

Experts say newlyweds conflict on control issue

By David Holloway
Staff Reporter

Experts agree that the center of conflict facing newlyweds today is the question of who is in control of the relationship.

Kenneth Clements, executive director of the Lincoln Samaritan Counseling Service, said "the issue of control in a marriage has been increased by women's awareness."

"I find that younger couples are usually arguing about children, sex or money," Clements said. "Both spouses are trying to gain authoritative control over the other in these situations."

Sue Bukacek, a counseling psychologist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln counseling center, said "the issue of power and of who's in charge in a relationship is the cause of most newlywed problems."

Bukacek said this problem is a result of a "lack of balance in a relationship because of money, children or other conflicts."

Director of the UNL Counseling Center, Vernon Williams, said common problems of college marriages come from financial situations both in trying to make ends meet and attending classes.

"There will be financial problems if one spouse is in school, or if both spouses are in school," Williams said.

Clements said in most cases couples are aware of one another's conflicts before marriage, but are afraid to bring them up, because they are afraid of a break-up.

"After about six months into the marriage, couples will usually confront one another's problems and most likely will reach some type of conflict," Clements said. "Most breakups will occur in the first year of a marriage."

Misunderstandings that don't get talked out can lead to the beginning of the end of a marriage, Bukacek said.

"Spouses don't recognize problems right away," Bukacek said, "but they will develop over time turning into patterns that are hard to break."

"The spouse will start to see things with tunnel vision, from his or her own perspective," Williams said.

Clements said if both spouses are willing to cooperate, it usually takes five to 12 sessions of one hour a week, before the couple would be able to work their problems out on their own.

"Out of my experience, women are ten times more likely to come to a marriage counselor than men," Clements said. "Men usually think they can work things out on their own, but when they do come to a session they are more than willing to cooperate."

Bukacek said she tries to keep the couple together to find out what the little problems are, so they can talk them out before they develop into bigger problems.

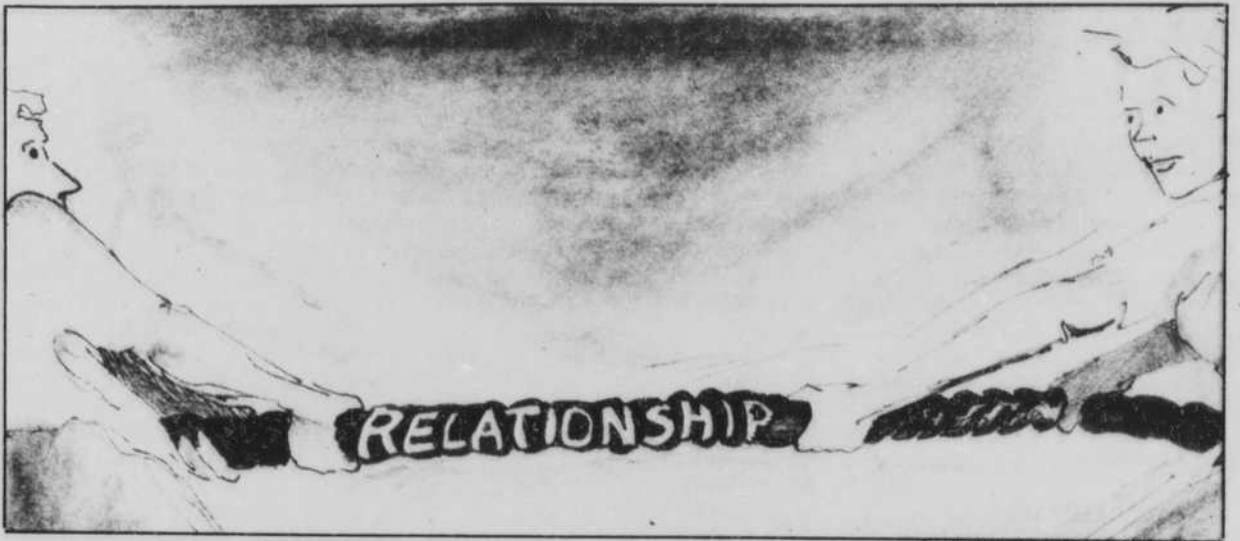
"I try to get them to discuss the problems with me instead of fighting them out at home," Bukacek said.

Pre-marital programs are the answer for couples about to marry, Clements said. "Over 85 percent of the couples who go through our pre-marital program remain married. I would recommend seriously that couples go through some type of pre-marital program with their clergy or a counselor before they get married."

Bukacek said couples should sit down and talk about the main issues that they will have to face as a couple. "They should figure out what to do when it comes time for a decision," Bukacek said.

Williams said he can't give advice to newlyweds until they experience marital problems.

"I don't know how to prepare a person for the situations, but it helps to hear from people who have gone through it."



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