

**UNDERSTANDING MARRIAGE, FAMILY,
AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

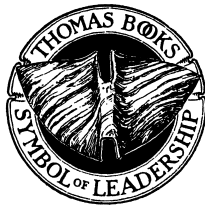
Jerry D. Lehman, Ed.D., is professor of psychology at the University of South Carolina Upstate, where he has been a teacher, counselor, mentor, and friend to students for over thirty years. He and his wife, Faye, are parents of two daughters, Lynn and Leigh, both of whom were instrumental in nurturing this project along. Leigh allowed dad to escape for some quiet writing time to her place in Florida during a sabbatical and Lynn was helpful, especially with computer problems—even buying dad a new laptop when his old one crashed.

UNDERSTANDING MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

By

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*Dedicated to my wife, Faye,
and my daughters, Lynn and Leigh—
they each taught me in their own way
what many of the words in this book really mean.*

PREFACE

The idea for this book took shape in the recesses of my mind soon after I started teaching a course on marriage, family, and intimate relationships. There were many topics I wanted to share with my students—topics that I felt would be relevant to their experience. I believed then and still believe today that there is no knowledge more important to the personal lives of students than knowledge about why intimate relationships succeed and fail. As the idea for this book went from thought, to pen, to paper, my enthusiasm never wavered. And as I wrote, I assigned the material as readings in my course. It was then that I realized that students also shared my enthusiasm for the course and the material. One student commented on how relevant the course was to her life. Another noted how pleased he was that the course had encouraged him to think about family and relationship issues in a new way; still another hoped that she could use her learning to improve her marriage.

Thus, the comments of students reinforced my thinking and my writing and it became something of a mission to introduce this material to interested students. And since they continued to sign up for the course, I continued to explore with them the emerging knowledge that makes up the field of relationship science. I feel very fortunate that I have had the opportunity to introduce students to the work of researchers, theorists, and therapists who have contributed to our knowledge base concerning marriage, family, and relationship issues. The work of these scholars' spans a number of different disciplines and is significant because it has the potential to impact lives in many positive ways. This book was written because of the significant work of these individuals; without their research, knowledge, and insight, there would be no book.

If you are a student using this book, my hope is that you will find this material as fascinating and exciting as I have. A Study Guide and other resources are available at www.understandingrelationships.net for assisting you in learning and understanding this material. As you read and discuss the book's content, I also hope that you will find ways to enhance your family life and intimate relationships. Much has been written about the breakdown of the family in our culture today. Many believe that the problems of crime,

drugs, poor performance in education, and many of the other woes we see around us have their roots in the family. If this is so, how do we address these problems? The answer I believe is—one family and one relationship at a time. What Barbara Bush said in the 1990s is still pertinent today, “What happens in your house makes more difference than what happens in the White House.”

If you are an instructor teaching a relationship course, I hope this material will allow you to shape a meaningful learning experience for your students. You will note that the content of this book is not as encyclopedic as many other texts; I have attempted to focus on issues and topics that are more family and relationship specific. This has allowed me to write about some topics in greater detail and I believe this depth allows students to better relate the material to their lives. Those of us who teach family and relationship courses usually want to go beyond just imparting knowledge; we want to help our students improve their family and intimate relationships. This is a noble but daunting challenge. If you have found ways that have worked for you in accomplishing this task, I would welcome hearing from you at jlehman@uscupstate.edu. In addition, if you use or are thinking about using this book in a course you teach, information about instructional resources is available at www.understandingrelationships.net.

I would like to thank my friend and colleague, Dr. Karen Macrae, who read portions of this manuscript and gave me valuable feedback. Also, this book would not have been possible without the support of the professionals at Charles C Thomas. I would like to thank them for their valuable help and assistance.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

- My Students' Experiences
 - Some Conclusions at the Beginning
 - Tools that Successful Couples Use
 - A Marriage and Family Story
 - My Hope for the Reader
 - The Content
-

It is 8:45 a.m., just fifteen minutes before a new semester begins. I am about to meet my marriage, family, and intimate relationship class for the first time. The class roll indicates that the class is full. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors from many areas across our campus have enrolled. As I make my way toward the classroom, I wonder why students have chosen to take a class on relationships. Of course, there are many reasons: the course is being taught at a convenient time, a friend had taken the course and recommended it, the course will count as elective credit, or perhaps they want to better understand intimate relationships in their lives. I know that relationships are central to students' lives—their satisfaction and happiness are often closely related to the well-being of their relationships.

MY STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

First classes are usually difficult. Instructors struggle with how to be interesting, yet at the same time communicate necessary information about the course. I frequently ask students to write questions that they have about relationships or specific relationship problems. If they are allowed to do this anonymously, they usually share quite candidly. If this class is like others, students will have a variety of questions and problems to share. In the past the following comments have been typical.

- I have been married for six months. So far it has been wonderful. We are still in a kind of honeymoon stage and the newness of our intimacy and sharing is still fresh. But how can we keep it this way? When I look at my parents' marriage, I don't see happiness. How can I keep my marriage from becoming like their marriage?
- My boyfriend and I are living together or, as they say, cohabiting. We both thought that it would be a good idea. But now I'm not too sure! I seem to be giving more than I am getting in return. My expectations of what it would be like living together have not panned out. Were my expectations too high? Should I settle for less than I envisioned or say that the experience taught me that we are not right for each other?
- I am in the first serious relationship of my life. It feels good to be so close to another person. But I am fast losing my ability to think rationally. Yet when I do try to think about "us," I realize that we are very different, so different it's scary. Should I be concerned about these differences or will they make our relationship more exciting and keep us from being bored? I have seen so many married couples who seem to be bored with each other.
- My girlfriend and I argue constantly. Sometimes I wonder what we see in each other. But we cannot seem to break up. When we have tried, I can't get her off my mind and she says she feels the same way about me. So we get back together and before long we are arguing again. Do marriages between two people like us ever work out?
- I am thinking about filing for divorce. I have been married 12 years, have two children, and am married to a workaholic husband. He provides well but is never home and rarely helps with the children. I don't know what happened to our relationship. It seems like we woke up one morning and what we had was gone. Could we get our relationship back? I hate thinking about rearing the children by myself, but that looks like what may happen.
- Sometimes I wonder what's wrong with me. I am living with a man who has a violent temper and tries to control my every move. He is extremely jealous and believes that I have been unfaithful to him. He has not actually hit me, but I'm afraid that he might. Why did I fall for a man like this? Is there any chance he might change?
- I am shy and can't seem to meet anybody. My roommate and I are so different; she never meets a stranger and is out with friends all the time. I am not comfortable with having anyone too close to me. I'm not even sure I ever want to get married, but then it's depressing to think I might be alone all my life. Is there any hope for someone like me?
- My daughter is fourteen and right now we are having a lot of problems with her. She is threatening to run away if we don't let her do what she

wants. She has gotten in with a bad group at school and they have more influence with her than her dad and I do. We argue constantly with her about her room, her friends, her tattoos, her music, and just about everything else. I am really worried. We don't know what to do; certainly what we are doing is not working. Help!

- I have a beautiful marriage and a wonderful family. I realize how fortunate I am to have a loving husband and two healthy, happy daughters. We do a lot of things together as a family and I just hope that we are spared major problems down the road. We have strong religious beliefs and I think this has drawn us closer as a family.
- We have just had our first child. She has a difficult temperament and cries constantly. We have lost more sleep in the last month than I would have thought possible. We asked the doctor whether this would ever end. He recommended a book about children who cry a lot and are difficult. When are we going to find time to read a book?
- My father and mother never married so I never really knew my father very well. My mother was a single mother struggling with all of the problems that single mother's experience. She did the best she could under the circumstances, but it was hard for her and for me. I feel that I have somehow been cheated. I would daydream that my father would come and take me away and love me so all the hurt would go away. What I am wondering is this: how will the absence of a father affect me? Will I always be distrustful of men like I now seem to be? I desperately want a relationship, but at the same time, I am suspicious of every male's intent.

Of course, answers to questions like these do not come easily. However, throughout the semester, the course material and class discussion will address many of their concerns.

SOME CONCLUSIONS AT THE BEGINNING

I believe that there are things that students interested in relationships should know even before beginning their study. These things are not earth shattering; many of my students have probably already drawn these conclusions on their own.

- Humans have a need to love and be loved. We seek out companionship with others. And there is something special and deeply satisfying about an intimate love relationship.
- Yet close loving relationships, while highly rewarding and satisfying, can also be the source of great pain. Some of our greatest joys and