



Qualities of a Healthy and Happy Family

Family: A Circle of Life

Why a FAMILY becomes a circle of life? *“Every soul is surrounded by an atmosphere of its own - an atmosphere that can be charged with the life-giving power of faith, courage, and hope, and sweet with the fragrance of love. Or it may be heavy and chill with the gloom of discontent and selfishness... By the atmosphere surrounding us, every person with whom we come in contact is consciously or unconsciously affected.”* (White, E.G., Mind, Character & Personality, COL 339 (1900) p. 207)

“Marked diversities of disposition and character frequently exist in the same family, for it is in the order of God that persons of varied temperament should associate together. When this is the case, each member of the household should sacredly regard the feelings and respect the right of the others. By this means mutual consideration and forbearance will be cultivated, prejudices will be softened, and rough points of character smoothed. Harmony may be secured, and the blending of the varied temperaments may be a benefit to each.” (White, Ellen, CG p. 205)



FAMILY: A CIRCLE OF LIFE

“The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.”

William James

Characteristics of less effective families

1. Husband and wife argue and treat each other disrespectfully.
2. The parents have emotional problems that prevent them from engaging with the children or with each other.
3. The children are controlled with punishment. (no self-control)
4. Self-esteem is not maintained or enhanced.
5. Only one parent is responsible for carrying out parenting responsibilities.
6. Family members abuse alcohol or drugs.

*By the **atmosphere surrounding us**, every person within the family and outside the family is **consciously or unconsciously affected**.*

How important is the family?

Family is an institution at risk. In today’s society we don’t really pay much attention to the importance of developing positive and healthy family relationships.

Are you aware that if you died tomorrow, the company that you are working for could easily replace you in a matter of days? But the family you left behind will feel the loss for the rest of their lives.

And come to think of it, we are more willing to make sacrifices and to pour ourselves more into work than into our own family, an unwise investment indeed, don't you think?

Jesus’ example regarding family

If we look at Jesus’ example on family relationships, we see Him hanging on the cross suffering physically and emotionally. Darkness was surrounding him as he was about to die, but

suddenly and in the middle of that intense moment in which He was carrying the destiny of humanity, He thought about his mother. Where was his mother Mary? She was right there with her son, she was at the foot of the cross.

The last words from Jesus were of filial love to assure his mother affection and protection. He looked upon the heartbroken face of His mother, and then upon John; and then he said: "Woman, behold thy son!" Then, to the disciple: "Behold thy mother!" John well understood the words of Jesus, and the sacred trust which was committed to him. He immediately removed the mother of Christ from the fearful scene of Calvary.

The powerful influence of our family

In our minds there are, for good or bad, powerful influences that come from our "home" (whatever "home" may be). The lessons learned there have an amazing power over our life. These influences may help us to be happy and successful or may make us fail and be miserable. No one can deny the great influence of our family over our lives.

Both research and common sense indicate that children who grow up in *families that are emotionally healthy* have a better chance at succeeding in the world when they become adults. These children are also more likely to have fewer problems during adolescence.

"The restoration and uplifting of humanity begins in the home... The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences." (White, E.G., The Ministry of Healing, p. 349)

SEVEN QUALITIES OF A HEALTHY AND HAPPY FAMILY

These are the **characteristics of emotionally healthy and happy families:**

1. COMMITMENT - There are guidelines and expectations for family members' behaviour. There is total commitment to promote the happiness of others. The importance of the family goes beyond the needs and wants of individuals.

Philippians 2:3, 4

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It is not that these families are special and they don't have problems, they do. **What is the difference?** The difference is that they face their issues and problems with a sense of unity and commitment to each other.

There are *realistic perceptions and expectations* by parents of each other and of their children. The couple put themselves and each other before anyone else, including the children; the marriage, however, is not a symbiotic one which excludes the children. The children do not feel that to be close to one parent means they are alienating the other.

2. RESPECT - All family members are treated with respect and are taken seriously.

The capacity to have open, honest, and clear communication and to be able to deal with issues without attacking or blaming each other.

A mother's story... I ran into a stranger as he passed by, "Oh excuse me please" was my reply. He said, "Please excuse me too; I wasn't watching for you." We were very polite, this stranger and I. We went on our way and we said good-bye. But at home a different story is told, How we treat our loved ones, young and old. Later that day, cooking the evening meal, my son stood beside me very still. When I turned, I nearly knocked him down. "Move out of the way," I said with a frown. He walked away, his little heart broken. I didn't realize how harshly I'd spoken. While I lay awake in bed, God's still small voice came to me and said, "While dealing with a stranger, common courtesy you use, but the family you love, you seem to abuse. Go and look on the kitchen floor, you'll find some flowers there by the door. Those are the flowers he brought for you. He picked them himself: pink, yellow and blue. He stood very quietly not to spoil the surprise; you never saw the tears that filled his little eyes."

By this time, I felt very small, and now my tears began to fall. I quietly went and knelt by his bed; "Wake up, little one, wake up," I said. "Are these the flowers you picked for me?" He smiled, "I found 'em, out by the tree. I picked 'em because they're pretty like you. I knew you'd like 'em, especially the blue." I said, "Son, I'm very sorry

for the way I acted today; I shouldn't have yelled at you that way." He said, "Oh, Mom, that's okay. I love you anyway." I said, "Son, I love you too, and I do like the flowers, especially the blue."

Remember that the lack of control over our words demonstrates a lack of control of our emotions.

Proverbs 16:24; Colossians 4:6; Psalm 37:8

3. GENUINE LOVE - There is an atmosphere of caring and love in the family. "The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven." {AH 106.1}

Luke 6:31-36 – "Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?... Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." **Romans 12:9**

Testimony - You are asking me, what is my wife doing that makes me feel so good? Well, I'll tell you. She doesn't remind me often about my short comings, faults and defects. I'm human and I have plenty. But she is always reminding me of my accomplishments, my good deeds, and my success. Sometimes I even forget about it myself, but she is always there to remind me that I'm not that bad after all."

Love – You can, if you wish, stop loving others. On the other hand if you allow yourself to love and reach everyone with it, you'll find God and the real meaning of life.



How to love your children:

- Stay close. Don't just direct their lives from the sideline. You are the captain not the coach.
- Clear the schedule to give them plenty of your time.
- Affirm them by building on positives. This

will develop their sense of self worth.

- Discipline is essential. As a dam fills up with water, take away the boundaries and disaster happens downstream. We all need guidelines with appropriate consequences if the boundaries are broken.

4. GOOD COMMUNICATION – An open and positive communication within the family will increase connectedness, mutual understanding and the degree of satisfaction with life. Generally, this experience of connectedness and good communication will make it easy to be open and authentic towards others as well as listen to others with an open mind.

Family members should be encouraged to express their opinions. Different points of view are encouraged. And there is a sense of emotional connection that creates an atmosphere of caring and love within the family. Research indicates that most families these days have an average of **17** minutes of conversation each week. This is very little time, especially if we consider that each week has **10,080** minutes.

James 1:19, 20 – "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."- **Proverbs 15:23; 18:13; 21:19; 25:24; 27:15-**

How to communicate with your children:

- You must have a good attitude.
- Choose the battles that are important to their future, not yours.
- Listen first. Listen to their emerging points of view.
- Look for their body language and know when to talk.
- Talk their language. Keep your vocabulary and instructions short and simple.
- Take time to talk things through.
- Find teachable moments. Look for times to teach them life, communication, and spiritual skills.

People in healthy and happy families have to be flexible; there is a feeling of going with the flow.

5 .SPEND TIME TOGETHER – Family members that share mutual interests, laughter, and fun will keep mutual interests alive and will enjoy doing things together.

Everyone needs to have a safe place where they can be themselves and be vulnerable. A long-lasting marriage provides that place. This requires paying attention to the other person and knowing when he or she needs comfort.

The following question was presented to 1500 students in primary school: What do you think makes families happy? The most common answer was: To do things together.

It is important for a family to spend time together, not only in quantity but in quality. A father told me that he had discovered that family activities usually are not happening by themselves. We have to plan them. If we are not careful, time goes by and we end up spread all around the place and never see each other.

Family members need to find activities that they enjoy doing together, like working around the house, playing, going to church, eating around the table. The important thing is not *what* we do but *how* we do it.

- *Remember: When they are little they want to be with you, but you don't want to be bothered by them. When they are bigger you want to be with them, but they don't want to be bothered by you.*

Proverbs 22:6 – “train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” - **Ephesians 5:15-17**

6 .UNITY & FLEXIBILITY – Group identity or a sense of “we-ness” is encouraged within the family as well as the identity development and autonomy for all family members. At the beginning of the marriage, for example, it is important to create a sense of togetherness and also autonomy. It means creating a shared vision of how you want to spend your lives together. This means to create a sense of we-ness, a feeling that you are part of a couple.

Ephesians 4:2-3 – *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*

In healthy and happy families there is a group identity or sense of “we-ness.” There is also identity development and emotional maturity. This means to stop childish reactions, and replace them with a pleasant attitude and personal content based on your own self-worth. It is essential that you let go of an excessive concern about yourself, then you'll be free to

focus your attention towards others.

7 .SPIRITUAL MATURITY – Attention is paid to the needs of others outside the family, creating a sense of mission and community involvement. There is a parallel between the inner dynamics of religious motivation and the quality of family relationships.

Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4 – “*Submit to one another...*”

We express the spiritual dimension of our life not only in church once a week, but in our daily activities and especially in our family interaction at home.

- In a typical family, for example, children observe how their parents respond to life's circumstances, how they establish priorities and values, how they relate to others (including God), how they view and care for themselves, and how they nurture their love for one another. They learn the skills that they will use themselves someday.
- Examples:
 - The responsibility with which we handle our money.
 - The cordiality we extend to visitors in our homes and our willingness to reach out sacrificially to those in need.
 - The open, enthusiastic, and respectful affection between those they look up to, they incorporate it into their own relationships. (How to... taken from: *Teenage Ups and Downs* by David Veerman, “Single Parent Family” July 1995)

We have to pay more attention to the importance of developing positive and healthy family relationships.

In our minds there are, for good or bad, powerful influences that come from our “home” (whatever “home” may be). The lessons learned there have an amazing power over our life. These influences may help us to be happy and successful or may make us fail and be miserable. No one can deny the great influence of our family over our lives.

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