

Marriage & Family Glossary

abortion:	the termination of a pregnancy.
adoption:	a legal process in which an individual or family brings another person's child or children into their home and raises them as their own.
ageism:	a form of prejudice or discrimination in which one judges a person negatively solely based on age.
alimony:	court-ordered financial support to a spouse or former spouse following separation or divorce.
Alzheimer's disease:	a form of dementia that is characterized by cognitive decline and progressive memory loss.
androgynous:	gender expression that is a combination of masculine and feminine traits.
anti-miscegenation laws:	laws that prohibit sexual relationships, reproduction, and marriage between people of different races and/or ethnicities.
arranged marriages:	marriages in which the family plays a role in the selection of the children's spouse.
asexuality:	the lack of sexual attraction.
authoritarian parenting:	a parenting style that is strict and domineering, with parents offering little affection to their children.

authoritative parenting:	a parenting style in which the child experiences a balance of boundaries and independence.
battered child syndrome:	a medical term to describe patterns of injuries commonly found in physically abused children.
battered woman syndrome:	the psychological state in which an abused woman submits to continuing abuse because she believes herself helpless to escape the abuser.
binuclear family:	a postdivorce family in which both parents participate in the raising of their children despite living in separate households.
bisexuality:	a sexual orientation with attraction to both sexes.
blended family:	a type of remarriage where one or both spouses have children from a previous marriage; also referred to as stepfamily.
boomerang children:	adult children who move back home to live with their parents after losing their job or experiencing a separation/divorce.
caregiver burnout:	overall exhaustion that results from managing the health and well-being of others.
caregiving:	assistance provided to people who cannot perform basic activities or instrumental activities of daily living for themselves, such as eating, drinking, and bathing.
centenarian:	individuals age 100 years or older.

child abuse:	physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect of a child (an individual 17 years old or younger).
child support:	court-ordered financial support paid by the noncustodial parent to the custodial parent for payment or assistance in paying child-rearing expenses incurred, such as daycare or healthcare.
childfree:	individuals who choose not to have kids.
childless:	individuals who cannot have children for biological reasons.
cisgender:	a descriptor for a person whose gender identity matches with the sex registered at birth, cis means “on this side” so the gender and sex of a cisgender individual are on the same side of the spectrum.
cluttered nest syndrome:	a phenomenon where adult children move back home to save money to work to establish their career.
cohabitation:	living with someone in an intimate physical or sexual relationship without being legally married.
cohabitation agreement:	a document that defines the behavioral and financial obligations of the couple.
collaborative divorce:	a legal process where both spouses have an attorney and sign a contract agreeing to work together to resolve pertinent issues without needing to go to court.

commitment:	a promise of dedication to a relationship in which there is an emotional attachment to another person who has made the same promise.
common law marriage:	a legal marriage resulting from two people living together and presenting themselves as married, even though their relationship was never formalized by the state.
commune:	a group of adults and possibly children who live together, sharing aspects of their lives; originated from a French style of dividing territory and living space.
communication:	the use of verbal and nonverbal language and signs to create shared meanings between two or more people.
commuter marriage:	a dual-career marriage where spouses live in different areas.
conflict-habituated marriage:	a marriage characterized by couples constantly verbally arguing, possibly physically fighting, but the conflict is not a reason for divorce.
contested divorce:	a divorce in which the partners disagree on the terms of the divorce.
contraception:	devices, techniques, or medication to prevent fertilization and pregnancy.
courtship:	a series of interactions between a couple that involves parental approval and rules of behavior, with the stated goal of marriage.

covenant marriage:	a legal contract where partners agree not to divorce except in instances of abuse, adultery, illegal drug use, felony offenses, or physical separation for two years.
cult of domesticity:	a middle- and upper-class belief that women should be responsible for homelife and men should work outside the home; also referred to as the cult of true womanhood.
dating:	a form of courtship involving social interaction and activities that might evolve into an exclusive relationship between two people.
dementia:	a catch-all phrase that includes a variety of cognitive disorders that result in a decline in mental abilities and functioning, such as memory, thinking, and behavior.
devitalized marriage:	a marriage with the obligation to stay married despite the emotional connection has declined or they are unhappy in the marriage.
DINKs:	stands for D ouble I ncome, N o K ids; a type of relationship where both individuals earn an income and do not have children.
divorce:	the legal process for terminating a marriage.
domestic violence:	abusive behavior in which one member of a family harms another, whether that be a child, parent, or significant other.

double standard of aging:	the devaluation of women in contrast to men in terms of attractiveness as they age.
dual-career family:	a family where both spouses are in careers and have a commitment to work that has a long-term pattern of mobility.
dual-earner family:	a family where both spouses are involved in paid work outside the home and one or both view the work only as a job rather than a career.
dual-income family:	a family in which both spouses are involved in paid work outside of the home.
elder abuse:	the physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of a senior citizen by a caregiver or trusted person.
elopement:	a marriage conducted secretly.
emotional abuse:	acts or words that are used to control or demean another person and that create emotional deprivation or trauma; also known as psychological or verbal abuse.
empty nester:	a word to describe a parent or caregiver when their children grow up and leave home (the nest).
engagement:	a pledge to marry.
expressive traits:	traditionally associated with the nurturing and supportive role of a woman.

familism:	an expectation that family needs take precedence over individual desires.
family-to-work spillover:	an adverse effect on work performance because of family demands or problems.
fault divorce:	an adversarial process of divorce in which one spouse alleges that the other has committed an act that has caused the marriage to break down or has failed to act in ways that would preserve the marriage.
fecundity rate:	the potential number of children a person able to give birth could have throughout their lifetime.
fertility rate:	the number of children born to someone able to give birth throughout their lifetime.
filial piety:	the cultural belief common in Asian societies of caring for, respecting, obeying, and supporting elders, especially elders in one's family.
filicide:	the deliberate killing of a child by the parent.
filter theory:	the process of sifting through partners based on their characteristics and location.
financial abuse:	a form of abuse where one person controls another's access to money and economic resources.
fornication laws:	laws enacted to make it illegal to have sex outside of marriage.

gender:	the social construct learned from behaviors and expectations associated with a particular sex.
gender identity:	the inner sense of identification and label a person gives themselves; some common gender identities are male, female, and nonbinary.
gender ideology:	a person's philosophy about the roles spouses should play in a marriage based on their gender identity and sex.
gender roles:	the public gender expression of masculine traits, feminine traits, and identity.
gender strategy:	the plan of action used to make one's gender ideology a reality.
gender-nonconforming:	the gender expression that does not conform to society's norms of masculine or feminine.
genderqueer:	gender expression that can be a combination of masculine and feminine traits or neither; used as an umbrella term for queer gender identities like nonbinary.
ghosting:	the termination of relationships wherein one partner simply disappears and ceases communication.
helicopter parenting:	a parenting style that involves parents constantly hovering over their children, sometimes doing everything for them or sheltering them.

heterogamy:	a marriage between people who are dissimilar in social and demographic characteristics, such as age, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status.
heterosexuality:	a sexuality characterized by attraction to the opposite sex.
homogamy:	a marriage between people who are similar in social and demographic characteristics, such as age, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status.
homosexuality:	a sexuality characterized by attraction to the same sex.
hooking up:	a casual sexual pattern between individuals engaging in socialization.
hypergamy:	the tendency for men to marry down in age while women marry up in age.
incest:	any type of exploitive sexual contact between relatives.
initiator:	the spouse or partner whose unhappiness or dissatisfaction leads them to consider divorce or a breakup and sets in motion the process of "uncoupling."
instrumental traits:	traits traditionally associated with being masculine, such as earning the majority of the household's income.

interfaith marriage:	a marriage between spouses of different religious faiths or spiritual beliefs.
interracial marriage:	a marriage between spouses of a different race/ethnicity.
intersex:	a person born with a combination of male and female sexual organs.
intimate partner violence:	abuse that occurs between two people in a close relationship; also referred to as IPV.
intimate terrorism:	frequent, long-term abuse that leads to physical injuries and emotional problems.
involuntary stable singles:	people who have stopped looking for a partner and decided to remain single.
involuntary temporary singles:	people who want to be married and are in the process of looking for a partner.
joint custody:	an arrangement where both divorced parents continue to share responsibility for the care and raising of their children.
leisure gap:	the number of hours a person has available to them during the week to pursue their interests.
love marriage:	the decision on who to marry is left entirely to the individuals.

marriage:	a socially constructed relationship that assumes financial and sexual cooperation between its members.
marriage rate:	the proportion of people in society over the age of 15 married in a year.
marriage squeeze:	a shortage of acceptable mates of one sex or the other.
matriarchy:	a system in which lines of descent are traced through the maternal side of the family.
miscegenation:	sexual relationships, reproduction, and marriage between people of different races and/or ethnicities.
monogamy:	a committed relationship, physical or sexual, with only one partner.
neglect:	when someone does not receive the standard of care necessary to meet their basic needs.
nesting:	a living pattern where the children remain in the family home while divorced parents move out and establish satellite homes, with one parent living in the family home with the children at all times.
network family:	a family or support group of non-kin individuals.
no-fault divorce:	a divorce granted without requiring either spouse to prove marital misconduct by the other spouse.

occupational sex segregation: the clustering of men and women in different occupations, such as men as doctors and women as secretaries.

old age: a socially agreed-upon category beginning at 65, which coincides for most people with retirement.

open adoption: a type of adoption where the lines of communication between the birth parents and adoptive family remain open; it is common for everyone to know each other in this type of adoption.

outsourcing: using or hiring someone outside the immediate family to assist with household and/or childcare responsibilities.

pansexual: a sexuality characterized by emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to all people regardless of their gender identity, sex, or sexuality.

passive-congenial marriage: marriages where the couple has no strong emotional commitment to each other; they often have stronger emotional connections to friends and family outside the marriage.

patriarchy: a system in which lines of descent are traced through the paternal side of the family.

permissive parenting: a parenting style that does not have rules or boundaries.

physical abuse: any act that causes physical harm or injury to someone.

pink-collar job:	jobs in women-dominated fields that offer low pay.
polyamory:	a relationship where multiple partners are with each other in a consensual, non-monogamous way romantically and/or sexually.
polyandry:	a marriage between one wife and multiple husbands.
polygamy:	an overarching term that refers to a marriage where one person is married to multiple spouses at the same time.
polygyny:	a marriage between one husband and multiple wives.
postnuptial agreement:	a legal document that specifies how a couple's assets will be divided if they divorce; the agreement is made after the couple is married.
power:	the capacity to exercise influence or the ability to get someone to think, feel, or act in a way that they wouldn't have done otherwise.
prenuptial agreement:	a legal document for people who are getting married that lays out the financial matters of both parties, allowing them to decide ahead of time what happens in the event of a divorce.
propinquity:	a residential pattern that increases the chances of mate selection because two people live near one another.
rapprochement:	a harmonious and comfortable relationship with someone.

remarriage:	the act of marrying someone after divorce or the death of a spouse.
replacement level:	the number of children that need to be born in a society to keep the population level stable.
resilient family:	families that can resist disruption in the face of challenges and can cope effectively when faced with crises.
role conflict:	competing demands resulting from two or more statuses.
sandwich generation:	people caring for both senior parents and children at the same time.
second shift:	the domestic responsibilities awaiting employed women after their paid work hours are completed.
semi-open adoption:	a type of adoption where the adoption agency acts as an intermediary between the birth mother and the adoptive family.
serial marriages:	having three or more marriages as a result of repeated divorces.
serial monogamy:	when a person has several spouses over their lifetime although no more than one at any given time.
sex:	the biological and anatomical variances between males and females.

sex ratio imbalance:	an imbalance in the number of men to women in a society.
sexual orientation:	an individual's sexual interest toward the same, opposite, both, or neither sex.
sexuality:	an individual's experience and expression as a sexual being.
single:	being unmarried, divorced, widowed, or unattached to another person.
socialization:	the process by which a person learns the appropriate attitudes and behaviors within a culture.
sole custody:	an arrangement in which the responsibility for the care and raising of children after a divorce is given to one parent.
stepfamily:	a family formed from remarrying where one or both spouses have children from a previous marriage; also called blended family.
technological abuse:	the use of technology to harass and stalk another person.
tender years doctrine:	the legal presumption under traditional divorce laws that young children would be better with their mother than with their father after a divorce.
transgender:	a person whose gender identity is different from their biological sex.

uncontested divorce:	a divorce where the accused party would agree not to challenge the accuser in court.
vital marriage:	couples that have a balanced relationship where they support each other and resolve their differences successfully.
voluntary stable singles:	individuals who don't want to get married.
voluntary temporary singles:	individuals who temporarily prioritize other pursuits like school or a career over marriage.
wedding:	a public ceremony that validates and celebrates a couple's marriage.
work-to-family spillover:	adverse effects on family life because work demands or problems in the workplace.