

Part 2: The Two of Us and the Baby

Thursday 6.11.2014 16.00-16.45
(+ chat 16.45-17.15)



Why Does Your Relationship Matter?

- Being in a close and loving relationship has multiple benefits:
 - To you
 - To your partner
 - To your relationship
 - To your family
 - To your baby (see the next slide)



Why Does Your Relationship Matter?

- The greatest gift a couple can give their baby is a loving relationship
- Parents happy relationship has a positive influence on baby's development
- The quality of the relationship affects the parenting behavior of both parents. Parents in happy relationships are:
 - more responsive, affectionate and confident with their infants
 - more self-controlled in dealing with defiant toddlers



Parenthood Changes Your Lives

- Parenthood is a life changing experience and requires adjustment
- Changes happen on many levels:
 - Personal
 - Relationship
 - Family
- All couples experience changes
- Intercultural couples face unique issues and challenges



Issues Common to all Couples

- Sleep patterns
- Couple time and quality one-on-one time
- Interaction and communication
- Conflict and arguments
- (Physical) intimacy
- Gender roles
- Expectations versus reality
- Relationship satisfaction



Personal Story

We didn't really believe it, but having a baby changed our relationship. We used to spend a lot of time together, doing things we both enjoyed. Now everything seems to revolve around the baby. I love our everyday life with the baby, but our relationship feels a bit dull at the moment. Fortunately we both accept things the way they are: this is inevitable at this stage and the situation won't last forever. We also try to organise time for each other. It's not easy though, because my parents don't live in Finland and my partner's parents live in another town.



Issues Common to Intercultural Couples

- Integration issues
- Language
- Social support networks:
 - Friends
 - Family
 - Grandparents
- Information and awareness
- Expectations



Personal Story

We have come through challenging phases in our marriage since our son was born. My husband misses his own family a lot now that we have our own child. We have got to know (and had to!) each other better. We don't have much time to spend together as couple and also the time to do our "own things" is short. It takes time to find a balance with family time, your own time and work. We have both matured and let go of some more selfish habits. Sometimes it's better to sleep on the floor with a coughing baby than to wake up your partner who needs to wake up early to go to work the next morning!



Tips For The Expatriate Partner

Learn the language

"Language is probably to most stressful thing so 'bite the bullet'!"
 "And also to learn the language for the foreign couple as much as possible. I have met people who have been here for decades and they can't speak Finnish and I think it must be so isolating and their experiences so limited. And Finnish isn't that difficult, it depends on your attitude and motivation and also what your native language is."

Take care of your relationship and be open with your spouse

"The most important thing is empathy."
 "I would say that listen to each other. I would say that's... at least the starting point. If you want to, you know find a balance, you really have to talk and listen to each other. And then further on you have to compromise and find solutions, but I would say it is most important that you actually listen to your partner."
 "Monocultural couples have subliminal understand, but we don't have that. We have to explain it, write it down, break it down, sometimes even use a dictionary. Explain, explain, explain. Communication is a big thing in a relationship I believe. Communication is a vital thing."



Tips For The Expatriate Partner

Be proactive

"Have something to do, join something like a sport or a choir or group where you see the same people every week, and find a job or a place to study. Yeah, start a language course. I think that's important, to feel like you are actually doing something."
 "But if you keep busy and have a sense of purpose, then you feel great about yourself"

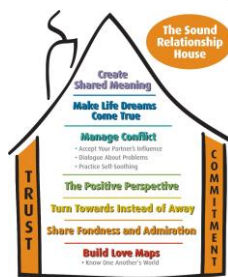
Be patient and tolerant

"So give yourself some time, take some distance, observe and if you don't like something, think about it, don't make hasty conclusions because the chances are within a short time you realise you weren't right. Maybe you were just having a bad day. Have patience, don't judge the book by its cover. Give it time. With time anything is possible. It's a good place, a safe place and there a lot of advantages in being here."

Do your research

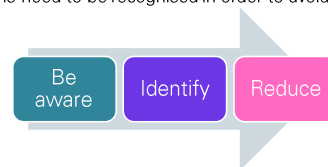


The Sound Relationship House



Destructive Interaction Patterns

- Destructive interaction patterns, such as harsh start-ups, escalation, invalidation, criticism and defensiveness, are harmful to a relationship
- They make dealing with conflicts difficult
- Patterns need to be recognised in order to avoid them



Recipe For Happiness (part 1)

- Accept change
- Talk openly: What are your expectations? Do you have the same plan and are you committed to it?
- Face your differences
- Delight in responding to your baby
- Add warm fathering and equally shared parenting to the mix
- Develop and maintain strong social networks



Recipe For Happiness (part 2)

- Cherish your relationship, don't put it on hold!
- Work on good communication
- Cool down your conflicts
- Savour your friendship
- Build a zesty sex life
- Be appreciate and show affection
- Create a third culture and build a family legacy



Tips From Other Parents

"Agree of a week plan - I have 2 days of my own in a week, when I can do whatever I want after work and I don't have to take care of anything at home. My husband doesn't plan anything on those days and if he has to, we swap. He also has two days a week for his hobbies and 3 remaining days are family days. There are no exceptions from this rule and I think that's worked WONDERS for us, taught us mutual respect and let us focus on our hobbies and such while having a small active child."

"I think it's less about culture and more about gender. Usually mothers bear more responsibility than fathers and that leads to frustration. Share the load!"

"Talk to each other of your expectations, what you think are the roles of mum and dad, what is important for you when growing a child. It is better to talk of these things beforehand so that you know what the other expects and wants"

"Make sure you understand your partner's childhood, their family culture, their parents' good and bad: these will become the basis of how each of you understands parenting and the assumptions of what to do in certain situations. The underlying tacit understanding of children, childhood, development and parenting are crucial to open and converse about and decide within your own family what are the expectations, desires and goals. No matter how much I thought we had done this, a majority of our conflicts essentially arise from differing childhood cultures (not only from different countries, but different family lives)."



Next Steps

- **It's time to chat!** What did you think about the lecture? What questions did it raise?
- Continue the dialogue in the Facebook group
- Take a look at the exercises and bonus material at the website en.duoduo.fi/part-2-the-two-of-us-and-the-baby
- The next lecture and chat (Part 3: Bringing up an intercultural and bilingual child) takes place on:
 - Tuesday 11 November, 16.00-17.15

