Intimate Relationships and Communication

Chapter 4

Developing Intimate Relationships

- Be willing to give of yourself
- Self-concept, self-esteem, and self-acceptance
    - Feel good about yourself
    - Have a healthy relationship with yourself
    - Positive views of self develop in infancy and childhood
- Gender role and communication
    - Cultural expectations are also learned in childhood and affect the way we relate to others
- Attachment
    - Adult styles of loving may be based on childhood styles of attachment to a primary caregiver

Friendship

- Friendships teach tolerance, sharing, and trust

    Characteristics of friendship:

    - Companionship

    - Respect

    - Acceptance

    - Help

    - Trust

    - Loyalty

    - Mutuality

    - Reciprocity

    Friendships may be longer lasting than romantic relationships
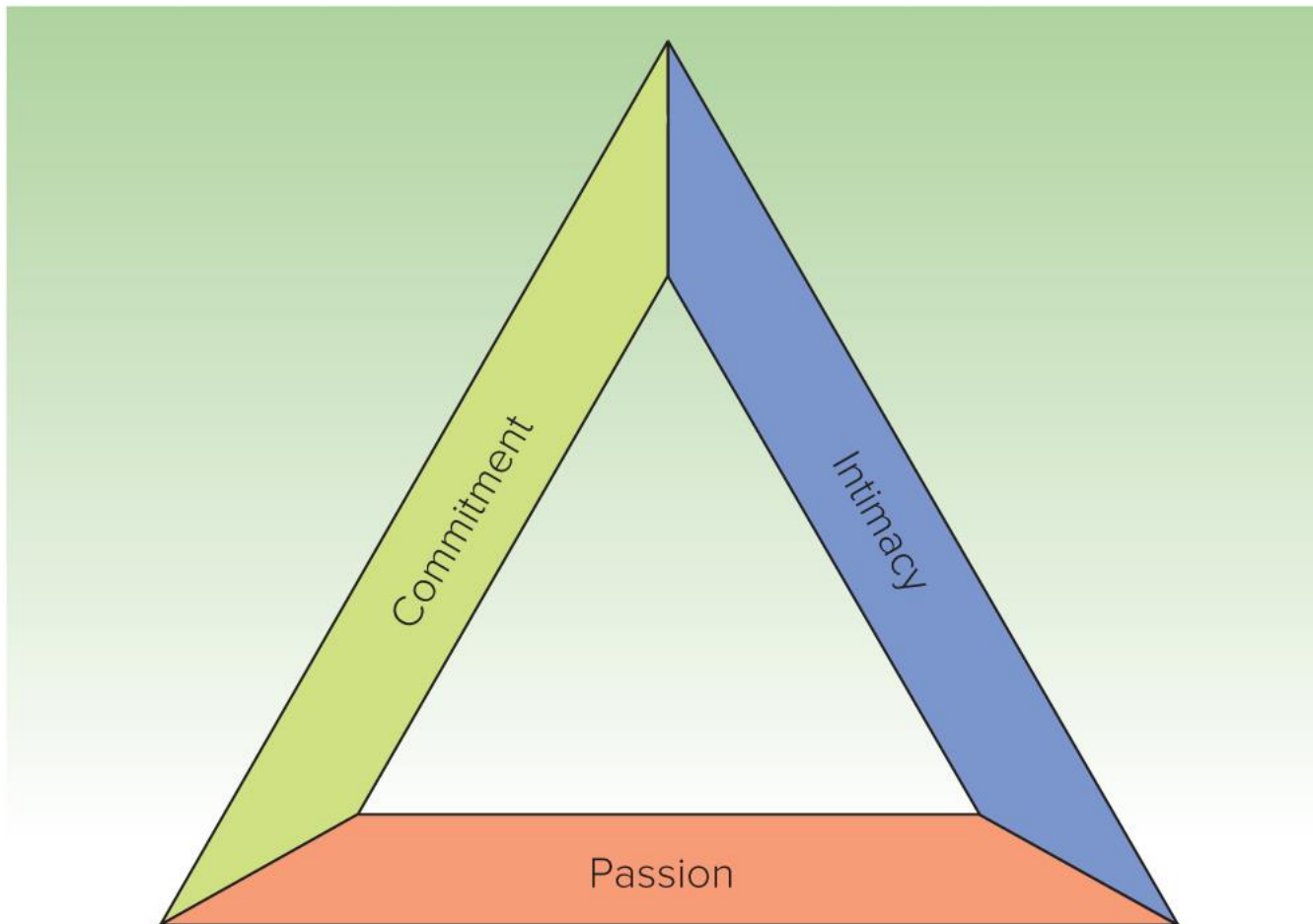
Love, Sex, and Intimacy

- Love is a profound and basic human emotion

- In many kinds of relationships, love is entwined with sexuality

- Personal standards, not social norms, are the basis for decisions about sex today

    Has led to an increased emphasis on sex over love

Love, Sex, and Intimacy (2)

- For most, love, sex, and commitment are closely linked

  Love: positive factors that draw people together

  Sex: excitement and passion, adds fascination and pleasure

  Commitment: reflects responsibility, reliability, and faithfulness

- Other features of love that can be temporary: euphoria, preoccupation, idealization, devaluation, infatuation

Love, Sex, and Intimacy (3)

- Triangular theory of love (Robert Sternberg)

    Intimacy: feelings of attachment, closeness, connectedness, bondedness

    Passion: motivational drives and sexual attraction

    Commitment: decision to remain together, with the ultimate goal of making long-term plans

- Different stages of love are based on different combinations of the three dimensions

Figure 4.1 Triangular Theory of Love

Ultimately a relationship based on a single element—passion or intimacy or commitment—is less likely to survive than is one based on two or three dimensions.

Love, Sex, and Intimacy (4)

- Pleasure and pain of love
  - Passionate love involves both pleasure and pain
  - Physical arousal accompanies many emotions
- Transformation of love
  - Over time, for most, passion decreases
  - Intimacy may continue to grow or diminish
  - Commitment is maintained unless other aspects of the relationship deteriorate
  - Key to enduring relationships is transforming passion into an intimate love

Challenges in Relationships

- What opportunities do our relationships offer?

  Healthiest relationships may be those that allow us to feel secure even when we are apart

  Relationships that offer the greatest chance to grow are those in which we can be open, nonjudgmental, expressive, and understood

- Honesty and openness are necessary for a relationship to deepen

Challenges in Relationships (2)

- Emotional intelligence

    Emotionally intelligent people can given and receive emotional support

    Ability to observe emotions without judging them helps during arguments or conflicts

    Mindfulness is key

- Unequal or premature commitment makes it difficult to maintain a relationship

- Unrealistic expectations can damage intimacy

Challenges in Relationships (3)

- Competitiveness

    Connectedness can be jeopardized if one partner feels the need to always compete

- Balancing time together and apart

    Every person is unique and has different needs for distance and closeness in a relationship

- Jealousy

    Healthy self-esteem and clear communication are key

- Supportiveness

    Asking for and giving support

Unhealthy Relationships

- It is important to recognize when a relationship is unhealthy

    Physical or emotional abuse

    Codependency

- Relationship my be unhealthy if little value is placed on time spent together

- Criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and withdrawal may indicate a relationship is not salvageable

- There are negative physical and mental consequences to an unhappy relationship

Ending a Relationship

Usually difficult and painful

Give the relationship a fair chance

Be fair and honest

Be tactful and compassionate

If you are the rejected person, make time for resolving your anger and pain

Recognize the value in the experience

Communication

- Nonverbal communication
    - Ability to interpret nonverbal messages is important
    - Body language should agree with words
- Digital communication and our social networks
    - Be mindful of how social media can influence communication and relationships:
        - Missing nonverbal cues
        - Promoting an idealized version of oneself
        - Spying
        - Checking one's phone rather than staying present
        - Publicizing more areas of one's life

Communication (2)

- Communication skills

    Self-disclosure: revealing risky personal information usually helps create greater intimacy

    Listening: trying to understand instead of judging, blaming, advising, or trying to control

    Feedback: a constructive response to another's self-disclosure, usually involving reciprocal self-disclosure

Conflict and Conflict Resolution

- Conflict is natural

    It is best to let anger dissipate before trying to resolve conflict

- Conflict resolution skills are vital for maintaining intimate relationships

    Clarify the issue

    Find out what each person wants

    Determine how you can both get what you want

    Negotiate changes and be willing to compromise

    Solidify agreements verbally or in writing

    Review and renegotiate

Pairing and Singlehood

- Choosing a partner

  First attraction—observable characteristics

  – Similarities: geography, ethnic and socioeconomic background, educational level, lifestyle, physical attractiveness, and other traits

  After the euphoria of romantic love, the emphasis switches to values and future aspirations

  Most important question: How much do we have in common?

  – Differences add value, but similarities increase the chances of success

  – Acceptance and communication are key

Dating

- Different cultures have different rituals for finding a mate

- Many people find romantic partners through dating, often centered on a mutually enjoyable activity

- Traditional male-female pattern evolves into steady dating, engagement, and marriage

- Greater equality has led to a new pattern where intimacy develops in a group context

- Among the young, dating has been supplanted by hooking up

Online Dating and Relationships

- Advantages of connecting with people online:

  Allows for relaxed communication

  Easier, with less investment

  Can get to know someone from home, set your own pace, and start and end a relationship at any time

- Disadvantages:

  Misrepresentation

  Greater tendency to idealize online partners because people reveal only what they want

  Removes body language, chemistry, and intuition from the process

Online Dating and Relationships (2)

- Tips for online dating:

  Choose a site that fits your relationship goals

  Make sure you and your date are have similar intentions

  Don't post photos without knowing the consequences

  Don't give out personal information

  Use a unique email for online dating

  If someone doesn't respond, don't take it personally

  Before meeting in person, talk on the phone

  Don't agree to meet unless you feel comfortable; meet in a public place; consider bringing a friend; and let others know where you will be
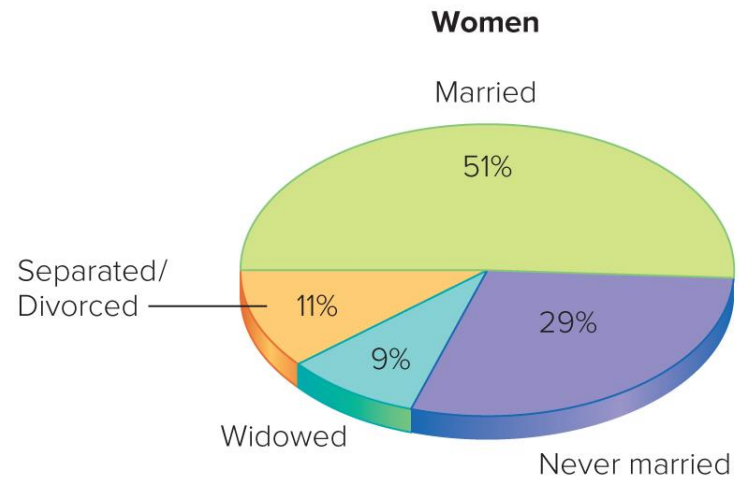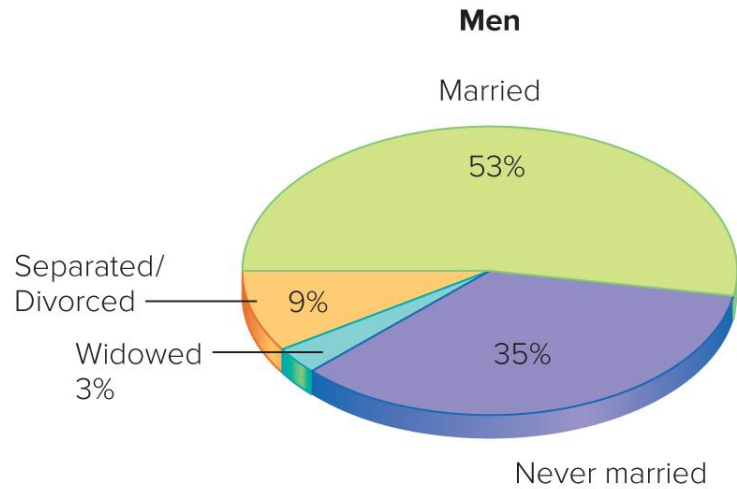
Living Together

- Gaining acceptance as part of the normal mate-selection process

  > Greater tolerance of sex outside marriage; increased availability of contraceptives; and people marrying later

- Provides many of the benefits of marriage, along with greater autonomy and fewer obligations

- Disadvantages include a lack of legal protections and, often, pressure from one's family to get married

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Relationships

- Sexual orientation: a consistent pattern of attraction to persons of the same sex or gender, a different sex or gender, or more than one sex or gender

  Some people prefer to self-identify as queer

- Regardless of sexual orientation, most people look for love in a committed relationship

- Queer relationships tend to be more equal and less organized around traditional gender roles

- Sexual minorities often rely heavily on community

  Homophobia: fear or hatred of homosexuals

Singlehood

- Growing number of adults never marry
    - Changing views on singlehood
    - Delayed age for marrying
    - Financial independence takes longer to achieve
    - Cohabitation is more common
    - Divorce rates are high

- Advantages: career and personal development; freedom

- Disadvantages: lack of companionship; economic hardships

Men

Married 53%

Separated/Divorced 9%

Widowed 3%

Never married 35%

Women

Married 51%

Separated/Divorced 11%

Widowed 9%

Never married 29%

Figure 4.2 **Marital Status of the U.S. Population, 2015**

Currently more than 116 million single individuals—35% of men and 29% of women—have never been married.

Marriage

- In the past, people married mainly for practical reasons; today, they marry for more personal, emotional reasons

- Benefits of marriage include providing a setting for raising children and building a secure future

- Trend in marriage is toward an equalization of duties and responsibilities

  Couples are often marrying later

  Second, later-life unions are also common

Marriage (2)

- Best predictors of a happy marriage:

    Realistic expectations

    Acceptance of the other's personality

    Development of friendships with other couples

    Good communication

    Effective ways of resolving conflict

    Agreement on religious/ethical issues

    Egalitarian roles

    Good balance of individual and joint interests

- Commitment is the most important part of a relationship for some couples

Separation and Divorce

- High rates of divorce in the United States may reflect high expectations for marriage and a lack of believe in the permanence of marriage

  Physical separation usually follows an emotional separation

  Recovery involves construction of a postdivorce identity

- Sometimes counseling is necessary to help children

- Divorce is often followed by remarriage

  Number of stepfamilies is growing
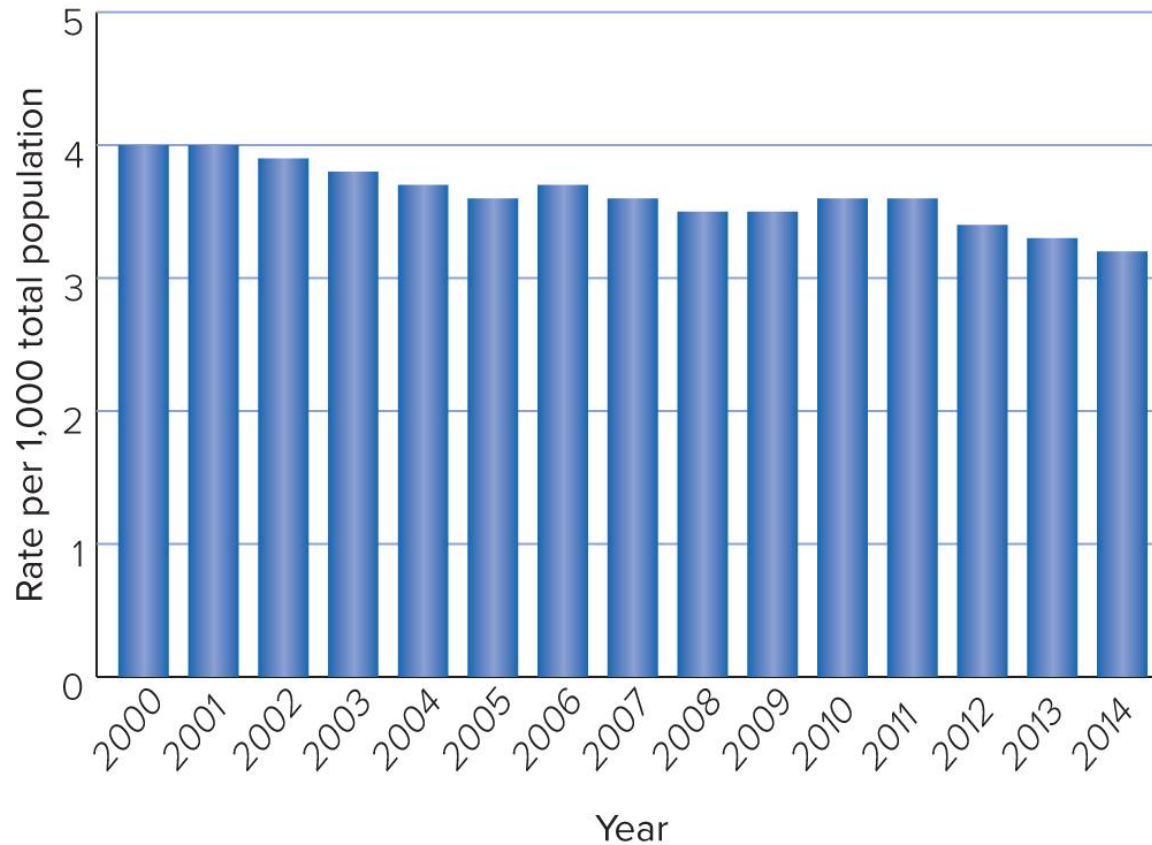
Figure 4.3 Divorces and annulments: United States, 2000–2014

Although the rates have dropped since the year 2000, divorce is still fairly common in the United States.

Becoming a Parent

- Birth of a first child is an extremely stressful transition
    - Marital roles tend to become more traditional
    - Mothers usually have to make greater changes in their lives
    - Marital satisfaction often declines
- Successful couples have these characteristics:
    - Strong relationship before the baby was born
    - Planned to have the child
    - Good communication

Parenting

- Parenting styles vary
    - Demandingness
    - Responsiveness
- Four general styles of parenting:
    - Authoritarian
    - Authoritative
    - Permissive
    - Uninvolved

Parenting (2)

- Every child has a tendency toward certain moods and a style of reacting—a temperament

  Easy

  Difficult

  Slow-to-warm-up

- Difficulties tend to arise when there is a "mismatch" in temperament/styles between child and parent

- Advocates of attachment parenting believe children who are constantly held and attended to will grow up to be more independent

Parenting and the Family Life Cycle

- At each stage, the relationship between parents and children changes

- Early on, parents ensure physical well-being around the clock

- Later, parents must strike a balance between giving freedom and setting limits

- Marital satisfaction tends to decline when children are in school because of additional pressures
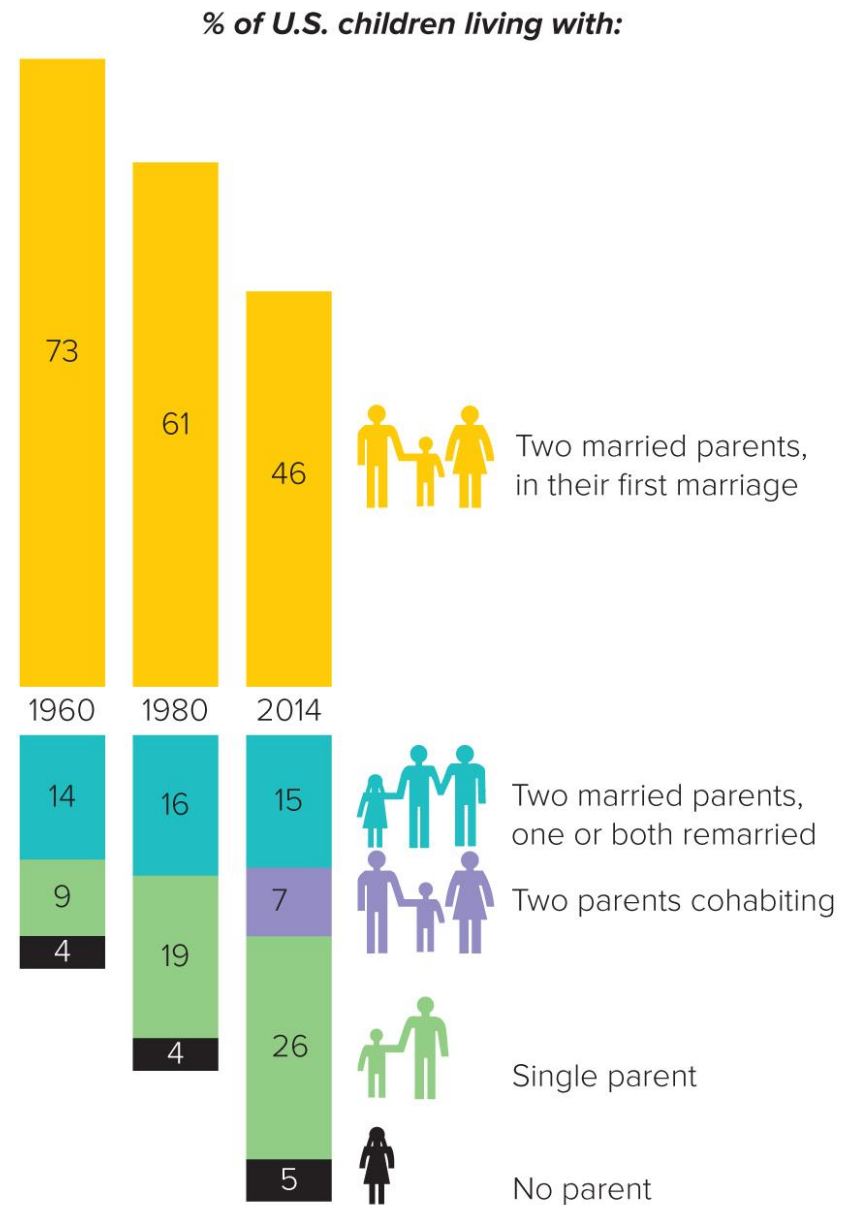
Single Parents

- About 26% of children today are living with a single parent

- Economic difficulties are the primary problem for single mothers

- Single fatherhood is much more rare, and typically the father's primary concern is having enough time with his children

- Children from single-parent families have less success in school and careers, but this may be a result of other factors

% of U.S. children living with:

Figure 4.4 Growing Diversity in Family Living Arrangements

According to Pew Research Institute, about 26% of children today are living with a single parent, compared with about 68% with two parents that may both be in their first marriage, one or both parents in a second marriage, or both parents cohabiting.

Two married parents, in their first marriage

Two married parents, one or both remarried

Two parents cohabiting

Single parent

No parent

1960   1980   2014

73   61   46

14   16   15

9   7

4   19

4   26

5

SOURCE: Pew Research Center. 2015. Parenting in America: Outlook, Worries, Aspirations Are Strongly Linked to Financial Situation (http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/parenting-in-america)

Stepfamilies

- Healthy stepfamilies are both less cohesive and more adaptable than healthy primary families

- Stepfamilies need time and shared experiences to gain the feeling of being a family

Successful Families

- Strong families cope successfully with stress and crisis

    Shared routines are highly beneficial

- Eight major qualities appear in strong families:

    Commitment

    Appreciation

    Communication

    Time together

    Spiritual wellness

    Stress, crisis, and conflict management

    Affectionate physical contact

Review

- Explain the qualities that help people develop intimate relationships

- Explain elements of healthy and productive communication

- Describe types of love relationships as well as singlehood

- Discuss the benefits and challenges of marriage

- Describe challenges and rewards of family life