



A Steelers loss may be ruining your marriage

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Beaver County Times

Saturday February 6, 2010 09:00 PM

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Pittsburgh Steelers fans are noted throughout the world for wacky behavior, but who knew they were prone to marital stress?

It's true, according to TWOgether Pittsburgh, a program geared toward building healthier relationships among area couples.

A Steelers loss was listed among the top things that negatively impact relationships in Pittsburgh, says Terry Mann, the organization's project director.

Yoi!

It ranks right up there with lousy weather and road construction for turning couples against each other.

Triple yoi!

Those revelations came from a random sampling of 400 people in a five-county region surrounding the city, including Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Washington and Westmoreland counties, Mann said. The survey was commissioned by TWOgether Pittsburgh, which is attempting to get a handle on what causes marital stress in the region.

Mann said there are common denominators that cause strain in all relationships — work commitments, finances, child-rearing, household chores, for example. TWOgether Pittsburgh, in its survey, focused on things unique to western Pennsylvania.

"We focused on the weather because Pittsburgh is not known to have the greatest weather in the world," Mann said. "We looked at sports. We looked at traffic and construction because it seems as if it never stops around here."

They also asked people whether issues involving elderly parents can put a strain on their marriages.

They do, but they have nowhere near the impact of a Steelers or Penguins loss.

Less than 10 percent said aging parents contributed to marital stress.

The top three regional stress factors, in order: Road construction and congestion, gloomy weather, a loss by a favorite sports team.

And in Pittsburgh, the favorite sports team is the Steelers.

Of the 400 people surveyed, an average of 17 percent said a loss by the Steelers strained their relationship. Only 2.5 percent on average said the same about the Pirates. The Penguins averaged about 9 percent.

But road construction, by far, has the worst impact on marriages around here. According to the survey, nearly 54 percent of the respondents listed highway construction and congestion as the leading cause of marital spats.

Mann said marital stress can come in many forms, from short tempers to shouting matches and violence.

"It could be any number of things," he said. "We didn't ask those details."

The good news, though, is that TWOgether Pittsburgh is a federally funded program. As such, it offers free workshops throughout the five-county region to help couples cope.

The organization has created nine different programs, most lasting six weeks, that focus on improving communications skills and other topics related to relationships. Mann said men, who are not typically interested in such things, seem to like the programs.

To find out more, log on to the organization Web site at www.twogetherpgh.org or call the office at (412) 741-8550.

"Sometimes people just need to be aware that something is an issue," he said. "They just never thought about it. Like sports, for example; you get so caught up in a sports team that you don't realize when they lose that it affects you."

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