

New Study Finds S.H.A.L.O.M Workshop Improves Relationships “96% resolve their differences more effectively”

A study conducted by Shalom Task Force shows that the S.H.A.L.O.M. Workshop helps engaged couples learn effective marriage skills and develop a higher level of emotional intelligence. Since its inception last year, over 125 couples have attended the seminar which has received overwhelmingly positive reviews from the participants. According to the new study, “96% of the participants learned how to resolve their differences more effectively.”

The S.H.A.L.O.M. Workshop was launched in response to the current crisis facing marriages in America. According to various reports including one called *The Effects of Divorce on America*, divorce has increased significantly over the last 70 years. For example, “in 1935 there were 16 divorces for each 100 marriages and by 1998 the number had risen to 51 divorces per 100 marriages.” In addition, “over a twenty year period the number of divorced Americans rose from 4.3 million in 1970 to 18.3 million in 1996.” Divorce rates also seem to be rising in the Orthodox community which has alarmed community leaders and organizations like the Shalom Task Force.

Organizers of the workshop believe that young couples face more demands than ever before. The typical complex marriage - managing two careers while rearing children - requires that couples have very strong, well-established abilities to communicate, resolve issues, maintain mutuality and set goals. Without this foundation, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by stress and time pressures. Problems can intrude much more easily than most couples realize. Marriage preparation can function as an immunization that boosts a couple's capacity to handle potential difficulties.

The S.H.A.L.O.M. Workshop teaches couples how to increase understanding and sensitivity to each other's feelings, communicate effectively through building a sense of mutual respect, promote self confidence in each other and gain better financial awareness.

A study of the participants found that:

- 91% said that they were better able to talk about their true feelings
- 87% said they learned how to talk more respectfully
- 96% learned how to resolve their differences more effectively
- 95% reported that they learned how to become better listeners
- 97% said they learned some valuable communication tools that they can use to discuss difficult issues
- 84% said they learned how to express their opinions and ideas more clearly

According to Rabbi Daniel Schonbuch, Executive Director of Shalom Task Force and S.H.A.L.O.M. Workshop lecturer, “I believe that the couples I met greatly benefited from the opportunity to learn new relationship skills. Several times each workshop I see participants turn to one another and say ‘aha, that’s just what I was thinking about but didn’t know what to say or how to say it!’”

The feedback from participants has been equally gratifying. One couple who recently participated in a workshop wrote the following letter to the S.H.A.L.O.M. Workshop staff:

“We would like to express our sincere thanks to S.H.A.L.O.M. Workshop for putting together such an informative and enjoyable class. We were mostly impressed by the organization of the program overall, the methods explaining how to communicate effectively to your spouse and the worksheets that helped you practice it. It is really a wonderful tool for young couples who are about to embark on one of the most fascinating, complex, and intimate relationships of all. We look forward to recommending this to anyone we know getting married, and would love the opportunity to help out in any way, including hosting one of your workshops at our home.”

Mrs. Esther Friedman, director of the S.H.A.L.O.M Workshop, has received numerous phone calls and letters from couples who believe that the exercises they learned made a difference in their relationships. She said that it was gratifying to hear from couples that their communication skills improved from the minute they walked out of the workshop. According to Mrs. Friedman “participants have told me that they gained a better understanding of themselves and their chassan/kallah and were appreciative of the workshop for giving them the ability to take their relationship to a higher level in such a positive way.”

It is also important to note that this workshop is not therapy nor is it intended for couples in distress. The S.H.A.L.O.M. Workshop does not replace traditional pre-marriage classes offered by Chassan and Kallah teachers; rather, it enhances it.

The S.H.A.L.O.M. Workshop is a project of Shalom Task Force and is endorsed by prominent Orthodox Rabbanim. Funding for this project was provided by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant: # 90-FE-0106.

The program is currently given in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and the Five Towns. More and more couples are being encouraged to attend by friends, family, chassan/kallah teachers, Rebbeim and Rabbonim.

To find out more information and to register please go to www.shalomworkshop.org or call (212) 742.1141.