

Strengthening the family

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There are many pressures on the family today. You are all familiar with them. You know about the divorce rates, you all know how hard it is to keep up in a materialistic and addictive society and the competitive work place. The family doesn't have to suffer.

We are hard wired to attach and need attachment, and when it works well, the family provides the best form of healthy environment for our basic need "to love and be loved", as well as the physical needs. Only in the family can we be ourselves in community, totally relaxed about ourselves and others, with the right level of interdependence and independence with the right balances shifting as the children grow.

But only in the family if it is not right can we find the level of personal and interpersonal destruction possible in the human race.

Traits of healthy families need close attention. It is amazing how these traits resemble things that the Bible teaches. Lets list them now. Many of these elements are the basic health of communication, of personal self esteem as well. What elements in your family could be strengthened even further? Does your family:

- Teach respect of one another [starting with the parents respecting each other and the children's needs and developmental appropriateness]
- Respect for privacy, having boundaries
- Affirm and support one another
- Have a balanced sense of right and wrong
- Really listen and empathise

- Develop trust, being trustworthy
- Share some quality time
- Have fun together
- Admit and seek help with problems
- Share responsibility
- Have love not conditional on obedience. [that is no shaming and blaming]

Remember, we are not clones of one another, and should not have to think, feel and act the same. But we can share our differences closely in a healthy family and be accepted, while principles are not compromised.

Some good books : Delores Curran, *Traits of a Healthy Family* [Minneapolis Winston Press 1983] and Gary R Collins *Family Shock, Keeping Families Strong* [Illinois Tyndale House 1995]