

*Vita***JOHN C. VAN EPP, Ph.D.**

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BRIEF BIO

- John Van Epp, PhD is the author of *How to Avoid Falling in Love with a Jerk*, published by McGraw-Hill, which blends in-depth research with humorous stories to provide a map for making healthy relationship choices, and *Becoming Better Together: healthy relationship goals for growing together when life is pulling you apart* (see Publication section for additional publications).
- The combination of his twenty-five years of clinical experience in a private practice with his experience as a adjunct professor where he taught marriage and family coursework and reviewed extensive research in premarital, marital and family relations, have paved the way for his programs, *PICK (How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk) Couple LINKS, Love Thinks, Our Home Runs, Home Run Dads, Ultimate Spiritual R&R, and Relationship Counseling with the RAM* to be taught to more than a million worldwide, and to be used by all branches of the military, non-profit and community organizations, high schools and universities, social agencies, juvenile and correctional facilities, churches and faith-based organizations, and in all fifty states, ten countries and by more than 10,000 instructors certified by Dr. Van Epp.
- Van Epp is a contractor for the Henry Jackson Foundation and works with the staff at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in the Laboratory of Suicidality Department. He is considered a subject matter expert on spirituality, psychology, resiliency and suicidality, and currently is contributing to the development of a suicide prevention, intervention and postvention manual for Chaplains with Special Operations.
- Van Epp and his innovative Relationship Attachment Model, books and relationship programs were awarded the Smart Marriage Impact Award in 2008, the National Association of Relationship & Marriage Education Impact Award (2018), and have been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time Magazine*, *Psychology Today*, *O Magazine*, and *Cosmopolitan*; and he has appeared on the CBS Early Show, *Good Morning America*, *Fox News*, and *Focus on the Family*.

EDUCATION

Ph.D. May, 1995	The University of Akron , Akron, OH Counseling Psychology
M.A. May, 1987	Ashland Theological Seminary , Ashland, OH History
M.A. May, 1986	Ashland Theological Seminary , Ashland, OH Pastoral Psychology and Counseling
B.S. May, 1980	Philadelphia Biblical University , Philadelphia, PA Pastoral and Biblical Studies

PROFESSIONAL/ WORK EXPERIENCE**Founder/ President LoveThinks, LLC (formerly Lifechangers, DBA) 1989-present**

- Responsibilities include: counseling, teaching, training instructors in a psycho-educational relationship programs, conducting seminars and workshops, speaking engagements, program development, writing, conducting research and serving as a consultant for research projects.

Clinical Counselor, 1986-2010

Lifechangers, Medina, Ohio

Private Practice

Adjunct Professor, 2007-2009

University of Akron, Akron, Ohio

Adjunct Professor, 1995-1999

Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, Ohio

- Advanced Marriage and Family Therapy Assessment
- Managing A Private Practice
- Advanced Marriage and Family Therapy
- Human Development

Founding Minister, 1981-1987
Medina Community Church, Medina, Ohio

Associate Minister, 1980-1981
Weymouth Community Church, Medina, Ohio

Associate Minister, 1979-1980
Bristol Baptist Church, Bristol PA

RESEARCH

The Impact of a Relationship Education Program on Single U.S. Army Soldiers,
July 2004 - November 2005

The Department of Human Development and Family Science, The Ohio State University

- This evaluation of the PICK [*Premarital Interpersonal Choices & Knowledge*] a Partner, relationship education program, delivered to Army soldiers examined changes in knowledge and attitudes about relationship development and marriage as a result of participation in the program. At the conclusion of the program, participants demonstrated an increase in their understanding of the crucial areas to explore and discuss in a premarital relationship, and, overall, exhibited more favorable attitudes and beliefs about marriage and mate selection.

PICK Program and Couples LINKS Community Initiative Research

The PICK [*Premarital Interpersonal Choices & Knowledge*] a Partner Program (Van Epp, 1996) and the Couple LINKS (Lasting Intimacy through Nurturing, Knowledge & Skill) (Van Epp, 2004) are used by many local and state marriage initiatives. Most of these initiatives collect data and run statistics on program effectiveness. Responsibilities include: Designing inventories, research designs, and providing consultation. Some of the regions where this research is conducted:

- Grand Rapids, MI
- Dayton, OH
- Dalton, GA
- Sacramento, CA
- Los Angeles, CA
- Richmond, VA
- Fargo, ND
- Lakenheath AFB, England
- Knoxville, TN
- Utah statewide
- Springfield, MO
- Chattanooga, TN
- Fort Worth, TX
- Tallahassee, FL

- Fargo, South Dakota
- Heidelberg, Germany
- Singapore, Singapore
- Seoul, South Korea

PUBLICATIONS

Curricula

- PICK (Premarital Interpersonal Choices & Knowledge) a Partner (aka How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk[ette]) (1996).
 - Instructor Certification Course
 - The PICK Educational Program on DVD
 - Adult 5-lesson Participant Workbook
 - Adult Military 5-lesson Participant Workbook
 - Young Adult 5-lesson Participant Workbook
 - Young Adult 10-lesson Participant Workbook
 - C-PICK Bible Study Workbook (faith-based)
 - How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk(ette) Parent Manual
- Couple LINKS (Lasting Intimacy through Nurturing, Knowledge & Skills (2000)
 - LINKS Instructor Certification Course
 - The Marriage LINKS Educational Program on DVD
 - Couples 5-lesson Participant Workbook
 - Couples 5-lesson Military Participant Workbook
 - C-LINKS Study Workbook (faith-based)
- Our Home Runs (Families stepping up to the plate)
 - Our Home Runs Instructor Certification Course
 - Our Home Runs Participant Playbook
- Home Run Parents (and Home Run Dads)
 - Home Run Parents/Dads Instructor Certification Course
 - Home Run Parents or Dads Participant Playbooks
- Ultimate Spiritual Resiliency & Relationships (R&R)
 - Ultimate Spiritual R&R Instructor Certification Course
 - Ultimate Spiritual R&R workbook (Army; Air Force)

- Counseling with the RAM
 - An 8-hour course for teaching counseling skills and assessment
- Relationship Goals
 - Single Track (based on the PICK Program)
 - Married Track (based on the LINKS Program)

Books

- Van Epp, J.C. with contributions from Cutlip, M.C. (2017). *Becoming Better Together: healthy relationship goals for growing together when life is pulling you apart*. Trinity Press.
- Van Epp, J.C. (2006). *How to Avoid Falling in Love with a Jerk: the foolproof way to follow your heart without losing your mind*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Ponzetti, James (editor) (2016). *Evidenced-based approaches to relationship and marriage education*. Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) programs: PICK and LINKS (chapter 15). Routledge Publishers.
- Chimsky-Lustig, Mark (editor). (2010). The Healthy Imbalanced Marriage, in *Creating a Marriage You'll Love*. Sellers Publishing.
- Alexander, Susanne (editor). (2010). Compatibility and Friendship; Follow Your Heart Without Losing Your Mind; Check Out the Family, in *All-in-One Marriage Prep: 75 Experts Share Tips and Wisdom to Help You Get Ready Now*. Barringer Publishing.

Books in preparation for publication

- Van Epp, J.C. *Your Relationship Brain: Wired to Connect*
- Van Epp, J.C. *Up, Down, In & Out: Finding the Directions for Your Life*.

Journal articles

- Bradford, K., Stewart, J. Pfister, R, & Higginbotham, B. (2016). Avoid falling for a jerk(ette): effectiveness of the premarital interpersonal choices and knowledge program among emerging adults. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*.
- Van Epp, M.C., Futris, T.G., Van Epp, J.C., & Campbell, K. (2006). The Impact of the P.I.C.K. a Partner Relationship Education Program on Single Army Soldiers. *Family & Consumer Sciences Research Journal*. Vol 36, 4, June 2008.

Journal articles in preparation for publication

- Van Epp, J.C. and Cutlip, M.C. The Relationship Attachment Model: An integrated theory of attachment.

Other publications

- Cutlip, Morgan (2013). *A qualitative examination of the relationship attachment model (RAM) with married individuals*. Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy.
- Futris, T.G., Van Epp, M.C., & Van Epp, J.C. (2005). *The Effectiveness of a Premarital Education Program on Single U.S. Soldiers: Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge (P.I.C.K.) Program*. Final Report Prepared for Deputy under Secretary of the Army, Operations Research.

GRANTS AND CONTRACTS (the following are a few of over fifty contracts)

- Van Epp, J.C. & Futris, T.G. (2004). The Impact of a Premarital Education Program on Single U.S. Army Soldiers. Funded through the Department of Defense.
- Van Epp, J.C. (2005). Contract to Train and Certify 400 Chaplains as PICK Instructors. Funded through the Chief of Chaplains Office.
- Van Epp, J.C. (2006). Contract to Train and Certify 300 Chaplains as PICK Instructors. Funded through the Chief of Chaplains Office.
- Van Epp, J.C. (2007). Contract to Train and Certify 300 Chaplains as PICK and LINKS instructors. Funded through the Chief of Chaplains Office.
- Van Epp, J.C. (2005-present). Contract to Train and Certify Chaplains at the Chaplains School, Fort Jackson in PICK and LINKS. Funded through the Chief of Chaplains Office.
- Van Epp, J.C. (2007-present). Contract to Train and Certify Chaplains in 6-12 Strong Bonds Trainings per year in PICK and LINKS. Funded through the Chief of Chaplains Office.

PRESS AND RECOGNITIONS

- **Essence “Jerk Alert: Is he a clown or a keeper?”**
June, 2003
- **The Wall Street Journal “Check mate: Tutors teach smart dating”**
May, 2005
- **Time Magazine**
January 16, 2006
- **The Associated Press “The Army's New Rules of Engagement”**
February 4, 2006
- **Fox News Interview**
February 5, 2006
- **O Magazine**
February, 2006

- **The O'Reilly Factor**
February 14, 2006
- **Salon.com "Singles going steady"**
March 7, 2006
- **Psychology Today "Love isn't blind"**
April, 2006
- **Expanded Books Video Campaign**
September 26, 2006
- **Lavalife Magazine "How to avoid dating a jerk"**
September 26, 2006
- **The New York Post**
October 22, 2006
- **CNBC "The business of saving marriages"**
October 26, 2006
- **The Wall Street Journal "Therapists advise couples confessing temptation"** October 26, 2006
- **Wedding Bee**
October 26, 2006
- **AOL Love and Sex Coach**
October 5, 2006
- **WCBQ-WHNC-AM Dr. Alvin Augustus Jones Interview**
October 19, 2006
- **New York Daily News**
November 2, 2006
- **OK! Weekly**
November 8, 2006
- **Catherine Crier Live**
November 9, 2006
- **CBS The Early Show**
November 11, 2006
- **Cosmopolitan**
December issue, 2006
- **International Radio Tour of 200+ stations**
December 2006
- **eDiets**
December 2006
- **Smart Marriage Impact Award**
July 2008
- **Cosmopolitan**

June, 2008; August, 2008; April, 2009; June 2009; October, 2009

- **Best 2008 Research Article Award**
Family Consumer Sciences Research Journal
- **Men's Health**
Sept. 2009
- **Inside Romance Success with Kevin Decker**
March 2009
- **Life & Faith with Mike Powers**
October 2009
- **Focus on the Family Weekend Magazine**
February 2010 (Four weekly broadcasts over course of the month)
- **American Association of Christian Counselors**, radio interviews by Tim Clinton
2012, 2013
- **Cosmopolitan**
March 2014

DIVERSE POPULATIONS SERVED

Military

- The United States military (Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines) has been utilizing curricula that have been written by Dr. Van Epp for over twenty years. These curricula include a course for helping singles with romantic relationships and the selection of partners: *Premarital Interpersonal Choices & Knowledge (PICK)*, also titled, *How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk (or Jerkette)*. A second course for helping married couples maintain resilient and close, satisfactory relationships is *Lasting Intimacy through Nurturing, Knowledge & Skills (LINKS)*. A third course for helping families maintain resilient and close, strong relationships is *Our Home Runs*. A fourth course helping individuals, couples and families with developing and deepening a spirituality that increases resiliency is *Ultimate Spiritual Resiliency & Relationships (R&R)*. Military personnel certified by Dr. Van Epp and his organization, Love Thinks, LLC have taught more than half a million service men and women in his programs over the past twenty years.
- The Army Chief of Chaplains specifically identified Dr. Van Epp's programs as an integral component of the Strong Bonds Initiative in their current Memorandum of Instruction since 2003.
- Family Advocacy Programs in all branches of the military have had Dr. Van Epp train and certify Family Advocacy Managers in Love Thinks programs. For instance, the Air Force has had Dr. Van Epp train and certify over 150 personnel so that every Air Force

Base has PICK and LINKS certified instructors to conduct relationship workshops for service men and women.

- Family Readiness Programs in all branches of the military have also utilized Dr. Van Epp's programs and have trained staff to facilitate the PICK, LINKS and Our Home Runs Programs since 2004.
- Since 2003, Dr. Van Epp has conducted Chaplain training events with his courses in the Army Strong Bonds Program (previously called, *Building Strong and Ready Families*). Between the years 2003 and 2005 he conducted over thirty training events for Chaplains. Since 2005, Dr. Van Epp has taught his programs in at least six to ten trainings of Army Active Duty, Reserves, and National Guard Chaplains and their Assistants each year in the Strong Bonds Program. In addition, for the last two years he has trained over 120 ANG Chaplains and Chaplain Assistants in his programs in their annual Strong Bonds Training Event.
- Dr. Van Epp is the only trainer who has conducted the train-the-trainer events for his programs. With over three thousand Chaplains trained as trainers by Dr. Van Epp, ninety-eight percent of Chaplains assigned to Dr. Van Epp the highest ratings for his trainings conducted on these programs.
- Dr. Van Epp has had extensive experience with training military professionals, having conducted classes and trainings in the Chaplain Basic Officer Leadership Course for the training of Army Chaplains since 2004. His teaching and writing skills have been so esteemed that he was contracted to design a Professional Counseling Course based on his innovative Relationship Attachment Model which is presently used in the doctrine of the Chaplain's professional training.
- All Chaplain Graduates between 2004-2015 have been certified in one or more of Dr. Van Epp's programs. Between 2010-2015, graduating Army Chaplains were certified in three programs (*PICK*, *LINKS* and *Our Home Runs*) and received an additional professional counseling course written and taught by Dr. Van Epp (Relationship Counseling with the RAM).
- The Chaplain's Captain Career Course has included the *PICK* and *LINKS* courses written and taught by Dr. Van Epp between 2006-2011. And from 2011-2015, Chaplains have been trained and certified in the *Ultimate Spiritual Resiliency & Relationships (R&R)* course so that they can conduct spiritual resiliency courses in their work with soldiers.
- The Air National Guard has coordinated training events over the last three years in order to have Dr. Van Epp train and certify over 150 Chaplains in the *Ultimate Spiritual Resiliency & Relationships (R&R)* course so that they can conduct spiritual resiliency courses in their work with airmen.

- All Love Thinks courses have been empirically evaluated with military audiences and found to significantly change attitudes, skills, intentions and behaviors in ways that positively improve close relationship and increase personal resiliency.

Marriage & Family Coalitions

Over fifty organizations serving a county or counties and/or their entire state with an emphasis on reaching communities and/or low-income populations, partnering with existing social, educational and faith-based organizations in their areas to improve dating relationships, marriage and family relationships, and lower divorce rates have utilized Dr. Van Epp's programs. For instance, the extension office of the State of Utah has had Dr. Van Epp train and certify over fifty instructors in PICK and LINKS to teach these programs in adult education classes, colleges and universities, public high schools, jails, and agency settings throughout the state of Utah.

Incarcerated Youth and Adults

Numerous prison initiatives designed to improve relationship practices, partner selection, and/or marriages in incarcerated youth and/or adults, particularly those involved in re-entry programs have utilized the PICK and LINKS programs.

Faith-based Organizations and Churches

All of the Love Thinks programs have both Community and Christian versions. The community version is based on existing research from behavioral and social sciences. The Christian versions include all of the program information from the secular versions but are integrated with Biblical principles and passages.

Divorced and Single-Again Adults

Dr. Van Epp has conducted workshops, trainings and keynotes at such conferences as the National Conference for the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics; Beginning Experience (BE); the International Conference for the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics; and the Edith Stein Conference. His PICK program has been used since 1998 in numerous divorce recovery classes.

Sexual Harrassment/Assault Response & Prevention (SHARP), and Sexual Harrassment and Assault Prevention and Education (SHAPE)

Dr. Van Epp has trained and certified numerous Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) in the PICK program. For instance, the Defense Language Institute in Presidio, CA has utilized Dr. Van Epp and his PICK program in their overall mission to reduce

sexual harassment and assault and cultivate healthy relationship practices among service members.