

Belonging to a Community can help families

Summary of Figuring out Families Podcast with
marriage counsellor Derek Boylen



Being part of a community is really important. Often when we think about family life, we just think about what's happening in the immediate family, but community has a lot to offer couples and families.

It can provide an important source of support for a couple and family life, but also. research has found that just having a community in our life does something to the relationship itself and the way that we communicate and in the way that couples and families connect.

We may like to think that the aim in life is to be totally autonomous and not to have to rely on anybody else to be financially independent, and free to spend our time how we wish. But the truth is that every family is vulnerable. It doesn't take much to go wrong to suddenly realize that we need help. Inevitably, when these moments occur, it is the of those surrounded by us, who can see the journey that we're taking it, who reach out and help us get through hardship. Every family is going to experience major challenges and having a supportive community is one of the key strengths of resilient families.

However, the utility of community is not just during the tough times like losing a family member or dealing with sickness or financial crises. Sometimes during regular life changes, like a new job, or welcoming a new child into the world, having a supportive community makes a huge difference in helping us transition healthily into our new life conditions.

As part of a community, one of the ways to help a family in a major life transition can be to give them

more time. This can be as simple as setting a roster to make meals for a couple of weeks, or to help carpool children to and from school and extracurricular commitments. It isn't too much of a burden on any individual family, but it makes a huge difference in the lives of the family that needs more time to adapt to a new newborn, or a new job.

A meaningful life is not just one in which we do all the loving, but where we allow ourselves to be loved by others too. Rather, to be seen by people and cared for by people is one of the most meaningful experiences in life. And in seeking out people with shared values and interests, whether it is through the local church or local sports club we can make this experience of community even more rewarding.

People in the community that share your values can also share the role in being a role model for your child, especially in the areas that you are less skilled or capable. One parent is not enough to meet all the needs of their kids, in order from them to grow up, to be strong, healthy adults. This is because we don't have enough time or don't have enough wisdom in every area of life. For example, you might not be inclined towards sport, so someone from the community who is passionate about sport can step into that space for your child and be a role model for them in that realm.

For many families, especially those struggling in family life, we sometimes just don't have the time and the energy resources to always give our children, the attention that we'd like to give them. Despite our best efforts there's just meals that need to be cooked and mortgages that need to be paid and chores that need to be done.

So, having a supportive community helps with the raising of our children, but also helps our children to realize what's normal as well. When they see other families, they can recognize that it's just like their mum and dad.

The benefit of Community goes far beyond just individual families. Strong communities improve the overall health of the nation, and its stability. Social capital is defined by the OACD as networks together with shared norms, values, and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups. It's a realization that human beings are made for relationships and were made for rich, meaningful relationships. Social capital is the relationship infrastructure that supports us personally and in family life, so that our needs for support and for meaningful relationships are fulfilled as well. A higher social capital score improves how we view the country, how hopeful we are that the future will see greater improvements, and how invested we are in contributing to that improvement.

Derek Boylen has conducted research with the university of Notre dame with couples who have been married for very extended periods of time, at a very minimum, at least 55 years of marriage. And one of the things that really stood out interviewing these couples is it almost all of them were part of a community to a great degree.

The couples were asked about the importance of

community in their lives into the, the place of community and how it was a part of their lives. For some couples it was a politically engaged community that sustained them through much of their relationship. For others sport was the activity that their community revolved around. Many couples met through playing sports and played tennis for the first half of their marriage and then switched to golf for the back nine. One couple were both 94 years of age and still play six holes of golf every week.

Family life is full of challenges, and community is the gift of joy that gives meaning to those challenges. It gives couples something to talk about, which isn't just their children's behavior and the finances and their household chores.

When we have strong community around us, they support us as we go through the different challenges of life. They give us perspective and help us to realize what's normal and where we should reach out for help, and in the end, they often provide the help that we're looking for when we need it.



Figuring out Families Podcast

Derek Boylen, an experienced marriage and relationship counsellor and a lecturer in relationships at the University of Notre Dame. We have put together this most valuable podcast series which we are calling the Focus Sessions.

The series focusses on many aspects of family relationships and can help in strengthening your family. We hope you'll find the series beneficial and get some insights on issues you may face in your family.

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