

## FAMILY RESOLUTIONS

Beginning a new year is a great time for examining your relationship and putting some thought into making it better. In order to do this, it requires the efforts of the entire family.

This handout is designed as a tool for you and your family to use as a starting point for communication and exploration. It may help you identify areas you would like to work on together.

For each area ask yourselves:

\*How well do you think our family functions in this area?

\*What are some simple steps you can take to strengthen our family in this area? There is no way to pass or fail this process. Every family has its strengths and weaknesses.

### FAMILY REPORT CARD

\*Communication patterns of healthy families are characterized as clear, open and frequent.

How does your family communicate?

\*Healthy families encourage each family member to grow as an individual. What are the unique qualities of each family member?

\*In a healthy family each member is supported and sustained by other family members and is committed to the family as a unit. How does we support each other?

\* Healthy families are guided by an underlying moral or value system shared by all members. What are your family values?

\*Successful families are not isolated. They are interactive in their communities. How are we involved in our various communities?

\*Healthy families adapt to stressful and potentially damaging events and predictable life cycle or stage changes. How do we care for, and help each other adapt in stressful times.

\*Healthy families balance the uniqueness of each family member while cultivating a sense of belonging to the family. What do you appreciate about each other?

\* Within healthy families, there is a clear recognition that the parents are in charge, yet open to their children's ideas. How is this managed in our family?

\* Healthy families like to spend some of their free time together. What do you do together?

## TIPS FOR BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES

Here are some ideas and suggestions to help you strengthen your family.

1. Show appreciation for each other. Compliment each other on accomplishments or for just taking the time to do something special for the family. Say “Thank you” or “I appreciate you.” Give each other hugs. Make amends when you behave inappropriately. Treat each other with respect.
  
2. Stories and rituals help families during crises and difficult times. Talk about the family’s heritage and roots. Strong families understand the importance of talking about the good time and bad times as a way of remembering and learning. Create or continue exciting and vital family rituals such as reunions, going out to eat on designated days, cooking special meals together or volunteering together at a local soup kitchen. Strong families find ways to make these rituals come alive.
  
3. Learn to handle conflicts. A family’s bonds are tested by the ways family members respond to conflict: Here are some suggestions to deal with conflict:
  - \*Take a moment to listen to others and observe your own behavior. (If necessary find a mediator)
  - \*Recognize that family members may handle conflict differently.
  - \*Determine whether the situation is just a difference of opinion or a major disagreement.
  - \*Identify the real issue.
  - \*Don’t talk around the problem. Be specific and timely in discussing the issue.
  - \*Find out what the other person wants. Do they need to simply express their feelings or do they feel misunderstood?
  - \*Identify areas of agreement and then work out differences.
  - \*Look for possible solutions together that are acceptable to everyone.
  - \*Work hard to resolve a conflict and then give each other credit for making the effort.

Parents take the time to stay involved in their children’s lives. Here are some suggestions to keep connected with your child.

- \*Put a loving note in your child’s lunch.
- \*Read a book together.
- \*Ask a teacher or friend to record your child in a special event at school or day care if you can’t come, so you can still “be there.”
- \*Designate a special day for each child on a monthly basis.
- \*Get down to your child’s level physically. Meet him or her eye to eye.

- \*Surprise your child by doing a spur-of -the-moment fun activity.
- \*Let your child pick a favorite outdoor activity and do it with him or her.

Manage stress. Sometimes the demands of busy lives become overwhelming and we experience stress, fatigue and frustration, which will have an effect on the entire family. Some steps you can take to manage stress include:

- \*Have a written self-care plan.
- \*Have specific quiet time to reflect on your day.
- \*Take time to enjoy yourself.
- \*Keep your expectations realistic and your thinking positive.
- \*Set limits on what you can do.
- \*Exercise regularly and maintain good eating habits.
- \*Learn to relax.
- \*Journal

Once a month, do something your family has never done before. Keep it simple but creative. Ideas: Have an indoor picnic, star gaze, plant a tree, visit a museum, ride a city bus, or pretend to be tourists in your own community to really experience where you live.

Start your family tree. Visit grandma and grandpa or great aunt and great uncle. Ask lots of questions about their childhood, their parents, brothers, sisters, their school days, their old neighborhood, etc. Tape record or video tape the conversation. Use the history as a good start for your family tree and unique family history.

Take time on a family project. Choose one needy family from your neighborhood or from your congregation to remember and help during the holidays or special occasions. Have a neighborhood or household clean up day where everyone pitches into help with the job.

Family prayer or ritual. Make up a simple, short family prayer or ritual and do it while holding hands before a meal. Do not allow it to become rote, frequently discuss the meaning behind the creation of the prayer or the ritual. Alter the prayer or ritual as necessary to reflect the changes in the family.