

PLEASE READ THIS FIRST...

Love Thinks has been honored to serve federal and state grantees along with military personnel for over twenty years, training and certifying 40,000+ instructors in our flagship courses: PICK (healthy dating and partner selection skills and virtues for youth and single adults); Couple LINKS (healthy relationship skills and virtues for sustaining a married or committed relationship); and Home Run Dads (healthy relationship skills and virtues for building and sustaining strong father-child and co-parenting relationship).

These three flagship courses are both research-informed and evidence-based and are focused on a primary set of needs for a specific relationship type (youth and single adult daters; married and committed couples; fathers and children). However, some of the contributing and even casual problems each relationship type struggles with are actually addressed in the other flagship program(s). Research has shown the Love Thinks curricula that are all built around the R.A.M. to improve relationship quality and stability, and by teaching skills to participants throughout the relationship lifecycle, their chances of finding and maintaining healthy relationships both with a partner and children, will increase dramatically.

Historically, PICK, LINKS, and HRD have been selected by grantees as stand-alone courses. Grant proposals can and have chosen more than one curriculum—for example, a fatherhood course could be combined with a course for couples. However, grant requirements from HHS/ACF/OFA have strongly urged that proposals include just one curriculum.

Therefore, an alternative to selecting just one of the flagship courses is now available by combining two or three of the courses into a single curriculum, ***Intentional Relationships***. This is possible because all three flagship courses are formatted around the common conceptual framework of the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM). As a result, they can easily be sequenced to meet the additional needs of a population that a primary course has not adequately addressed.

For instance, those that have received fatherhood grants work with many fathers that are not in a committed relationship with the biological mother of their children, or any other committed relationship. The PICK course helps participants in this category learn how to find a partner and the warning signs of an unhealthy partner. However, in time, most of those fathers do build a committed romantic relationship or become married. The LINKS course helps participants in a committed romantic relationship learn skills to strengthen the relationships with their partner in healthy ways. In both cases the reality is this: a romantic partnership will be one of the greatest influencers in their relationship with their children. Since the *Home Run Dads* and most of all fatherhood courses do not prepare fathers with a game plan for either choosing a life partner or sustaining an existing relationship with a romantic partner, it stands to reason that Fatherhood grantees should take single fathers through a course about healthy dating and partner selection, and fathers who are already in a committed relationship through a course that provides in-depth support to ensure that their partnership creates a loving and secure environment for their children.

Therefore, it only makes sense to provide fathers with a fatherhood program and then direct those in committed relationships to attend the Couple LINKS course while those not in a committed relationship would be encouraged to attend the PICK course for a healthy dating and partner-selection course.

Again, grant proposals can add PICK and/or LINKS to Home Run Dads or any fatherhood course of their choosing, but we wanted to provide an alternative to multiple courses with our single curriculum series, ***Intentional Relationships*** (combines PICK, LINKS, and Home Run Dads in a sequence of facilitation).

The following pages provide an overview of the three flagship courses, the unique conceptual nature of those courses, and the advantages of providing relationship education in a conceptual framework. Finally, more than a dozen topical modules are now included in the flagship courses in order to take deeper dives into specific pain points that grant writers want to address in their populations.

## INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

*A Comprehensive Relationship-Cycle Curriculum*

- **Intentional Relationships in Dating (aka PICK)**
  - Relationship skills and virtues for forming healthy romantic partnerships for youth or adults.
- **Intentional Relationships for Couples (aka Couple LINKS)**
  - Relationship skills and virtues for sustaining healthy committed or married relationships.
- **Intentional Relationships for Fathers (aka Home Run Dads)**
  - Relationship skills and virtues for healthy father and parent relationships within families.

### **RESEARCH-INFORMED & EVIDENCE-BASED:**

Courses were developed from research/theory in prevention, attachment, healthy relationship formation and sustainment, marital/relational virtues, and relationship skills. Research has been conducted and published on courses with outcomes of improvement in multiple areas of relationship quality and stability.

### **PREVIOUS & PRESENT GRANTEES:**

- Utah State Extension (HRU): PICK (youth and adult classes), LINKS, Home Run Dads
- Bethany Christian Services of Georgia: PICK (young adults)
- Allegheny Intermediate Unit: Home Run Dads/Parents (fathers)
- Marriage Works! Ohio: PICK (adults), LINKS (couples)
- Make It Last Evansville, IN: PICK (youth and adults); LINKS (couples)
- Additional Grantee locations that utilized PICK, LINKS, and/or Home Run Dads/Parents: Grand Rapids, MI; Dalton, GA; Richmond, VA; Fargo, ND; Knoxville, TN; Springfield, MO; Chattanooga, TN; Fort Worth, TX; Tallahassee, FL; Chicago, IL; Atlanta, GA

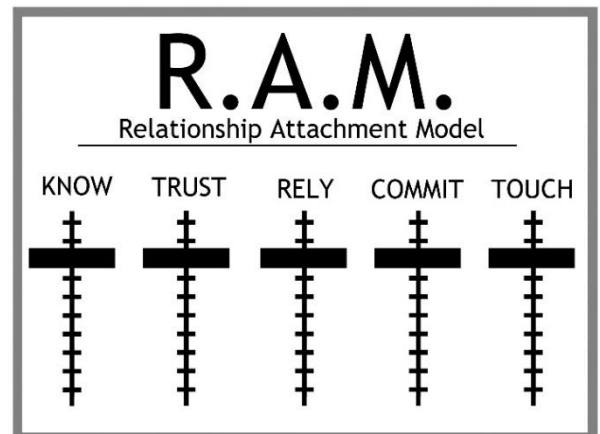
**FLEXIBLE DELIVERY:** The Flagship Courses are delivered in 12-hour (in-person or virtual) classes or expanded with sequential facilitation and/or course modules up to 24-hours.

**TARGET TOPIC MODULES:** All three flagship courses have more than a dozen additional video-based modules related to parenting, dating, marriage, and relationship skills that can be inserted or added to address specific concerns of attendees.

**MULTIPLE POPULATIONS:** Courses have been validated by data collections, pre/post studies, and published research with youth, at-risk youth, emerging adults, adults, married couples, low-income adults, incarcerated adults, military members, and minority populations. English, Spanish, Mandarin, and faith-based versions are available.

**CONCEPTUAL CONTENT:** A unique strength of the three flagship courses is that they are developed around the visual and interactive Love Thinks proprietary tool, the Relationship Attachment Model® (RAM). This allows all relationship virtues and skills to be packaged within the five dynamic bonds of a relationship represented by the RAM rather than presented in a topical list. This greatly increases participant retention and follow-through and provides a simple and practical understanding of how to “actively run” a relationship with the essential virtues, skills, and relational activities that build and sustain healthy relationships. Utilizing the RAM in the framework of all three flagship courses also provides a congruence between them.

**Therefore, each of the three flagship courses can be taught as a stand-alone course or combined sequentially in the Intentional Relationship Series to create a more comprehensive course for your population. See page 4, Intentional Relationships for Fathers for an example of a sequential delivery to best meet needs of all fathers-single dating dads and dads already in a committed relationship.**



## 1. CONCEPTUAL AND TOPICAL

The three Flagship Courses, PICK 9.0 (youth and single adults), Couple LINKS 9.0 (couples), and Home Run Dads/Parents 9.0 (fathers), are all formatted around the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) which provides a common conceptual framework. There are several advantages to a conceptual approach to relationship education.

First, definition empowers implementation, and the RAM defines what exactly is a relationship. The dictionary defines a relationship as a connection between two or more people and the five relational bonds explain that connection specifically. This empowers participants with a game plan for what it means to intentionally build and/or sustain their relationships.

Second, relationship education courses tend to be siloed according to the “relationship type”—e.g., dating, marriage, or parenting relationships. However, because the RAM identifies universal relational bonds that are comprised in all relationships, it equips participants with a template for clearly understanding all their relationships. This increases the generalizability of learning from what participants gain about just one relationship type to all relationships.

Third, the RAM visual is quick to learn and easy to remember. What participants do not retain, they will not use. Most courses have many topics with even more subpoints. In contrast, all of the relationship content, skills, and virtues taught in each Flagship Course are housed within the one picture of the RAM. Therefore, if participants remember the model, it is more likely that they will also recall the details of the five relational bonds along with the skills and activities that build, sustain, and restore them.

Finally, because the RAM has ranges of each of the five relational bonds in a relationship, participants can regularly use this interactive tool to evaluate the health of their relationships. This is done by profiling their relationship on the RAM, identifying which of the five relational bonds need adjusted, and determining action steps that will improve that aspect of their relationship. This greatly increases intentionality and personal agency within relationships.

## 2. SINGULAR AND SEQUENTIAL

Although each Flagship Course can be taught as a stand-alone curriculum, the common conceptual framework of the RAM allows them to be united in a singular *Intentional Relationship Series* curriculum to also be taught sequentially. This is valuable because the primary focus of more than one Flagship Course may apply to specific populations.

An example is fathers with the HHS/ACS/OFA fatherhood grants designed to primarily help improve relationships between fathers and their kids. However, the co-parenting relationship also impacts parenting. And perhaps to even a greater extent, the partnering relationship impacts the parenting. Therefore, it makes sense to have the Home Run Dads address the parenting skills, virtues, and gameplan for staying involved and close with kids and respectfully managing a co-parenting relationship. But then, single fathers need the PICK course for healthy dating and partner selection; and the married fathers need the LINKS course for sustaining a healthy partnership. Therefore, the three Flagship Courses have the option of being combined under one course title: Intentional Relationships.

## 3. EXPANDABLE AND CONTRACTABLE

Each Flagship Course can be contracted from the customary 12-hours to significantly less time because of the conceptual framework of the RAM. All major topics can still be covered, albeit with less time, fewer activities and skill exercises. This may be necessary for some grant requirements or service settings. On the other hand, each Flagship Course can be expanded by joining it to another Flagship Course (sequential facilitation), or by adding any number of the Target Topic Modules explained on the next page.

## 4. RESEARCH-INFORMED AND EVIDENCE-BASED

The Relationship Attachment Model and Love Thinks courses built around the RAM are an entire chapter in the authoritative textbook, *Evidence-based Approaches to Relationship and Marriage Education*. See links for this book and much published research on Love Thinks courses: [www.LoveThinks.com/Research](http://www.LoveThinks.com/Research).



## TARGET TOPIC™ COURSES OR MODULES

from PICK 9.0, LINKS 9.0, and HOME RUNS DADS/PARENTS 9.0

The Target Topic Courses or Modules are all optional when facilitating one of the three Flagship Courses of Love Thinks: PICK 9.0 (youth and single adults), Couple LINKS 9.0 (couples), and Home Run Dads/Parents 9.0 (fathers and parents). Each one expands a *specific* topic included in one or more of the Flagship Courses which facilitators can then choose to include when it addresses a pain point in the population they are serving.

They are designed to be used in one of two formats. The first is the **“Course format”** in which the topic is facilitated as a stand-alone course in sequential sessions, or a partial- or full-day workshop. When facilitating any one of the Topic Courses, then the video segments of that course are streamed (DVD copy available upon request) to that class with the required Topic Course workbook that is purchased from the Love Thinks website. Each workbook explains when to stream the video segments, and how to engage in class discussions, small group discussions and activities, and skill-based exercises.

The second format is the **“Module format”** in which the topic is added to a specific workbook section of one of the Flagship Courses to take a deeper dive into that subject. The video segments are viewed when the instructor is preparing to teach the class but not necessarily shown during the class. Rather, a teacher lesson plan is available to provide certified 9.0 Instructors to know where to insert this module and how to engage participants in class discussions, small group discussions and activities, and skill-based exercises.

Each course consists of multiple, short (around 5-25-minutes each segment) video segments of teaching content from Dr. John Van Epp and Dr. Morgan Cutlip that can be streamed from the Love Thinks platforms (DVD available upon request), as well as how to order the printed workbooks when facilitating the Course Format, and a lesson plan for how to facilitate the Module Format within one of the flagship courses.

Following their certification training, Love Thinks 9.0 Certified Instructors in each of the three Flagship Courses will be provided with access to an additional icon on their Love Thinks Instructor Platform to access the Target Topic Courses & Modules. Previously trained/certified 9.0 instructors will also gain access to these Target Topic Courses. Access will begin in 2024.

The Target Topic Courses & Modules include:

- **Healing and Preventing Intimate Partner Physical & Emotional Abuse**
- **Overcoming Childhood Challenges**
- **Co-parenting Strengths & Strategies**
- **Employment Skills for Better Couple and Family Relationships**
- **Financial Literacy for Better Couple and Family Relationships**
- **Navigating the Mental Load**
- **Technology & Healthy Relationships**
- **How to have a Thriving Marriage after Kids**
- **Communicate What You Need with Confidence**
- **Overcoming Resentment**
- **Rebuilding Trust and Finding Forgiveness**
- **Apologies: Why, When, and What to Say**
- **Strategies for Difficult Conversations**
- **Shutting Down during Difficult Conversations**
- **Sexual Risks and Safe Boundaries**
- **Long Distance Dating**
- **Navigating a Dating Break Up**

**INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN DATING** aka, PICK (Premarital, Interpersonal, Choices and Knowledge)- *How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk*, is a 8-12-hour evidence-based and skills-based relationship course formatted around the RAM and focused on healthy dating (boundaries, attachment, intimacy, trust, sex, and commitment). The course is used by fatherhood and youth HHS/ACF/OFA grantees. The PICK course is a blend and application of two major fields of theory and research: prevention theory and attachment theory. Most problems in relationships are preventable with learning and implementing the content of this course. The PICK curriculum has three primary objectives. First, to explain a sequence of relationship formation based on the RAM that empowers individuals with greater agency for intentionally pacing a new romantic relationship in a way to keep their head and heart working together. Second, to provide a game plan for healthy partner selection. The PICK course takes a deep dive into five areas to get to know about a partner that accurately predict that person's character and relationship potential for a long-term relationship (e.g., family background, maturity of conscience, patterns from other relationships, compatibility potential, and relationship skills). And the third objective is to further develop individual character and relationship growth. The same five areas to explore in a partner are also mirrors that reflect one's own strengths and weaknesses. The PICK curriculum equips students and adult individuals to improve their relationship virtues and skills; and to equip them with a self-directing plan to actively form future relationships with intentionality and security. Research outcomes include more intentionality in dating relationships, more realistic expectations, slower sexual debut, and clearer understanding of unhealthy warning signs.

**INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR COUPLES** aka, *Couple LINKS (Lasting Intimacy through Nurturing, Knowledge, & Skills)*, is a 8-12-hour evidence-based and skills-based course formatted around the Relationship Attachment Model. The course is used by fatherhood and marriage HHS/ACF/OFA grantees. Couples learn and practice relational skills and virtues in the five relational bonds in the RAM that capture the major connections in their relationship: the ways they stay in the **know** through their communication, their attitudes of **trust** and respect, how they **rely** on each other to meet personal and shared responsibilities, needs, and wants; the ways they **commit** to support and prioritize each other, and their expressions of affectionate **touch** and sexual intimacy. Couples gain realistic expectations of the natural and common fluctuation of these five bonds that make up their relationship. The LINKS curriculum also empowers couples with a game plan for intentionally engaging together to regularly identify, strengthen, and restore any areas of deficit. This is accomplished by regular couple meetings formatted around the RAM. Couples learn that 1) both the failures and successes of life continually unbalance and deflate crucial areas of their relationship; 2) their relationship is neither self-maintaining or self-correcting; 3) therefore, the successful sustainment of closeness in their relationship must be intentionally maintained. Skills for communication, conflict resolution, forgiveness, and rebuilding trust, along with virtues of persevering commitment, empathy, and generosity are learned and practiced throughout LINKS sessions, resulting in research outcomes of twice the gains for couples compared to the average relationship course.

**INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR FATHERS** aka, *Home Run Dads*, is a 8-12-hour fatherhood, evidence-based and skills-based program designed with a sports theme in which the skills and virtues essential for healthy relationships between a father and his children are compared to building and maintaining strong team relationships with positive coaching skills. The course sessions develop the five relational bonds in the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) that explain the major connections that comprise father/child relationships. The sports comparisons make the activities and concepts concrete and fun. The course is used by fatherhood HHS/ACF/OFA grantees. **A combined approach:** Fathering is more than just parenting; in many ways, as goes the partnering, so goes the parenting. Therefore, all fathers attend a HRD course; but then the single dads attend PICK (healthy dating) while fathers that are married or in committed relationships attend LINKS. This also meets the 24-hour requirement. Research outcomes include father's spending more time with their kids while engaging in more intentional parenting.

**KNOW (Family Team Talks):** fathers learn and practice positive communication skills that keep them "in the *know*" with their kids, and they begin a detailed "stat sheet" on each of their children describing their goals and involvement based on that child's unique strengths, interests, needs, developmental characteristics, responsibilities, and skills.

**TRUST (Family Team Sportsmanship):** fathers learn ways to encourage attitudes of respect and *trust* through a "game plan" that identifies and implements their core values, promotes consistent structures for their children, and practices respectful and mutually engaging strategies for handling conflicts, discipline, and follow-up discussions.

**RELY (Family Teamwork):** fathers form practical and balanced plans for cooperative co-parenting, and for meaningful involvement with each child congruent with the ways that their children *rely* on them for their physical, emotional, social and educational needs. They make tickets for their kids for "hall of fame" activities that they want to do together.

**COMMIT: (Family Team Support):** fathers explore their own childhood experiences with a father or caregiver and identify ways they want to repeat and revise these experiences in their own identity and relationships with their children; they design a team pennant that has the names and "motto" of their family; they examine the balance of their life commitments with how they *commit* their time to and involvement with their children.

**Team (Family Team Affection):** fathers explore and discuss ways they affirm their love, affirmations, and appreciation for their children through physical interactions and affectionate *touch*.

The primary take-away is a practical format using the RAM for family meetings that empower Dads to sustain strong relationships.