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Creating a Strong Family Universal Values, Family Strengths and the Quest for a Peaceful World

By John DeFrain, Extension Specialist, Family and Community Development

Kenneth Boulding, an economist, philosopher and general systems theorist, wrote that human betterment is the end toward which we individually and collectively should strive. Betterment is an increase in the "ultimate good," that which is good in itself. Four great virtues make up this ultimate good: (1) economic adequacy - "riches" in contrast to poverty; nourishment rather than starvation; adequate housing, clothing, health care and other essentials of life; (2) justice - in contrast to injustice; equality rather than inequality in access to work, education and health; (3) freedom - in contrast to coercion and confinement; and (4) peacefulness - in contrast to warfare and strife. Boulding proposed that these great virtues may be considered universal values. All the cultures he has examined appear to share these values.

In the same vein, researchers who study the qualities of strong families around the world note how remarkably similar these families are from culture to culture. Strong families tend to share six broad qualities or strengths: (1) appreciation and affection for each other; (2) commitment to the well-being of the family and the growth of each individual family member; (3) positive communication among family members; (4) enjoyable time together - "quality time and in great quantities"; (5) a sense of spiritual well-being within the family and connection to the greater good in the world; and (6) the ability to cope with stress and crisis - preventing difficulty when possible and dealing creatively with it when necessary.

Figure 1 combines Boulding's universal values with the Family Strengths Model. From a global perspective, the ultimate good and the strengths that create human happiness in our most intimate institution, the family, are remarkably similar. If the values we share as a human family are so closely aligned, we must be able to find a way to build a peaceful world together.

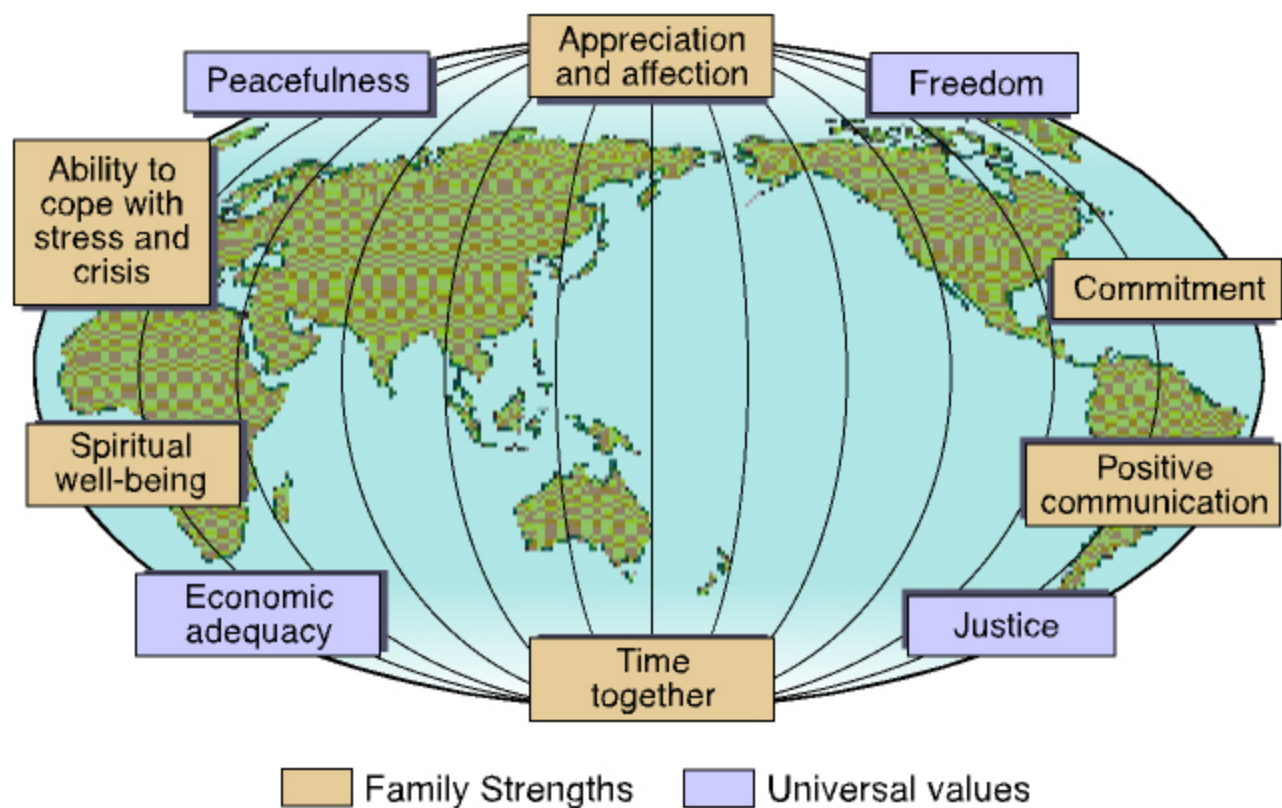


Figure 1. Universal Values and Family Strengths

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Figure 1. Universal Values and Family Strengths Illustration adapted with permission from the work of Amie DeFrain.

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