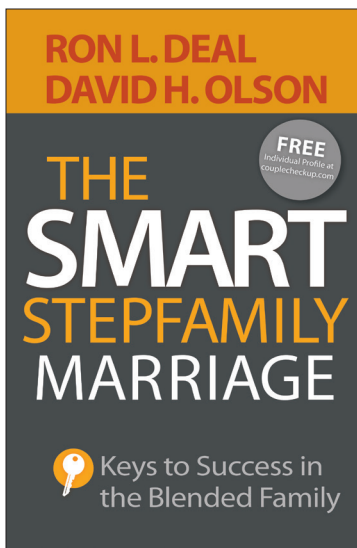
David H. Olson

Uniqueness of this book?

1. A basic premise of your book is that people have regular checkups for lots of things in life (e.g., dental, heart, car engine, even checking the air pressure of your tires) but rarely do couples get a checkup of their relationship. Why do you think that is?
2. There are a plethora of marriage books on the market today. Why do we need this one?
3. You say this book combines science and practical wisdom. What do you mean by that?
4. Is the book only for married couples?
5. The book provides couples a CPS or Couple Positioning System. What do you mean by that?
6. Do couples have to buy the book to take the Couple Checkup online?
(www.SmartStepfamilies.com)

Surprising Findings:

1. Our research reveals that a positive response to these ten items predicts a highly satisfactory relationship with over 90% accuracy.
 - A partner's moodiness is not an issue in the relationship. (Unhappy couples are 6 times more likely to be moody, critical, and negative toward one another.)
 - Each person feels understood by their partner. (Happy couples are 8 times more likely to feel understood and validated when communicating with their partner.)
 - Couples are able to resolve their differences. (Happy couples are 9 times more likely to resolve issues.)
 - Couples enjoy many of the same leisure activities. (85% of the best relationships have similar ideas of what is fun or relaxing and they engage in these activities together.)
 - Couples are creative in how they handle differences. (Unhappy couples are nearly 4 times more likely to have a rigid approach to problem solving and, therefore, get stuck in issues.)
 - Couples agree on how to spend money. (Happy couples share similar values about money and aren't afraid to trust each other with their assets.)
 - Affection is used fairly and sexuality is healthy. (Close to half of unhappy couples have concerns about the previous sexual experiences of their partner and/or about how desire is expressed in the marriage.)
 - Partners are not overly involved or influenced by their families or previous partners. (Healthy couples have positive shared friendships and healthy boundaries with extended family members.)
 - Couples have worked out parent and stepparent responsibilities and roles. (Only one-third of unhappy couples have agreed on how to parent their children/stepchildren, and unhappy couples are 6 times more likely to have concerns about what type of parent their partner will be.)
 - Each partner feels close to the other. (89% of happy couples feel close with their partner and confident in their relationship.)



The Smart Stepfamily Marriage

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2. The number one relationship problem for stepfamily couples is dealing with complex blended family issues.

Making the differences between first marriages and stepfamily marriages undeniable, our research reveals that an astonishing 7 of the top 12 stumbling blocks for these couples are related to a past relationship breakup (e.g., divorce) or to the complications of being a stepfamily.

3. Our study reveals that *the single most important predictor of a happy stepfamily marriage is a lack of perceived negative attributes in one's partner (e.g., temper, stubbornness) and the accompanying emotional safety that comes with being satisfied with their overall behavioral style toward you.*

Compared to strong, healthy couples, struggling couples include partners who are:

- 6 times more likely to be moody, critical, and negative
- 3 times more likely to be controlling
- 4 times more likely to be unhappy and withdrawn
- 3 times more likely to have a temper
- 9 times more likely to be stubborn

4. Other research shows that the remarriage divorce rate is 10–25% higher than first marriages (depending on whether using actual or projected data). Does this research shed any light on why this is?

Absolutely. There are a number of unique factors that contribute to marital stress in a stepfamily; fear of another relationship breakup is one of them, and nearly two-thirds of partners struggle with it to some degree. If left unchecked this can have a grave impact on the marriage; the fear of another breakup and jealousy predict with 93% accuracy whether a stepfamily couple has a close, intimate marriage or a struggling, unhappy one.

5. Jealousy is a problem for one-third of all blended family couples.

6. Most couples agree that children and matters of stepparenting put an additional stress on their marriage. Said another way, people marry because they fall in love with a person, but they often divorce because of the complications of the stepfamily.

88% of individuals expected difficulty related to having a stepfamily, and 86% thought having children from previous relationships would add stress to their marriage—and they are right. It does.

7. A relationship based solely on sex is in trouble.

Sex only accounts for about 13% of what contributes to a healthy, intimate relationship in blended family marriage (and only 10% in first marriage).

8. Sexual satisfaction clearly distinguishes happy and unhappy couples.

- Unhappy couples are 16 times more likely to disagree about how affection and sex are used within the relationship
- Unhappy couples are nearly 5 times as likely to be concerned that their partner's interest in sex is different than theirs
- Unhappy couples are 4 times as likely to be concerned about how their partner's previous sexual experiences will impact their relationship

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9. Your feelings about your marriage may not be a good indication of your spouse's.

Knowing the satisfaction level of one partner with any given aspect of a marriage only predicts the other partner's response 25% of the time.

10. Newly married stepparents often feel duped.

Dating partners tend not to favor or side with their children until after the wedding.

11. Nearly half (46%) of unhappy partners feel left out when their spouse spends time with their children.

The majority of partners in healthy couples, by contrast, do not (82%).

12. How long couples with children date prior to the wedding is not as important to their long-term success as how well they prepare for parenting and stepparenting challenges.

Unhealthy couples are about twice as likely to have not adequately discussed how they will raise the children together.

13. Two-thirds of all blended family married couples have financial issues that are tied to their past relationships.

Debts, bills, and settlements are among the top relationship issues for remarried couples.

14. When money concerns—especially those related to child support, alimony, or child care expenses for stepchildren—are paired with jealousy, stepfamily couples have even more struggles.

Marriage Ministries, Churches, and Community Marriage Initiatives:

1. Marriage ministries and marriage education programs are just now beginning to pay attention to stepfamily ministry. Is this an important area of ministry for the church?
2. What has held us back from tackling this?
3. How does a church or marriage ministry get started?