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No kids the secret to a happier marriage

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0904/090413-marriage.html>

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13th April, 2009

THE ARTICLE

A new study has found that having a child can make a couple less happy with each other. Researchers from the University of Denver conducted an eight-year study of 218 sets of parents. Their report is called "The effect of the transition to parenthood on relationship quality". It is published in the March 2009 edition of the 'Journal of Personality and Social Psychology'. The psychologists examined how happy couples were in the eight years after the birth of their first child. They concluded that the first baby put a lot of stress and pressure on a marriage. Ninety percent of couples experienced a decrease in marital bliss immediately following the birth of their first child. Unmarried couples experienced bigger problems.

It's not all bad news for would-be parents. Some couples in the research said their relationship was stronger after their baby was born. Parents who were married for a long time before starting a family were happier. Couples on higher incomes also seemed to have fewer problems. Researcher Scott Stanley said his team's findings did not mean children bring unhappiness in life. He said that parents may be happier as part of a family than as a childless couple. He noted that "this type of happiness can be powerful and positive". Stanley also pointed out that couples who did not have children also became unhappier with each other over time. However, he said parenthood accelerated levels of unhappiness.

WARM-UPS

1. MARRIAGE: Walk around the class and talk to other students about marriage. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

having a child / happiness / parenthood / relationships / psychologists / pressure / bad news / starting a family / higher incomes / childless couples / being positive

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. MARITAL BLISS: What are the secrets to a happy marriage? Complete this table. Share your answers with your partner(s). Change partners and share again.

	Pros / Cons	I (will / won't) do this
Say "I love you"		
Have children		
Share the housework		
Let him drive		
She controls finances		
Buy lots of presents		

4. HAPPY FAMILIES: Students A **strongly** believe children lead to a stronger marriage; Students B **strongly** believe children cause too many arguments for parents. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. CHILDREN: With your partner(s), rate these things in order of which brings greatest happiness to parents. Share your ideas with your partner(s).

- baby's birth
- baby's first walk
- child's first day at school
- child's first A+ at school
- the first boy/girl friend
- graduation from university
- marriage
- the first grandchild

6. HAPPINESS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'happiness'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Researchers say having a child will negatively affect a marriage. T / F
- b. The researchers spent eight years studying 218 different parents. T / F
- c. The study looked at the impact of a couple having two children. T / F
- d. Parents who weren't married had more problems than married couples. T / F
- e. The article said there was some good news for future parents. T / F
- f. Richer parents were unhappier after the birth of their first baby. T / F
- g. The researchers said parents could be happier than childless couples. T / F
- h. Couples who did not have children stayed happy together forever. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. study | a. happiness |
| 2. conducted | b. kind |
| 3. transition | c. sped up |
| 4. examined | d. change |
| 5. bliss | e. report |
| 6. would-be | f. stated |
| 7. starting a family | g. hopeful |
| 8. noted | h. having children |
| 9. type | i. carried out |
| 10. accelerated | j. looked at |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. having a | a. happy couples were |
| 2. conducted an eight- | b. of unhappiness |
| 3. The psychologists examined how | c. bliss |
| 4. a lot of stress and | d. incomes |
| 5. couples experienced a decrease in marital | e. child |
| 6. It's not all bad news for would-be | f. pressure on a marriage |
| 7. their relationship was stronger after | g. be powerful and positive |
| 8. Couples on higher | h. year study |
| 9. this type of happiness can | i. their baby was born |
| 10. parenthood accelerated levels | j. parents |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A new study has found that _____ a child can make a couple less happy with each other. Researchers from the University of Denver _____ an eight-year study of 218 sets of parents. Their report is called "The effect of the transition to parenthood on relationship _____". It is published in the March 2009 edition of the 'Journal of Personality and Social Psychology'. The psychologists examined how _____ couples were in the eight years after the _____ of their first child. They concluded that the first baby put a lot of stress and pressure on a _____. Ninety percent of couples experienced a _____ in marital bliss immediately following the birth of their first child. Unmarried couples experienced bigger _____.

quality
problems
conducted
marriage
happy
having
decrease
birth

It's not all bad news for _____ parents. Some couples in the research said their relationship was stronger after their baby was born. Parents who were married for a long time before _____ a family were happier. Couples on higher _____ also seemed to have fewer problems. Researcher Scott Stanley said his team's _____ did not mean children bring unhappiness in life. He said that parents may be happier as _____ of a family than as a childless couple. He _____ that "this type of happiness can be powerful and positive". Stanley also _____ out that couples who did not have children also became unhappier with each other over time. However, he said parenthood accelerated _____ of unhappiness.

incomes
pointed
levels
would-be
part
starting
findings
noted

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

A new study has found that having a child can _____ happy with each other. Researchers from the University of Denver conducted an eight-year study _____ parents. Their report is called "The effect of the transition to parenthood on relationship quality". It is published in the _____ the 'Journal of Personality and Social Psychology'. The psychologists examined how happy couples were in the eight years _____ their first child. They concluded that the first baby put a lot of stress and pressure on a marriage. Ninety percent of couples experienced a decrease in marital bliss immediately following _____ first child. Unmarried couples experienced bigger problems.

It's not all bad _____ parents. Some couples in the research said their relationship was stronger after their baby was born. Parents who were married for a long time before _____ were happier. Couples on higher incomes also seemed to have fewer problems. Researcher Scott Stanley said his team's findings _____ children bring unhappiness in life. He said that parents may be happier as part of a family than _____ couple. He noted that "this type of happiness can be powerful and positive". Stanley also pointed out that couples who did not have children also became unhappier with each _____. However, he said parenthood accelerated levels of unhappiness.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'happy'** and **'marriage'**.

happy	marriage
--------------	-----------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• each• 218• quality• examined• stress• bliss	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• would-be• stronger• incomes• type• pointed• levels
--	---

STUDENT PARENTHOOD SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about parenthood in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

MARRIAGE DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'marriage'?
- c) Were you surprised by the Uni. of Denver's research findings?
- d) Do you think this research would make couples think twice about having children?
- e) What's the best number of children to have?
- f) What do you think it is about having children that reduces marital bliss?
- g) What is the "transition to parenthood"? Do you think it's difficult?
- h) What stresses and pressures does a first child bring?
- i) Why do unmarried couples have more problems after having a child?
- j) What is marital bliss? How long does it last?

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MARRIAGE DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What do would-be parents think about before starting a family?
- c) Would your relationship strengthen after your first child is born?
- d) Should parents have a "happiness test" before having a child?
- e) What are the best things about having children?
- f) Do you think couples fall back in love once their children grow up?
- g) Do you think governments should help new families stay happy?
- h) Do you think there's anything more joyful than having a child?
- i) Is marriage dying out?
- j) What questions would you ask researcher Scott Stanley?

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LANGUAGE

A new study has found that (1) _____ a child can make a couple less happy with each other. Researchers from the University of Denver conducted an eight-year study of 218 (2) _____ of parents. Their report is called "The effect of the transition to parenthood (3) _____ relationship quality". It is published in the March 2009 edition of the 'Journal of Personality and Social Psychology'. The psychologists examined how happy couples (4) _____ in the eight years after the birth of their first child. They concluded that the first baby put a lot of stress and pressure (5) _____ a marriage. Ninety percent of couples experienced a decrease in marital bliss immediately following the birth (6) _____ their first child. Unmarried couples experienced bigger problems.

It's not all bad news for (7) _____ parents. Some couples in the research said their relationship was stronger after their baby was born. Parents who were married for a long time before (8) _____ a family were happier. Couples on higher incomes also seemed to (9) _____ fewer problems. Researcher Scott Stanley said his team's findings did not mean children bring unhappiness in life. He said that parents may be (10) _____ as part of a family than as a childless couple. He noted that "this type of happiness can be (11) _____ and positive". Stanley also pointed out that couples who did not have children also became unhappier with (12) _____ other over time. However, he said parenthood accelerated levels of unhappiness.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. | (a) had | (b) has | (c) having | (d) have |
| 2. | (a) settings | (b) sets | (c) set | (d) setting |
| 3. | (a) on | (b) at | (c) to | (d) by |
| 4. | (a) are | (b) was | (c) been | (d) were |
| 5. | (a) in | (b) by | (c) on | (d) with |
| 6. | (a) up | (b) at | (c) of | (d) to |
| 7. | (a) would | (b) would-be | (c) would have | (d) wouldn't |
| 8. | (a) starting | (b) starts | (c) started | (d) start |
| 9. | (a) do | (b) have | (c) be | (d) take |
| 10. | (a) happier | (b) happily | (c) happiness | (d) snap happy |
| 11. | (a) power | (b) powered | (c) powerfully | (d) powerful |
| 12. | (a) the | (b) an | (c) one | (d) each |

HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about marriage. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. PARENTHOOD: Make a poster about the difficulties of parenthood. How can they be overcome? Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. MARITAL BLISS: Write a magazine article about a couple who fell out of love after their first child was born. Include imaginary interviews with the parents and the baby.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to researcher Scott Stanley. Ask him three questions about his research. Give him three ideas on what he should tell the parents in his study to stay happily married. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. F d. T e. T f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. study | a. report |
| 2. conducted | b. carried out |
| 3. transition | c. change |
| 4. examined | d. looked at |
| 5. bliss | e. happiness |
| 6. would-be | f. hopeful |
| 7. starting a family | g. having children |
| 8. noted | h. stated |
| 9. type | i. kind |
| 10. accelerated | j. sped up |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. having a | a. child |
| 2. conducted an eight- | b. year study |
| 3. The psychologists examined how | c. happy couples were |
| 4. a lot of stress and | d. pressure on a marriage |
| 5. couples experienced a decrease in marital | e. bliss |
| 6. It's not all bad news for would-be | f. parents |
| 7. their relationship was stronger after | g. their baby was born |
| 8. Couples on higher | h. incomes |
| 9. this type of happiness can | i. be powerful and positive |
| 10. parenthood accelerated levels | j. of unhappiness |

GAP FILL:

No kids the secret to a happier marriage

A new study has found that **having** a child can make a couple less happy with each other. Researchers from the University of Denver **conducted** an eight-year study of 218 sets of parents. Their report is called "The effect of the transition to parenthood on relationship **quality**". It is published in the March 2009 edition of the 'Journal of Personality and Social Psychology'. The psychologists examined how **happy** couples were in the eight years after the **birth** of their first child. They concluded that the first baby put a lot of stress and pressure on a **marriage**. Ninety percent of couples experienced a **decrease** in marital bliss immediately following the birth of their first child. Unmarried couples experienced bigger **problems**.

It's not all bad news for **would-be** parents. Some couples in the research said their relationship was stronger after their baby was born. Parents who were married for a long time before **starting** a family were happier. Couples on higher **incomes** also seemed to have fewer problems. Researcher Scott Stanley said his team's **findings** did not mean children bring unhappiness in life. He said that parents may be happier as **part** of a family than as a childless couple. He **noted** that "this type of happiness can be powerful and positive". Stanley also **pointed** out that couples who did not have children also became unhappier with each other over time. However, he said parenthood accelerated **levels** of unhappiness.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - c 2 - b 3 - a 4 - d 5 - c 6 - c 7 - b 8 - a 9 - b 10 - a 11 - d 12 - d