

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Associations Between Participant Ratings of PREP for Strong Bonds and Marital Outcomes One Year Postintervention

Allen, E. S., Post, K. M., Markman, H. J., Rhoades, G. K., & Stanley, S. M. (2017). Associations between participant ratings of PREP for Strong Bonds and marital outcomes one year postintervention. *Military Psychology, 29*(4), 283–293. doi:10.1037/mil0000155

SUMMARY: Relationship education programs are designed to improve relationship outcomes. Over 300 participants participated in the Prevention and Relationship Education Program (PREP) for Strong Bonds, and their ratings of the program, marital satisfaction, and communication skills were measured one year after the program. Results revealed that participants' ratings of the program modestly predicted marital outcomes one year after the intervention.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Couples' marital outcomes one year after the program were not related to their overall satisfaction level with the program or the program leaders.
- Couples' communication skills were associated with their ratings of how much they learned, program helpfulness, and helpfulness of communication skills training.
- People who reported being more willing to invest time in the relationship, more confident in constructive communication, and more willing to work as a team were more likely to have higher marital satisfaction.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop classes and workshops for military couples to increase their marital satisfaction and communication skills
- Organize activities for military couples so that they have the opportunity to enjoy time together and bond with each other
- Offer support groups for couples who are in distress so that they can learn from each other and share experiences

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support relationship education programs that are tailored to the needs of military couples
- Encourage training for professionals who work with military couples on how to teach couples communication skills
- Continue to support programs aimed at increasing military family well-being and marital satisfaction

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



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METHODS

- Couples were recruited via brochures, media stories, posters, and referrals from chaplains; all couples were married, received at least a portion of PREP intervention, and remained married one year after the intervention.
- Follow-up assessments were conducted one year post the PREP intervention and included questions regarding program evaluation, marital satisfaction, and communication skills.
- Data were analyzed to examine the relationships between PREP ratings and marital outcomes one year after the program.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 368 individuals from 191 couples (181 males and 187 females) who received PREP interventions one year ago and completed the follow-up assessment; the average age of male participants was 28.2 years (SD = 5.7) and the average age of female participants was 27.3 years (SD = 6.1).
- The majority of male participants were White (68%), followed by Latino (13%), Black (11%), Multiracial (3%), Asian (2%), Native American (2%), and others (1%); most female participants were White (68%), followed by Latina (14%), Black (10%), Multiracial (6%), and others (2%).
- Most male participants were Active Duty Soldiers (97%) and most females were civilians (91%).

LIMITATIONS

- The average marital satisfaction at baseline (5.62 out of 7) and program satisfaction (6.27 out of 7) were both high, therefore the results may be biased due to ceiling effects (score limitation at the top of a scale).
- All participants were affiliated with the Army, therefore the results may not apply to individuals affiliated with other military branches.
- Only married couples were included in the study, so caution must be taken when generalizing the results to couples who are not married but living together.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term associations between PREP ratings and participants' marital outcomes years after the program
- Examine the effectiveness of PREP intervention in military branches other than the Army
- Investigate whether the PREP intervention can improve relationship satisfaction in unmarried couples

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