

Sweden Bahá'í Summer School
July 2026

Equality in Marriages and Families



Presenter
Susanne M. Alexander
Marriage Transformation®

Learning Together



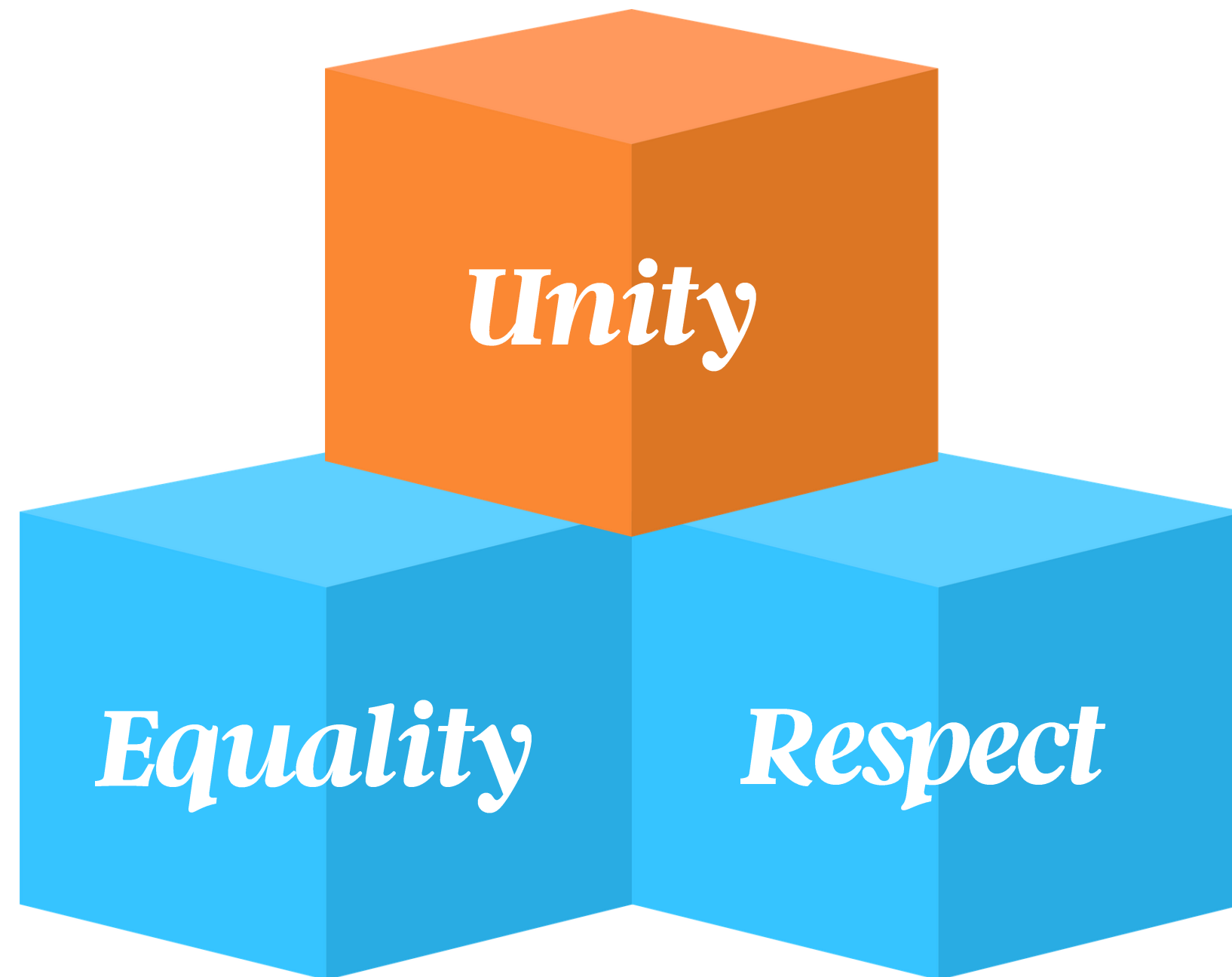
“Learning in action is becoming the outstanding feature of the emerging mode of operation.”

(Universal House of Justice, January 17, 2003)

“Endeavors are pursued in a **humble posture of learning....**”

(Universal House of Justice, December 27, 2005)

Overall Goal: Unity
Key Building Blocks:
Equality and Respect



Unity: A Vital Goal



“The purpose of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh is the realization of the **organic unity of the entire human race...**”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, October 27, 2010)

“Note ye how easily, **where unity existeth in a given family**, the affairs of that family are conducted; what progress the members of that family make, how they prosper in the world. Their concerns are in order, they enjoy comfort and tranquility, they are secure, their position is assured, they come to be envied by all. Such a family but addeth to its stature and its lasting honor, as day succeedeth day.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 279)



Equality of Women & Men

“Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, Compilation of Compilations, Vol. II, #2145)

“The world of humanity has two wings—one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, #227)



Equality in Marriage

“... [C]entral to the development of a new pattern of Bahá’í married life is the principle of the equality of women and men. As this principle is applied between the wife and husband within the marriage, the **relationship is strengthened and thrives, and girls and boys will be raised with a new understanding of equality and its practical expression.** The ramifications of this principle will thus gradually extend to future generations and contribute to the advancement of women...”

(Universal House of Justice, March 19, 2025, para 7)



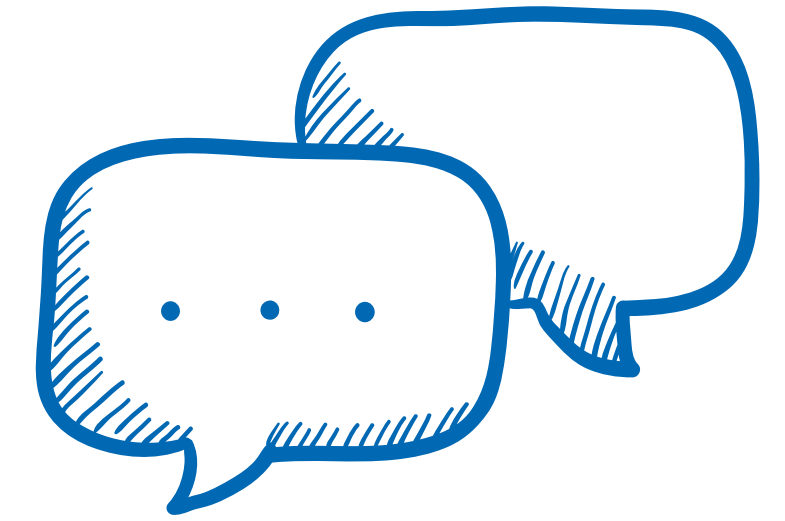
Partnership

“In the Bahá’í family, the married couple are **true partners**; one is not subordinated to the other. Together they navigate life’s challenges—whether spiritual, material, or social—through prayer, study, consultation, and reflection on action.”

(Universal House of Justice, March 19, 2025, para. #9)



Activity

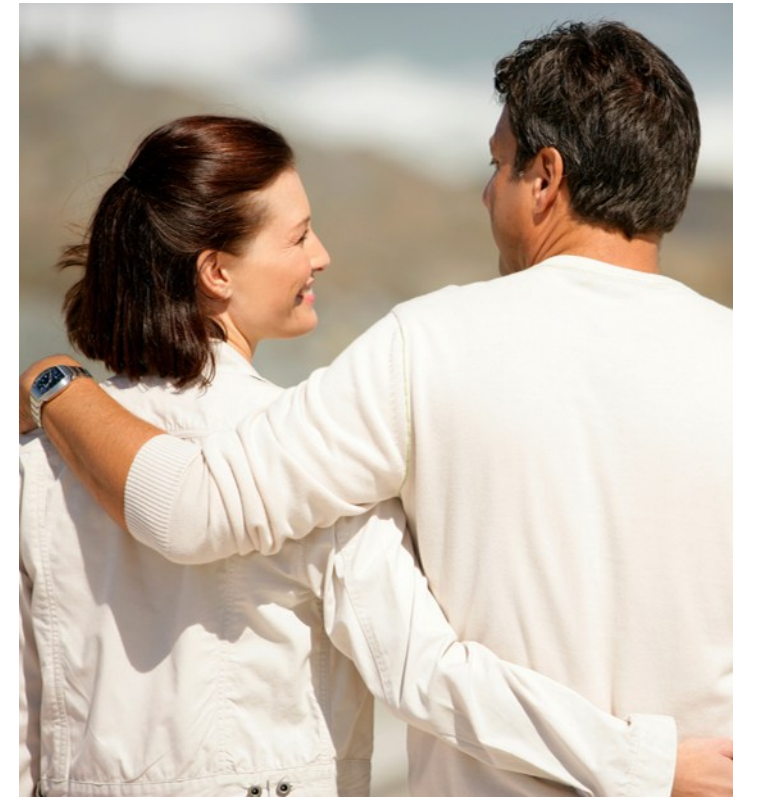


- **What are some specific examples of a marriage partnership? What words and actions would we see in a marriage and family when there is equality and unity?**
- **Vilka är några konkreta exempel på partnerskap inom äktenskapet? Vilka ord och handlingar kommer vi att se i äktenskapet och familjen vid praktiserandet av jämlikhet och enhet?**

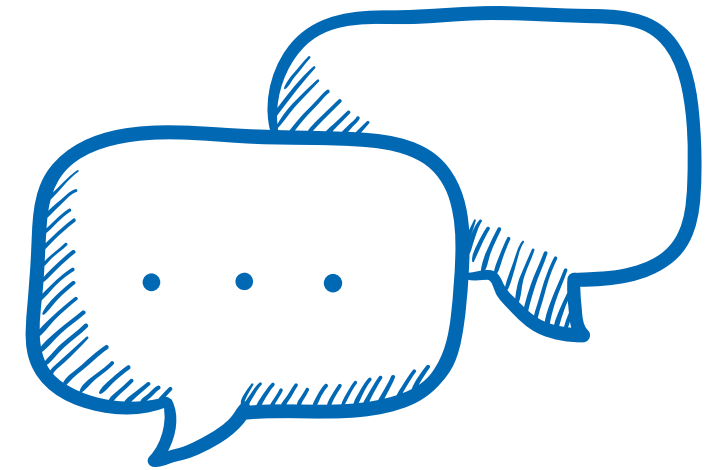
Sweden: Egalitarian

“Sweden is renowned as one of the world's most egalitarian societies, characterized by a strong commitment to economic redistribution, gender equality, and social welfare. This ethos is rooted in the "folkhemmet" (the people's home) philosophy, which emphasizes social cohesion, trust in public institutions, and universal access to resources.”

(Oxford Academic, Google AI)



Activity

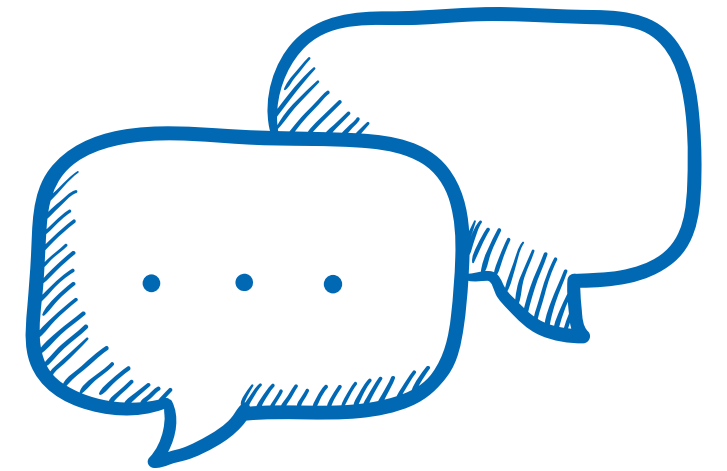


How does living in an egalitarian society contribute to the equality of women and men in marriage?

Hur bidrar ett jämlikt samhälle till jämställdhet mellan kvinnor och män i äktenskapet?



Activity



“What are the characteristics of Bahá’í family life and how are they distinguished from the way family life is understood in society today?”

(Universal House of Justice, March 19, 2025, para. #4)

“Vad kännetecknar bahá’íernas familjeliv och hur skiljer sig detta från hur man ser på familjeliv i dagens samhälle?”

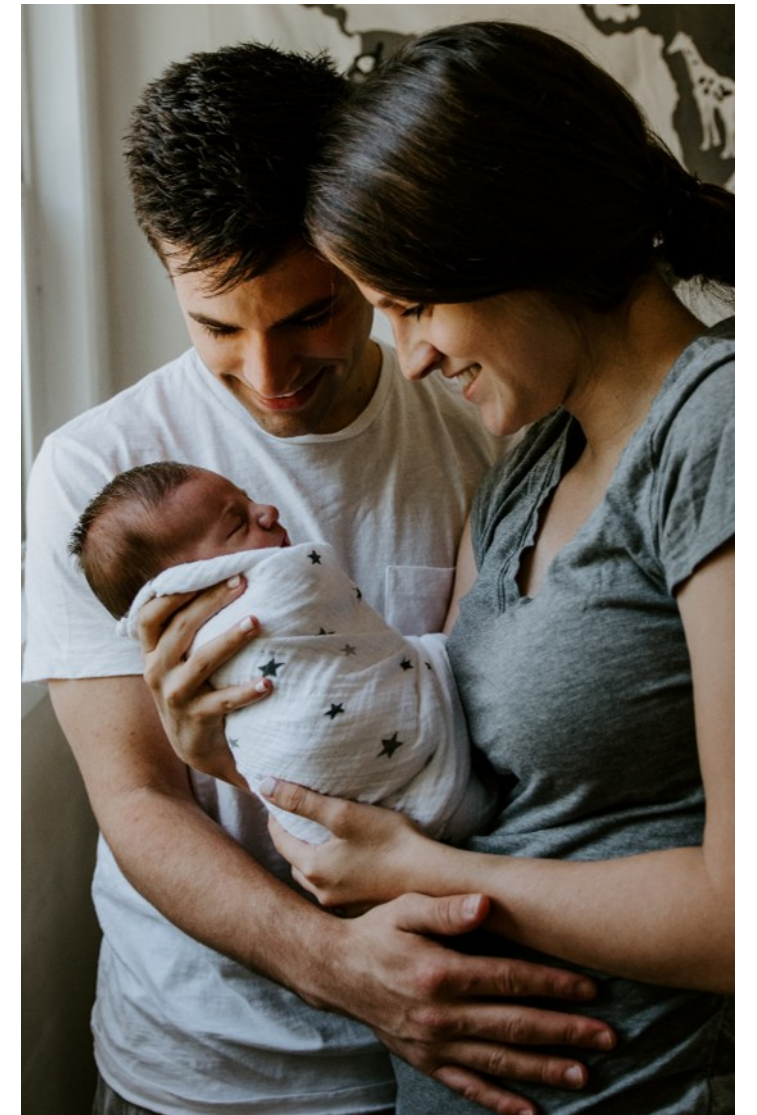
(Universella rättvisans hus, 19 mars, 2025, § 4)



Functions in the Family

“Equality between men and women **does not, indeed physiologically it cannot, mean identity of functions.** In some things women excel men, for others men are better fitted than women, while in very many things the difference of sex is of no effect at all. The differences of function are most apparent in family life. The capacity for motherhood has many far-reaching implications which are recognized in Bahá’í Law. For example, when it is not possible to educate all one’s children, daughters receive preference over sons, as mothers are the first educators of the next generation.”

(Universal House of Justice, *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. II, #2121)



Roles of Women and Men



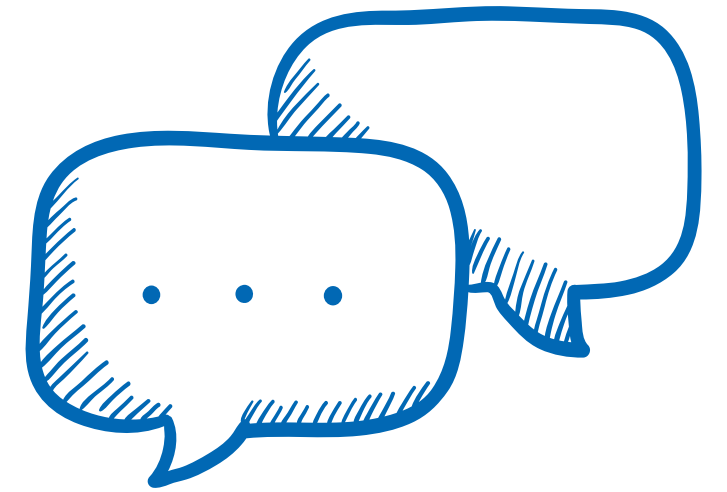
“... [T]here is a much wider sphere of relationships between men and women than in the home, and this too we should consider in the context of Bahá’í society, not in that of past or present social norms.

For example, although the mother is the first educator of the child, and the most important formative influence in his development, the father also has the responsibility of educating his children, and this responsibility is so weighty that Bahá’u’lláh has stated that a father who fails to exercise it forfeits his rights of fatherhood. Similarly, although the primary responsibility for supporting the family financially is placed upon the husband, this does not by any means imply that the place of woman is confined to the home.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986, #272)



Activity



The culture in Sweden is that both parents work, and the children are in childcare from the age of 1. How can parents ensure that their children's spiritual and moral education continues?

I Sverige är det vanligt att båda föräldrarna arbetar och att barnen går i förskola från ett års ålder. Hur kan föräldrar säkerställa att deras barns andliga och moraliska fostran fortsätter?

Some Aspects of Respect

- Treat our relationship or marriage partner as equal and valuable
- Appreciate and consider the body, mind, heart, soul, beliefs, belongings, and experiences of our partner
- Communicate and consult as peers, speaking and listening
- Honor the personal limits, boundaries, wishes, and comfort levels of our partner
- Touch with permission and care
- Allow our partner to grow and develop according to their own wishes and capabilities



Some Aspects of Respect

- Value our partner's knowledge, skills, talents, abilities, specialties, and strengths and invite them to contribute to people's pleasure, well-being, and progress
- Remember, acknowledge, and celebrate special dates, anniversaries, and other key events in the lives of people close to us
- Allow people the right to practice their beliefs and values as they choose without interference, as long as their beliefs and values do not violate laws or the just and legitimate rights of a partner





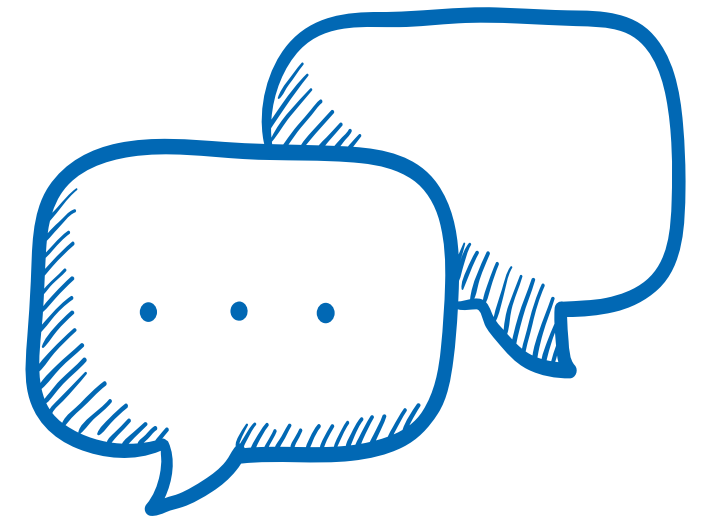
Rights and Respect

“All the virtues must be taught the family. The **integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed.** The rights of the son, the father, the mother—none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the **unity of the family must be sustained.** The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, #60)



Activity



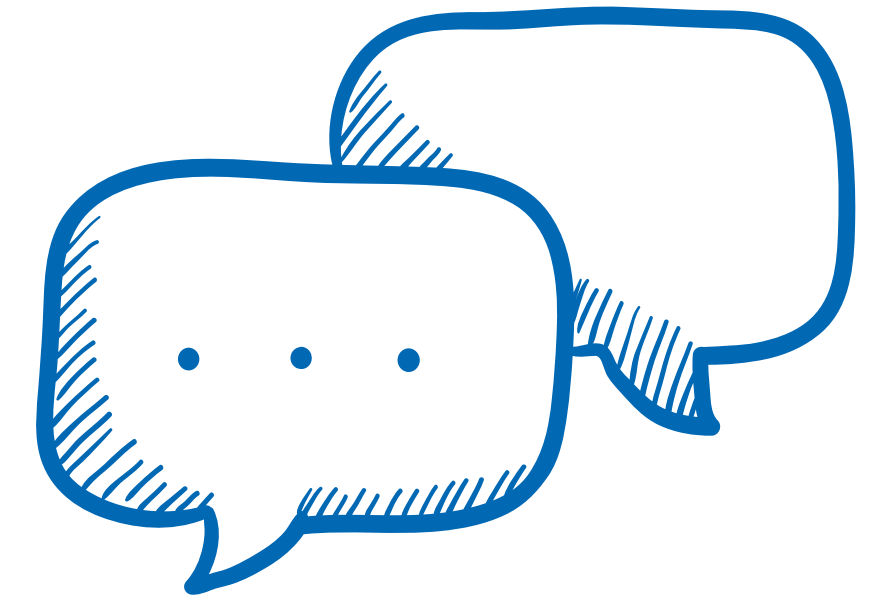
- **What are some practical ways that you demonstrate respect in your marriage and family?**
- **Vilka är några praktiska sätt som du visar respekt i ditt äktenskap och din familj?**
- **What new behaviors do you want to practice?**
- **Vilka nya beteenden vill du öva på?**

When Respect Needs to Grow

- Make independent decisions without considering or consulting with your partner
- **Criticism:** Negative words about personality or an attack on a partner's character; blaming a partner's personality or character for the problems in the relationship; example: "You are so irresponsible."
 - How to fix it: Don't blame; use "I" instead of "you" to share your feelings and needs.
- **Contempt:** Disregard and act superior through body language (examples: eye rolling, shrug, turning away...); or using sneering, sarcasm, patronizing, or self-righteous words; example, "You're such an idiot! Can't you do anything right?"
 - How to fix it: Hold positive thoughts and feelings; share admiration and appreciation.



Activity



What are some positive words to describe someone you love?

Vilka är några positiva ord som kan beskriva någon du älskar?

Friday Afternoon Workshop:

Positive Communication Practices That
Build Unity

Youth: Relationship Workshop

Saturday Morning: Consultation

***Thank You
Tack***



Susanne M. Alexander
Marriage Transformation®