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Building Family Strengths : Extension Circular 23-20-78

Ron Daly

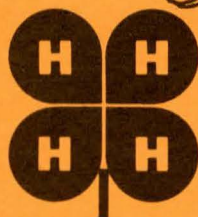
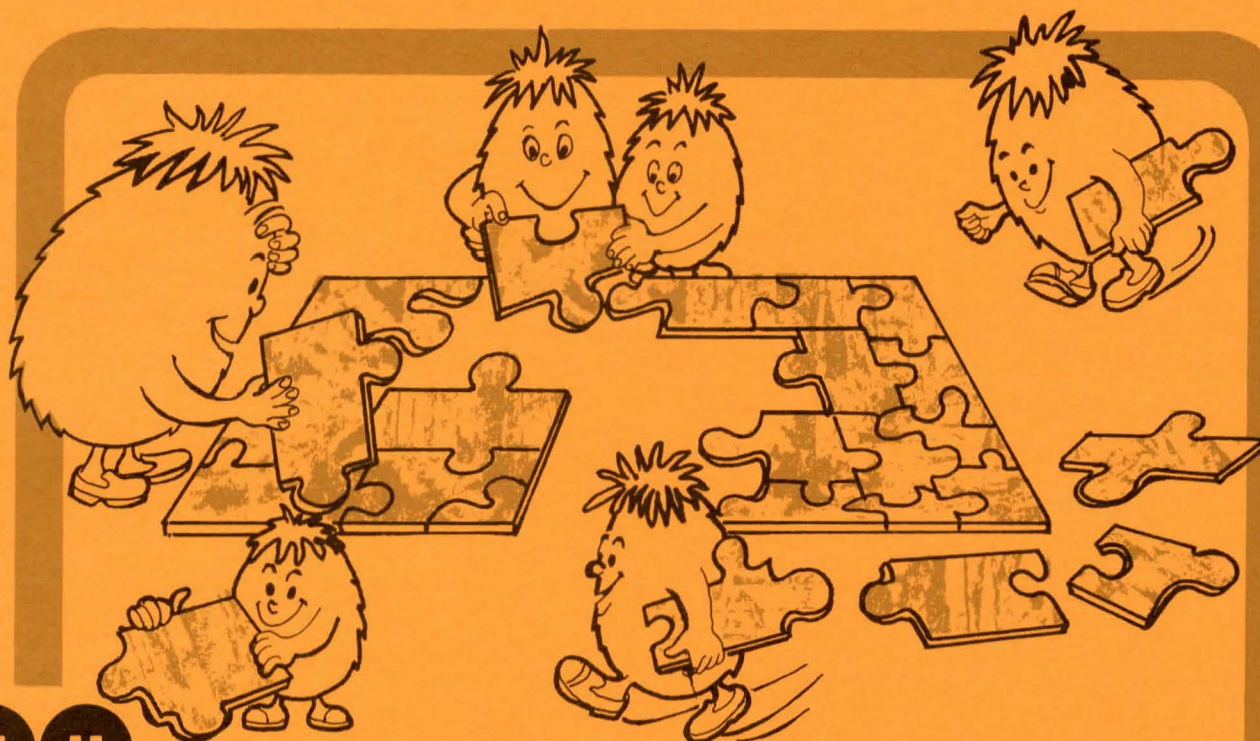
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4-H FAMILY PROJECT



BUILDING FAMILY STRENGTHS

EXTENSION WORK IN "AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS AND SUBJECTS RELATING THERETO,"
THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN, COOPERATING WITH THE COUNTIES AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
LEO E. LUCAS, DIRECTOR

E.C. 23-20-78

Dear 4-H Family:

We are pleased you will be participating in the 4-H Family Project—Building Family Strengths. With many outside influences affecting family life, it is important that we do all we can to strengthen our families.

This project is built upon the premise that what families do *together* does make a difference. Dr. Nick Stinnett, chairman of the Department of Human Development and the Family at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, is a spokesperson for the need to build stronger families. He has said, "The challenge of strengthening family life depends upon our gaining knowledge about strong healthy families."

In a research project in which Dr. Stinnett studied strong families, he identified five patterns present in each of these families. The five were:

- . The expression of appreciation.
- . Spending a lot of time together.
- . Good communication.
- . Commitment.
- . High degree of religious orientation.

This project will let your family join together in some special activities, and in the process learn to appreciate the unique strengths of your family.

Best wishes for a fun and fulfilling experience as you strive to develop your family strengths!

Sincerely,



Ronald T. Daly
Extension Specialist Family Life

RTD:h

4-H FAMILY PROJECT



By Ron Daly
Extension Specialist (Family Life)

GETTING STARTED

This project is a bit unique. It may have been initiated by a 4-H member or a parent. However, it requires the cooperation and participation of the entire family.

The primary purpose of the project is to help build stronger families. To provide a special time for sharing some memorable times together.

Special times shared as a family can be some of the most important investments you make in building a strong family.

Be aware that families come in all shapes and sizes: small families, large families, one-parent families, extended families which include aunts, uncles, grandparents, and in some cases special friends and even pets.

The composition of the family is not important. What is important is that it's *your* family. You may want to invite a friend, relatives or a special person to join with your family in this project.

To get the project under way, select a time when all family members can get together. Call a family meeting and complete the following tasks:

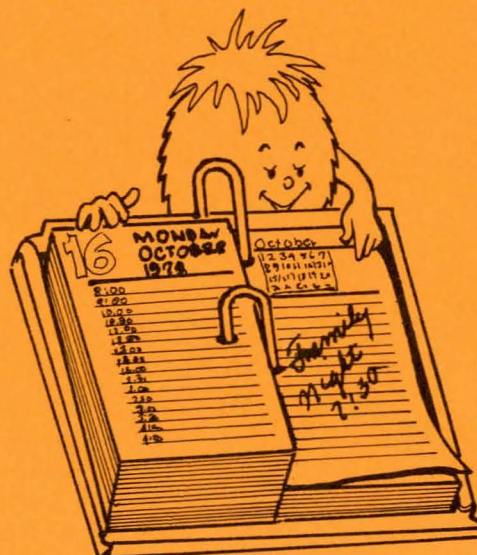
1. As a family review the NebGuide, HEG 78-97, Building Family Strengths. The message in

the NebGuide should provide some food for thought as you launch this project.

Be enthusiastic! Your enthusiasm can be contagious. Remember—the goal is to have fun and fellowship with the special people in your family.

2. Share the following statement:

This project is designed to provide an opportunity for 4-H members and their families to develop a greater appreciation of: (1) their heritage, (2) the uniqueness of each family member, (3) ways they can build on their family strengths, and (4) sharing some special memorable times together.



There are 5 activities:

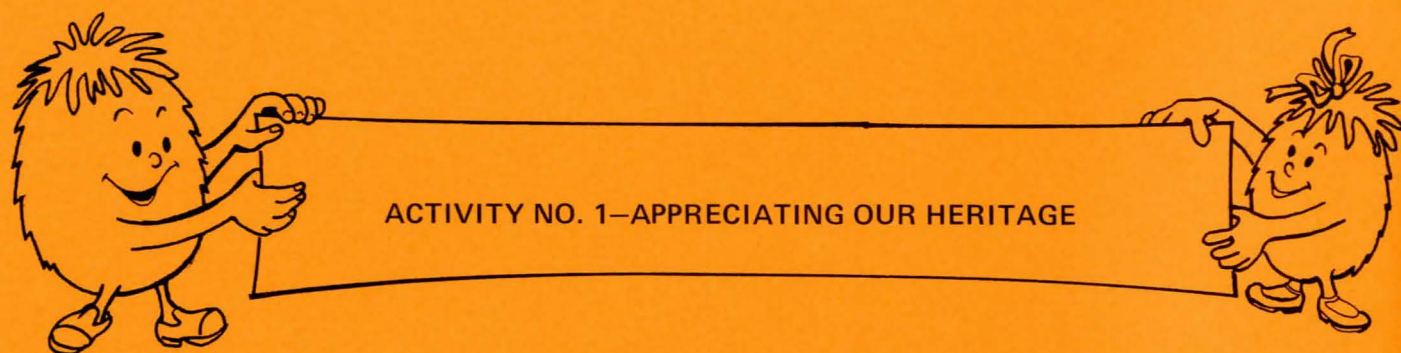
- . Appreciating Our Heritage
 - . Appreciating the Strengths and Uniqueness of Each Family Member.
 - . Special Activity Planning Session
 - . Special Activity
 - . Family Strengths Activity
3. Set a time and date for each activity.
 - a. Each activity will require approximately 1½ hours.
 - b. When they are scheduled is up to the

family. Everyone's schedule should be considered. One suggestion would be once each week for 5 weeks.

Remember, if you are too busy to spend time as a family, you are too busy.

c. If there are small children in the family, some flexibility is required so they can be involved as much as it is meaningful to them.

4. Review Activity No. 1 and assign the responsibilities listed for the first activity.



PURPOSE OF THIS ACTIVITY:

To help the 4-H member and his/her family gain greater appreciation of family heritage.

MATERIAL NEEDED:

1. A special invitation to the grandparents or older relatives who can spend an evening sharing some highlights of their lives and some special memories about the family.

If grandparents or relatives can't be present, perhaps they could share through a tape recording or written history.

2. Parents are another source for learning about the family. Before the meetings parents should gather some family mementos, jot down some special memories or family traditions that have special meaning for them.

3. A camera with film and flash ready to take some pictures as a remembrance of the evening will help make things special.

4. Some special food. The evening would not be complete without a special treat. Something

that was enjoyed in grandma or grandpa's youth might be just the thing to top off a memorable evening.

Depending upon your family situation, you may want to use a different activity than the one outlined. One family indicated that their children already had a great deal of knowledge about their grandparents, so the family planned a different experience. Be creative and modify the program to meet your family's needs. Options 1 and 2 are suggestions for other activities you might use.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS SESSION:

1. Call the family together and share with them the purpose of this activity.

2. Introduce the guests. Make sure they are made to feel special. Ask them to share some of their special memories. Experiences of their childhood when they were the age of the children may be very interesting.

Encourage the children to ask questions and to get involved in the discussion.

The discussion should help the family gain a greater awareness and appreciation of the family heritage.

3. As appropriate, Mom and Dad can share the mementos or memories that have special meaning to them.

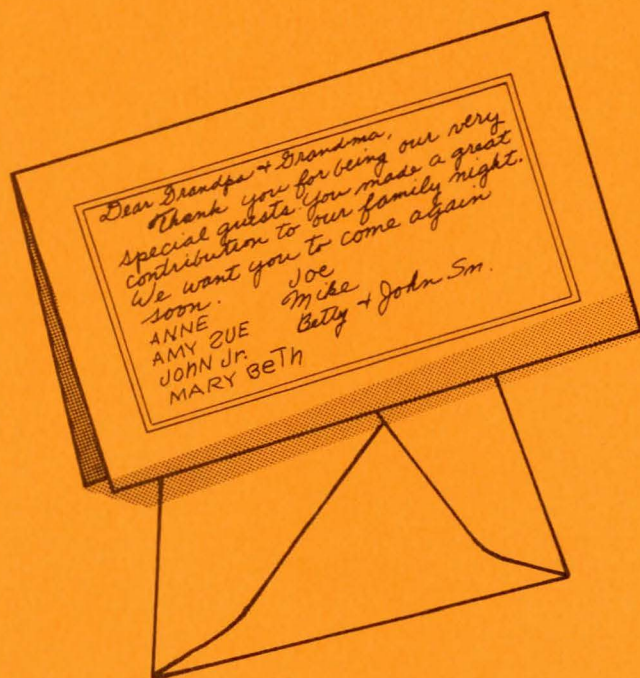
4. Have the children recall some of the most memorable experiences they have shared in the family.

5. Appoint someone to record in the project book some of the highlights and special things shared during the evening.

6. If you have a camera, take some pictures to be included in the project book. Pictures can be special reminders of the many things shared.

7. It's time for the special food. Top off the evening with a treat for all.

8. To prepare for the next session, take 5 minutes and assign specific responsibilities.



9. A special thank you note expressing the family's appreciation to the special guest should be written, signed by the family and sent to the grandparents or other special guest.



Option 1:

If you already have a good understanding of your heritage, spend the evening putting together a brief history of the family, highlighting the important people and events. Each family member can be assigned a particular person or event. He is responsible for developing that part of the family history. Old photos, letters, writings, personal journals can be used.

An evening organizing a family history may prove very helpful in appreciating your heritage.

Option 2:

Many resources are available in each community. Why not invite someone in your community who has special knowledge about the history of the community to spend the evening. Have them share some highlights or history of the important people and events which influenced the development of the community.

A greater understanding of what has happened in the past can provide a greater appreciation of the present, as well as the past.

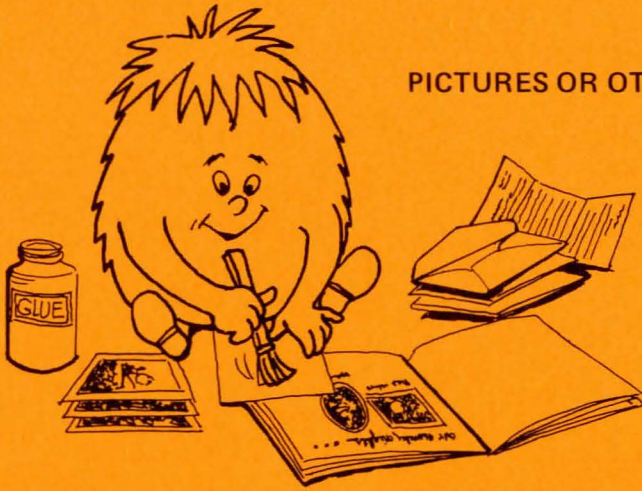
SPECIAL MEMORIES—ACTIVITY NO. 1

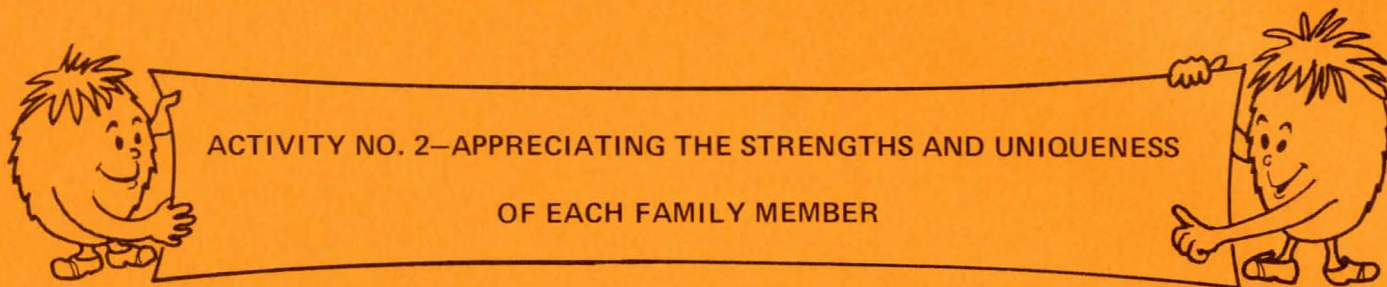
1. Special guests were:

2. Things we learned:

3. What we enjoyed most:

PICTURES OR OTHER SPECIAL MEMENTOS





PURPOSE OF THIS ACTIVITY

To help members of the family be more aware of the strengths and uniqueness of each person and how that uniqueness can enrich the experiences they share as a family.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. A stack of old magazines that can be cut up.
2. Rubber cement, glue or paste.
3. Scissors
4. Card stock or cardboard. A piece for each member of the family, 12" x 14" (30.5 x 35.5 cm) would make a good size.
5. A special treat to be shared by the family. Selecting some food new to one of the family members would be most appropriate.
6. A camera.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS SESSION:

Activity No. 2 is outlined step by step with a list of the materials you will need. Options 1 and 2 are guides to alternative activities that may be used.

1. Share with the family the purpose of this activity. (See above.) Emphasize that your goal is to look for the positive aspects of each person's uniqueness.

2. Get the magazines, scissors, glue, cardboard and place them on the table or in a place where all members can reach them.

3. Instruct each person to thumb through the magazines and look for pictures or words descriptive of a strength or unique characteristic of one of the family members. When they find something, have them cut it out and place it on a board with that person's name. Don't glue it at this point; allow approximately 20 to 30 minutes for this activity.

4. Work until there are a good number of pictures and descriptive words depicting the

uniqueness of each family member. You are now ready to arrange them into a collage on the cardboard. Focus on one person at a time talking about the uniqueness of that person as you build the collage. Cement the pieces on as you build the collage.

5. After the collages are complete, have each person hold his collage, then have family members share how that person's uniqueness enriches the experiences they share as a family.



6. It's treat time now, a time for a special snack—something that reflects the unique specialty of one of the family members.

7. If you like, put the collages where all family members have access that week and can add to them.

8. Make assignments for activity number three.

Option 1.

In place of developing a collage for each member of the family, have each person write down some of the strengths or unique characteristics of each person in the family and how each enriches the experiences you share as a family.

work of art should depict some of the strengths and unique characteristics of a family member.

When the art work is complete, it's time for sharing. Sort the pictures or posters into groups for each family member. Then have each person explain his creation, telling how that person's uniqueness enriches the experiences they share as a family.

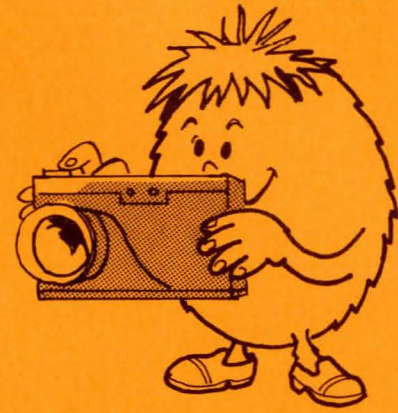
If the family has a flair for art, provide some paper and crayons and have each person make a poster or drawing for each family member. Each

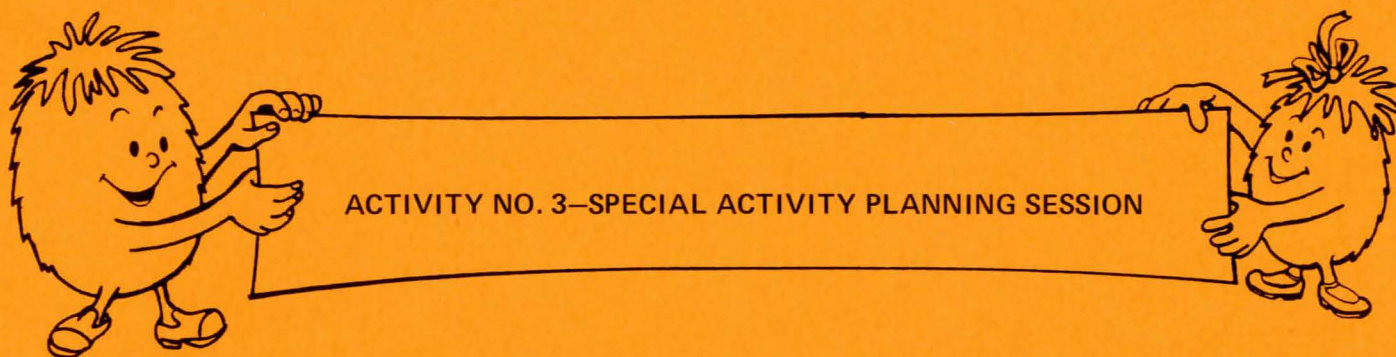
1. Give a brief description of the most unique characteristics of each family member.

2. What we enjoyed most:



PICTURES OR OTHER SPECIAL MEMENTOS





PURPOSE OF THIS ACTIVITY:

This is phase one of a two-part activity. This session is designed to involve all family members in planning and carrying out a special activity.

The goal of this activity is to help you as a family become more aware of what each person likes to do, and to use the resources of the whole family to plan an activity that will be special to everyone.

Often the same person ends up with the same job each time. Why not break tradition and make some unique assignments? Give each person a chance to try something new.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Some large sheets of paper or blackboard.
2. A marking pen or large crayon.
3. Pencils and paper for assignment sheets.
4. A special treat for the family.
5. A camera.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS SESSION:

1. One person is designated as leader and one as a recorder.
2. The recorder prepares a large sheet of paper or blackboard as follows:

The Most Enjoyable Things I Have Done With The Family	Plans for Special Activity

3. The person designated as the leader gives the following instructions:

"Each of you get as comfortable as you can (but not so comfortable you'll fall asleep.) Close your eyes and let your body relax. Think back on all the fun things you've done with the family. Select the 3 or 4 activities you consider the most fun."

Give them time to think for a couple of minutes. Then ask them to open their eyes and

have each person share the activity they enjoyed most. As they share, ask them to tell why it was so enjoyable.

While they are sharing, the recorder should list the activities on the paper or blackboard.

4. After everyone has had a chance to share 2 or 3 activities, move to the next part of the activity: Plans for Special Activity.

Instruct the group to think about the activities listed or any activity with special appeal to them. Then, have them recommend the activity they think would be a good one for the family to plan and carry out.

As the activities are shared by family members, the recorder should list them under "Plans for Special Activity."

When the list is complete discuss the merits of each activity. Select one the family thinks meets the greatest number of wishes. Remember, there will be days for other activities. The goal is to select one for the special activity.

5. With the special activity selected, you are well on your way. The next step is to determine what each will do to make this special activity a success.

Using another large sheet of paper, begin the planning process. Appoint one member as coordinator for the activity. That person should take charge and work with other members of the family on the plans. Be specific in what each person is to do to help make this a special activity. Give each person an opportunity to use his talents.

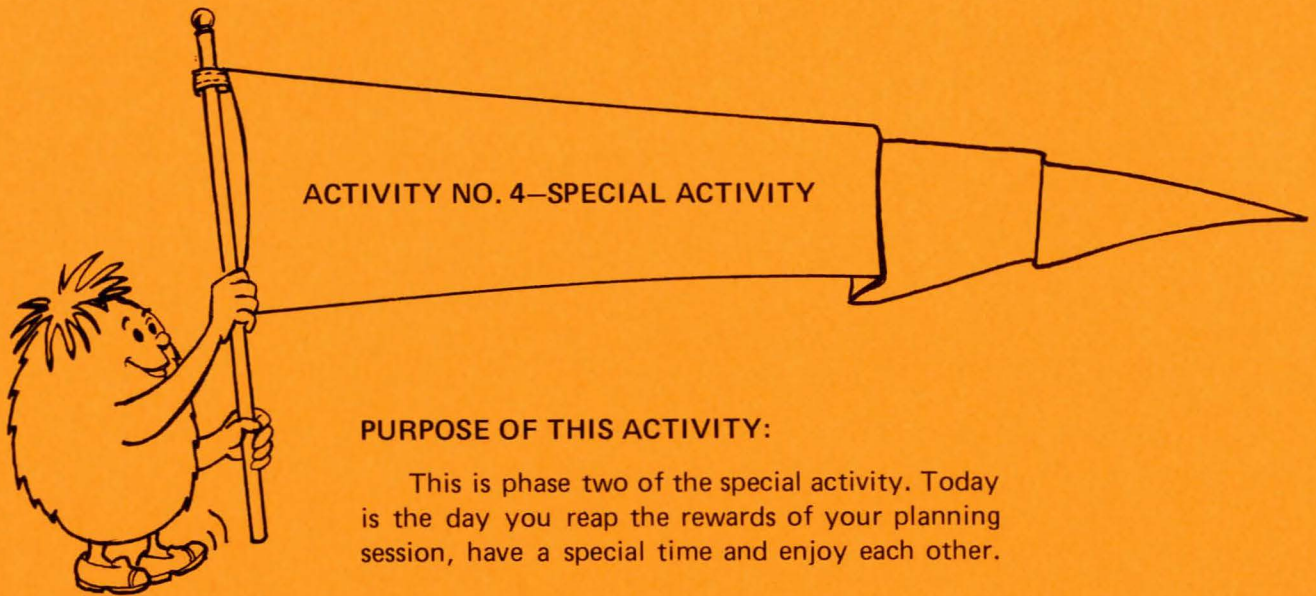
The most important thing to keep in mind is how you as a family can use all your resources to make this a super special event.

6. The coordinator for the activity should check with each person during the week to make sure everything is moving forward as planned.

SPECIAL MEMORIES ACTIVITY NO. 3

1. What things did your family say they had enjoyed doing together.

PICTURES OR OTHER SPECIAL MEMENTOS



PURPOSE OF THIS ACTIVITY:

This is phase two of the special activity. Today is the day you reap the rewards of your planning session, have a special time and enjoy each other.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Those as developed in your planning session.
2. A camera.

ACTIVITY:

1. The coordinator should have checked with everyone to make sure things were moving forward as planned.

If there are any last-minute problems the coordinator should work with the family member involved for the best solution.

2. Assign someone as official photographer to see that pictures are placed in the project book.

3. Carry out the super special activity and have a real special time as a family.

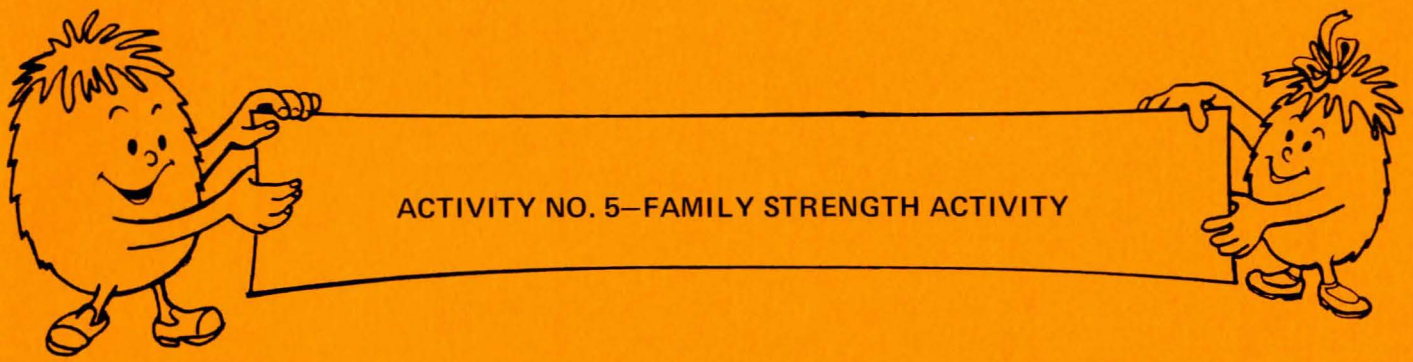
4. Take time at the end of the activity to thank each person for their efforts in making the activity a success.



SPECIAL MEMORIES ACTIVITY NO. 4

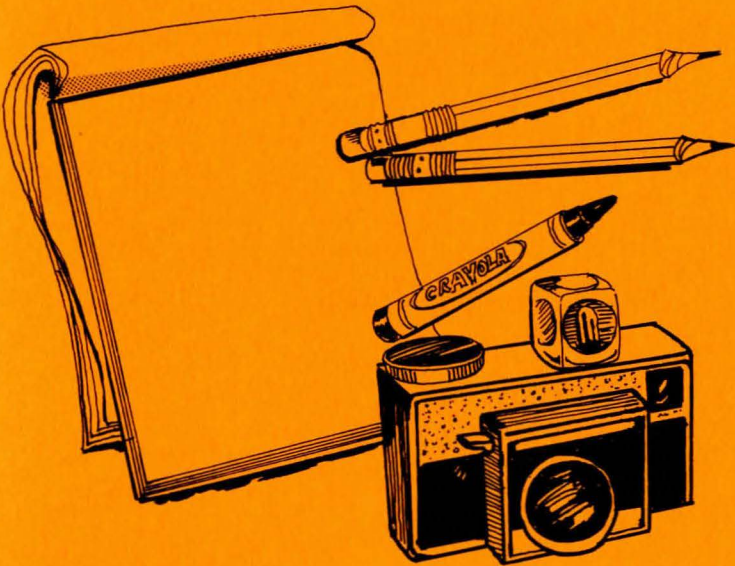
1. Briefly describe your special activity.
2. Share some of the most meaningful learnings from this experience.

PICTURES OR OTHER SPECIAL MEMENTOS



PURPOSE OF THIS ACTIVITY:

To help family members realize the many strengths they have as a family and to explore ways they can build on these strengths.



MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Paper and pencils.
2. Large sheet of paper, marking pen or crayon.
3. A positive attitude.
4. A special family treat.
5. A camera.



ACTIVITIES FOR THIS SESSION:

1. Family Strength Inventory. Give each family member a sheet of paper and a pencil. Have each think about the question, "What strengths do we have as a family?" Then have them write down all the strengths they can think of. Jot down key words or phrases that describe each strength. Following are several examples of what might be considered family strengths.

- . Family traditions
- . Family participation in local and national events
- . Fostering curiosity and interests
- . Family recreation
- . Mutual support of family members
- . Building relationships with friends
- . Parent-child relationships
- . Spiritual life
- . Relationships with relatives
- . Work together
- . Encourage each other
- . Allow each person to be unique

Don't be limited by the list, be creative and see how many strengths you can identify as a family.

2. After each person has completed his list, it's sharing time. One person should act as a recorder. As each shares a family strength, write it on the large paper so all can see it. Have each person share one of the strengths they listed. After each has had a turn, open it up to the total family and see how many more you can add. The recorder should see that everyone has a chance to participate. Either as you are listing the strength or after the list is complete discuss what each person means by the strength they suggested. Try to give specific examples.

A question you might want to explore is, "What do you consider our most important family strength?"

3. When the listing and discussion of family strengths is completed, ask the question, "What additional things could we do to strengthen our family?" Make a listing of the ideas shared.



GIFTS for
Mother



GOOD
HEALTH



LOTS
of
Money

4. You've had the opportunity to do a lot of talking. The crucial issue now is how you can take some of the ideas suggested and build them into action plans that will cause things to happen and not wilt into good intentions.

The essence is planned action. A family doesn't develop family strengths through just wishing or talking about them.

You have spent five evenings some planned activities that were designed for the purpose of building family strengths in your family. Hopefully, you have shared some memorable moments. Now the challenge is what you can deliberately design into your family life style to keep your family strong. Be creative and explore with each other some things you would really like to do.

5. As a closing activity, before you have a treat, take some time to think about each member of your family. If you could give each family member a special gift—making believe that you could give anything—what would you give each person. It should be a special gift just for that person.

When you have had time to think of a gift for each person, then as a family focus on one member at a time and share with them the kinds of gifts you would give them. Examples may be good health, the power to continue to bring joy into the lives of others, the development of a special talent, or a tangible gift. The key is to match the gift to the person.

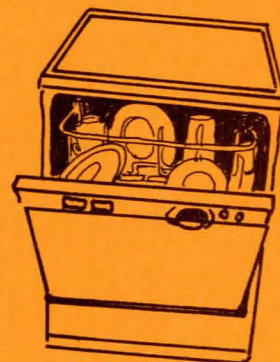
6. It's treat time. The night wouldn't be complete without a special treat to be enjoyed by the whole family.

7. We would like to know more about the families who have participated in the 4-H Family Project—Building Family Strengths. Please complete the enclosed report form and share with us your comments on the project. Then return the report form to the County Extension Office.

A new
HOUSE



A Dishwasher



SPECIAL MEMORIES ACTIVITY NO. 5

1. List some of the unique strengths identified for your family.
2. What are some of the things you plan to do to further strengthen your family?

PICTURES OR OTHER SPECIAL MEMENTOS

RETURN TO THE COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE

4-H Family Project-Building Family Strengths

Report Form

1. Name of Family _____

Address _____ County _____

2. Please list the names of those who participated in the project and the ages of the children.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. List the top five family strengths you identified for your family:

4. What are some of the specific things you plan to do to further strengthen your family?

5. Comments:

