

FAMILY HEALTH HABITS CHECK LIST

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INTRODUCTION

Every individual is born into a family. It is the family that most of all moulds our personality and character. The family is one of the units that most shapes our whole person well being.

The health of the family promotes the health of its members and in turn, the health of the society. This handout shares some suggestions as to certain habits which will contribute to a healthy family. Each member can score the extent to which you believe your family is observing these habits. Each person can determine how they can make a significant improvement towards the relevant habits. As well, the family can have a meeting to discuss how habits could be better observed.

Try to avoid arguments or blaming each other. Persons can also 'agree to disagree'.
Add any other health habits that you think would be useful!

1. BUDGETING TIME

(a) **Members establishing appropriate priorities for loyalty and time** - i.e. the family comes first (after one's Higher Power and after work or friends)

2. SHARING and COMMUNICATING

(a) **Members participating together in regular activities and family rituals:** meals, recreation, hobbies, physical and spiritual activities, special celebrations (birthdays, seasons), etc.

(b) **Members supporting each others' healthy interests, friendships, studies and career**

(c) **Members regularly discussing together** and sharing experiences (including discussion between parents, parent-child discussions and listening and family discussions)

3. Members RELATING POSITIVELY at the feeling level

(a) **Sharing verbal and physical affection** and love

(b) **Sharing affirmation (or praise)**

(c) **Regularly expressing both positive and negative feelings, as well as one's needs** and seeking to understand, empathize and provide feedback to one another

(d) **Exercising mutual respect** for each other's person, property and privacy

(e) **Avoidance of competition or abuse** (emotional, verbal, physical or sexual)

4. NURTURING and INFLUENCING

(a) **Parents seeking first a strong bonding** and teamwork between themselves for nurturing

(b) **Both parents providing jointly for practical family needs** (such as food)

(c) **Finding a father or mother substitute** for children

(d) **Adult children caring for disabled or elderly parents**

(e) **Parents teaching about life** (including values)

(f) **Parents discussing and modeling positive behaviours** and healthy lifestyles

(g) **Parents teaching responsibility** by organizing roles

(h) **Parents jointly providing appropriate explanations and consistent discipline** for desirable behaviours

(i) **Children respecting authority roles**

(j) **Family promoting good citizenship** through voluntary community service and outreach

5. FLEXIBLE, TRUSTING and OPEN behaviours

(a) **Children allowed increasing independence**

(b) **Avoidance of excessive inflexibility**

- Between parents

- Between parents and children

(c) **Establishing open, mutually supportive, external links** with the outside world (such as the extended family, neighborhood, friends, support groups, worship community, school, interest groups, workplaces and the society in general)

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6. PROBLEM SOLVING and CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

(a) Developing procedures to deal with:	
• Inevitable problems (such as sex, family planning, finances, in-laws, religion, different interests, friends, communication and child rearing styles, sibling rivalry, both parents working, life changes, and emergencies)	
• Serious problems (infidelity, alcoholism, addiction to drugs and gambling, outside children, domestic abuse (all types), chronic illness or disability and social deviancy in children)	
(b) Discussing all problems early and at appropriate times	
(c) Using problem solving skills: brainstorming options and seeking the best alternatives	
(d) Encouraging democratic participation and tolerating differences of opinion and interests while avoiding ridicule or becoming “personal” and allowing instead for compromise	
(e) Seeking consensus-building versus arguments, blame, criticism, personal attacks and revenge	
(f) Exercising a willingness to say “I am wrong” and “I forgive you”	
(g) Avoiding games of favouritism or using children as “pawns” or substitute parents	
(h) Seeking professional help when necessary	

SUMMARY OF HEALTH HABITS

1. Budgeting Time
2. Sharing and Communicating
3. Members relating positively at the feeling level
4. Nurturing and Influencing
5. Flexible, Trusting and Open Behaviour
6. Problem Solving and Conflict Management

CONCLUSION

Do not expect to be the perfect family member, or for your lack of experience in your role or your shortcomings as a family member to change overnight. Success is achieved by small beginnings and persistence. Seek professional counselling for individual members or the whole family as may become necessary. Willingness to seek help is a sign of health.

Just do you best - that is all. Your family will benefit and members will respect each other for their efforts.

HOW ABOUT PREPARING A FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT - TRY IT!

Happy Family Living!

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