

10 Reasons Your Family Matters to America The Ruth Institute 2018

*Are you sometimes discouraged about your marriage? Thinking of throwing in the towel?
Before you do, consider these benefits your marriage provides to others.*

- 1. Your marriage protects the rights of children to know their parents.**
Children need to experience the love of a mother and father. Children are entitled to a relationship with both parents—to know and be known by both parents. But children cannot possibly protect these entitlements on their own. Marriage proactively protects these rights; it assures that children, created by their parents, will also be bound to their parents.
- 2. Your marriage directs sexual activity into healthy channels.**
Marriage creates an expectation that the husband and wife will not be making babies outside of the home with other partners who cannot commit to the child. A marriage, even if it is currently childless, protects the natural rights of their future children to affiliate with both parents. In this way, even permanently childless marriages benefit children’s rights, and hence society, by reserving sexual activity to a setting that prevents out-of-wedlock birth.
- 3. Your marriage prevents fatherlessness.**
Marriage is society’s most reliable way of attaching fathers to their children during the many years it takes for them to reach adulthood. Large numbers of scientific studies over decades have consistently shown that father absence presents problems for children.¹ For millennia, marriage has brilliantly solved the fatherhood question by attaching men and women to each other before new life is created. This attachment helps eliminate confusion about the obligations either parent has to each other and to the child.
- 4. Your marriage teaches children about the permanence of true love.**
Children of divorce consistently say that they are unsure whether they can make love last.² Children of divorce are more likely to get divorced themselves.³ These facts point to one overarching fact: a stable marriage helps children understand and appreciate lifelong love.
- 5. Your marriage helps your children trust and be trustworthy.**
The family is a child’s first link to the rest of the human race. Parents spend a lot of time wiping noses and tying shoes, which might seem to be menial chores anyone can do. But as a by-product of fulfilling these mundane tasks, parents convey to the child that he or she matters to them. Only a parent can say, “You are our child, and no one will ever take you away. We will never get rid of you.”

¹ **Fatherhood Facts, Seventh Edition**, National Fatherhood Initiative, 2015, especially Chapter 5, highlighting that father absence creates higher risks of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, suicidal thoughts, poverty, poor health, emotional and behavioral problems, poorer academic attainment, and child abuse.

² Leila Miller, **Primal Loss: The Now-Adult Children of Divorce Speak**, Forward by Jennifer Roback Morse (Phoenix, AZ: LCB Publishing, 2017.)

³ Pat Fagan and Aaron Churchill, “The Effects of Divorce on Children,” (Washington DC: Marriage and Religion Research Institute, 2012,) especially pp. 23-25. <https://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF12A22.pdf>

The parents' marriage creates this unique promise which is irreplaceable by any other institution. This relationship creates a foundation of trust essential to all other forms of human cooperation.

6. Your marriage saves the taxpayers money.

When the family breaks down, the taxpayers often step in: government programs for poverty relief, health, education, and, all too often, juvenile delinquency and criminal justice. One study announces its estimate of the taxpayer costs of father absence in its title: "The One Hundred Billion Dollar Man." This figure is their estimate of the taxpayer costs of fatherlessness nationwide.⁴ Another study, using slightly different methodology, concludes that the total annual cost of fatherlessness to federal, state, and local taxpayers amounted to \$112 billion.⁵ Either way, we're talking about serious money.

7. Your marriage sets the standard for your children's future.

"Fathers who treat the mothers of their children with respect and deal with conflict within the relationship in an adult and appropriate manner are more likely to have boys who understand how they are to treat women and who are less likely to act in an aggressive fashion toward females. Girls with involved respectful fathers see how they should expect men to treat them and are less likely to become involved in violent or unhealthy relationships."⁶

Daughters of unmarried parents, on average, get their first period earlier, are sexually active earlier, and are more likely to have a premarital birth.⁷

Boys raised outside of an intact nuclear family are more likely than other boys to engage in delinquent behavior, including carrying guns and dealing drugs.⁸

8. Your marriage reduces violence in the community.

The most important predictor of criminal behavior is not race, income, or religious affiliation. It's father-absence.⁹ Neighborhoods without fathers are neighborhoods without men able and willing to confront errant youth, chase threatening gangs, and reproach delinquent fathers. The absence of fathers deprives the community of those little platoons that informally but effectively control the boys on the street.

Additionally, marriage is the setting where it is most likely that an errant or abusive parent will be confronted and corrected. Multigenerational families have

⁴ Steven L. Nock and Christopher J. Einolf, *The One Hundred Billion Dollar Man: the annual public cost of father absence*, The National Fatherhood Initiative, Jun 30, 2008.

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=100_billion_dollar_man.pdf

⁵ Benjamin Scafidi, **The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing: First Ever Estimates for the US and all 50 States**, (New York: Institute for American Values, 2008).

<http://americanvalues.org/catalog/pdfs/COFF.pdf>

⁶ Jeffrey Rosenberg and W. Bradford Wilcox, **The Importance of Fathers in the healthy Development of Children**. Child Abuse and Neglect User Manual Series. (Washington DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). Pages 11-12. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/fatherhood.pdf>

⁷ **Fatherhood Facts, Seventh Edition**, National Fatherhood Initiative, 2015, pp. 24-29.

⁸ **Fatherhood Facts, Seventh Edition**, National Fatherhood Initiative, 2015, pp. 15-17.

⁹ **Fatherhood Facts, Seventh Edition**, National Fatherhood Initiative, 2015, pp. 17.

a dramatic effect on preventing and addressing domestic violence.¹⁰ In this setting, it is much more likely that a partner will have the emotional health, education, resources, and network of support¹¹ to escape or confront an abusive partner.*

9. Your marriage reduces poverty.

In the past, children were largely assured an intact home, and poverty often depended on what a father did for a living. But fatherlessness and other forms of family breakdown now affect about half of American children. Child poverty is more likely to depend on whether children live with their fathers. “Since the 1970s, children in single-mother-headed families (who make up the clear majority of single-parent families) are over four times more likely to be poor, compared to children in married-parent families.”¹²

10. Your marriage makes marriage available to future generations.

Each of us has a marriage “imprint” based upon the marriage of our parents. Can you imagine entire communities without any marriage modeling at all? For instance, in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood of Baltimore in which the killing of Freddie Gray and subsequent riots took place, only 13% of children experience a two-parent home.¹³ Children have a harder time understanding what marriage is, how it functions, or how to behave in marriage, since they see permanent relationships so rarely. Such a weak marriage culture also makes it harder for young adults to find a dating pool of qualified partners to choose from. Their acquaintances have most likely not seen or experienced the benefits of a functional marriage either.

For 101 Tips for a Happier Marriage, go to the Ruth Institute store. For more information on the importance of trust in the family, see Love and Economics. For more information about the impact of divorce on children, see Marriage and Equality and Primal Loss.

¹⁰ W. Bradford Wilcox and Robin Fretwell Wilson, "One Way to End Violence Against Women? Married Dads," *Washington Times*, June 10, 2014
https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/06/10/the-best-way-to-end-violence-against-women-stop-taking-lovers-and-get-married/?utm_term=.b6884565c72f

¹¹ Lundy Bancroft, *Why Does he Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men* (New York: Penguin, 2002), 365; see chapters 14 and 15.

¹² W. Bradford Wilcox, Testimony before the “Committee on Building an Agenda to Reduce the Number of Children in Poverty by Half in 10 Years,” an ad-hoc committee of experts convened by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to study child poverty in the United States. June 21, 2017, Institute for Family Studies,
<https://ifstudies.org/blog/married-parents-one-way-to-reduce-child-poverty>

¹³ Baltimore City 2017 Neighborhood Health Profile, Baltimore City Health Department, pg. 7, Table 5.
[https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/NHP%202017%20-%2047%20Sandtown-Winchester-Harlem%20Park%20\(rev%206-9-17\).pdf](https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/NHP%202017%20-%2047%20Sandtown-Winchester-Harlem%20Park%20(rev%206-9-17).pdf)

**Note: if there is violence in your household, you must put a stop to it. Whether you are the perpetrator, the victim, or a co-perpetrator, you must get the help you need to end the violence and protect the innocent.*