

Getting the Keys: Relationship Education for Young Adults

By Kiera Wright-Ruiz

University of Florida, College of Journalism and Communications

Driver's education is a course where new drivers learn how to safely handle a vehicle. Driver's Ed for Love is similar, but it's a course designed to ensure the safety of your heart. More than 50 people attended the first Driver's Ed for Love workshop held at the University of Florida on Friday, January 21st, 2011. Isabell Springer, founder of Driver's Ed for Love, led the three-hour course at Hough Hall. The event was designed for young adults, but the course is also offered for teenagers and adults. The program's mission, as stated on www.driversedforlove.com, is to increase the number of healthy relationships and to bring relationship education to communities. They hope to "create a future where it is the norm for young people to be relationship-educated."

During the workshop, Springer introduced topics of love such as infatuation, sex, romantic attraction and emotional maturity. She opened the floor for comments and questions, and did activities involving the audience throughout the event. The workshops are held about once a month. Springer developed Driver's Ed for Love while searching for answers after going through a divorce. As a licensed marriage and family therapist, she began introducing the information she found to her clients. After seeing success in her own practice, she created Driver's Ed for Love in 2008. The lack of emotional maturity or if a couple is not a match is the cause for unhealthy relationships, Springer said. People initially choose partners based on romantic attraction and later discover that the emotional maturity was insufficient or mismatched, she added.

"People are hurting," she said. "We just want to be loved."

Jorelle Laakso, Director of Operations for Driver's Ed for Love, said there are no solid role models who demonstrate what a healthy relationship is. Media takes a big role with advertising dramatic relationships and breakups in magazines and TV. She said there is a lack of promotion of successful relationships. "The people who are mainly interested are divorced people," she said. "People don't think about being proactive and educating themselves before engaging in relationships." Laakso thinks people deserve the information Driver's Ed for Love is offering to have happiness. "People want successful love relationships. We focus on our education and careers, and that stuff's great, but when all that stuff is gone we want our relationship to come home to," she said.

"We want someone to grow old with and I think everybody has the right to know how to get that."

Kertesha Riley, UF graduate student, attended the event after receiving an e-mail from her college's LISTSERV. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in marriage and family counseling. Since she has taken many courses concerning relationships, she thought the workshop successfully put the teachings she has learned into simpler terms that the average person could grasp. Riley thinks more people could use a love workshop. "Self-awareness is the key to having a healthy relationship", she said. "I think a lot of people get caught up in the idea, 'I'll only be complete once I find the right person,' that's never the case."

Springer and Laakso think the future holds great opportunity for Driver's Ed for Love. The program is striving to be available and accessible to every teen and adult in the nation by trained course leaders. "Like a Starbucks on every corner," Springer said. She hopes people will become educated and proactive in their love lives.

"Never settle in love."

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