Creating a Strong Family

American Family Strengths Inventory

*A Teaching Tool for Generating Discussion on the Qualities that Make a Family Strong*

John DeFrain, Extension Specialist, Family and Community Development

Research in the United States and around the world has found that strong families have a wide variety of qualities that contribute to the family members’ sense of personal worth and feelings of satisfaction in their relationships with each other. One of the first steps in developing the strengths of one’s family is to assess those areas in which the family is doing well and those areas in which family members would like to grow further.

The qualities of strong families in America can be broken down into six general categories, as outlined in the following pages. Put an “S” for Strength beside the qualities you feel your family has achieved and a “G” beside those qualities that are an area of potential Growth. If the particular characteristic does not apply to your family or is not a characteristic important to you, put an “NA” for Not Applicable.

Family members doing this exercise will be able to identify those areas they would like to work on together to improve and those areas of strength that will serve as the foundation for their growth and positive change together.

This American Family Strengths Inventory has been validated through research with more than 21,000 family members in the United States and 26 other countries around the world. These studies of family strengths have been conducted since 1974 by Nick Stinnett, John DeFrain and their many colleagues.

For more information about this research, see:


Researchers:

John DeFrain, Ph.D., Professor, Cooperative Extension Family and Community Development, University of Nebraska, P.O. Box 830801, Lincoln, Nebraska 68583-0801, Phone: (402) 472-1659, E-mail: jdefrain1@unl.edu

Nick Stinnett, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Phone: (205) 348-7864, E-mail: nstinne2@ches.ua.edu

*For non-profit educational purposes only. Not for resale.
American Family Strengths Inventory

Enjoyable Time Together
In Our Family . . .

_____ We have a number of common interests.
_____ We like to have fun together.
_____ We feel comfortable with each other.
_____ We like to give each other a chance to do new things.
_____ We enjoy hearing our grandparents’ stories about the past.
_____ We enjoy simple, inexpensive family activities.
_____ We like to have a place we call “home.”
_____ We feel strongly connected to each other.
_____ Hanging out together builds strong relationships.
_____ We have lots of good times together.
_____ We often laugh with each other.
_____ Observing family rituals and customs is important to us.
_____ We enjoy sharing our memories with each other.
_____ We enjoy having unplanned, spontaneous activities together.
_____ All things considered, we have adequate time for each other and we enjoy the time we share together.

Appreciation and Affection for Each Other
In Our Family . . .

_____ We appreciate each other and let each other know this.
_____ We enjoy helping each other.
_____ We like keeping our promises to each other.
_____ We like to show affection to each other.
_____ We feel close to each other.
_____ We like to be kind to each other.
_____ We like to hug each other.
_____ We enjoy being thoughtful of each other.
_____ We wait for each other without complaining.
_____ We give each other enough time to complete necessary tasks.

Communicating Effectively with Each Other
In Our Family . . .

_____ We like to share our feelings with each other.
_____ It is easy to cue into each other’s feelings.
_____ We like talking openly with each other.
_____ We listen to each other.
_____ We respect each other’s point of view.
_____ Talking through issues is important to us.
_____ We give each other a chance to explain ourselves.
_____ We enjoy our family discussions.
_____ We share jokes together.
_____ Putdowns are rare.
_____ Sarcasm is not generally used.
_____ All things considered, our communication is effective.

Valuing Each Other and Demonstrating Commitment
In Our Family . . .

_____ Responsibilities are shared fairly.
_____ Everyone gets a say in making decisions.
_____ Individuals are allowed to make their own choices.
_____ We find it easy to trust each other.
_____ We like to do things for each other that make us feel good about ourselves.
_____ We have reasonable expectations of each other.
_____ We allow each other to be ourselves.
_____ We have a high regard for each other.
_____ We respect the roles each of us plays in the family.
_____ We find it easy to be honest with each other.
_____ We accept that each of us has different ways of doing things.
We build each other’s self-esteem.

All things considered, we value each other and are committed to our well-being as a family.

**Spiritual Well-Being**

**In Our Family . . .**

- We have a hopeful attitude toward life.
- Our home feels like a sanctuary to all of us.
- We have a strong sense of belonging.
- We enjoy learning about our family history.
- We feel strong connections with our ancestors.
- There is a feeling of safety and security.
- We feel connected with nature and the world around us.
- We feel a strong connection with the land.
- There is a sense of peace among us.
- We believe love is a powerful force that keeps us together.
- We benefit in many ways from our belief in a higher being.
- It is easy to share our spiritual values and beliefs with each other.
- Our personal religious beliefs are compatible with each other’s.
- All things considered, we have strong spiritual connections that enhance our well-being.

**Managing Stress and Crisis Effectively**

**In Our Family . . .**

- A crisis has helped us to grow closer together.
- It is easy to find solutions to our problems when we talk about them.
- It is always important to change the things we can.
- We can work together to solve very difficult family problems.
- A crisis helps make our relationships strong.
- We try not to worry too much because things usually work out OK.
- We are able to face daily issues confidently.
- We like to support each other.
- Our friends are there when we need them.
- A crisis makes us stick closer together.
- We always find something good comes from a crisis.
- We find it easy to make changes in our plans to meet changing circumstances.
- We have the courage to take risks that will improve things for our family.
- We feel it is important to accept the things we cannot change.
- All things considered, we look at challenges as opportunities for growth.

**Global Measures of the Family’s Strengths**

**In Our Family . . .**

- We love one another.
- Life in our family is satisfying to us.
- We are happy as a family.
- All things considered, we are a strong family.

UNL Extension publications are available online at [http://extension.unl.edu/publications](http://extension.unl.edu/publications).

Index: Family Life
Relationships
Issued February 2002