

Healthy Families

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The foundation of a healthy family is based on a level of mutual respect for other members and themselves. Healthy families provide a level of support for its members, so that every member of the family should enjoy a sense of security or “belonging” to the family. Healthy families are loyal to each other, and offer each other unconditional love. They create healthy boundaries that define individuality yet permit physical and emotional closeness. Enhancing positive communication distinguishes nurturing, affection and personal contact. Children, who come from a healthy family, are taught skills on how to cope in various areas of their life. Some of these areas are:

They know how to have a relationship with themselves: They learn to love and respect themselves, to be responsible and accountable for their life without excessive control or compulsion.

They know how to have a relationship with others: They learn the importance of relating to other people in healthy ways in which the spiritual integrity of each person is maintained.

They appreciate and respect the relevance of a spiritual life: They learn to embrace a trust in God that is beyond the power of themselves and their parents.

They respect the significance of emotional support: They learn to honor their feelings and share them appropriately with others because their voice is heard.

They have the ability to stay mentally fit: They learn to train their mental capacities in a balanced way to solve problems and to keep an active and curious mind.

They understand values: They are able to acquire those core beliefs or principles that help shape the mind and character and create moral excellence.

They value sexual purity: They learn responsible sexual behavior that is biblically based and spiritually appropriate.

When your growth is supported in these areas, you can become your own person and contribute your unique qualities to the family where there is mutual appreciation and support. In a healthy family, each member is honored as an individual. There is room for each person to express feelings and to be fully alive. When a family is healthy, the roles members play and the family rules and expectations do not confine the parents or the children. They only serve as useful guidelines. In a functional family each parent is clear about their own identity and the family is based on trust and love. There is hugging and healing and parents are emotionally available to each other and their children.

Now that I have given to you a picture of a healthy, wholesome family; let me share some tools that you can use to keep your family healthy. Jim Burns author of the book *“10 Building Blocks for a Solid Family,”* gives some very good points on how to keep your family balanced and secure during these uncertain times.

Be there. Your children regard your very presence as a sign of caring and connectedness. It's crucial for you to spend as much time as possible with them. Keep in mind that your job as a parent is a calling from God. Your influence on your children will be your greatest legacy. Ask God to help you make whatever sacrifices you need to make to free up your time and energy to be there for your children.

Express affirmation, warmth, and encouragement. Parents, who practice loving parenting, make their children feel accepted, appreciated, listened to, and loved. Avoid

shame-based parenting, which is performance-oriented and approval-focused, using words and actions that cause children to think that they aren't loved or valuable

Build healthy morals and values. The decisions that children make today will often affect them for the rest of their lives. Study the culture so you can understand what cultural influences currently pose a danger to your children spiritually. Pray for God's help to teach biblical values and morals to your children in ways they can best learn.

Discipline with consistency. When you clearly express expectations and consistently follow through, you'll produce responsible children. Keep in mind that consistent discipline takes lots of time and energy.

Ruthlessly eliminate stress. The unbalanced life will not be kind to the areas you neglect. Ask God to help you decide which activities to eliminate from your family's schedule if you're too busy to get enough rest and free time every day and evening.

Communicate well. Positive communication is the language of love for your children. Make a habit of listening carefully to your children whenever they share their thoughts and feelings with you.

Play together. There is nothing like play to bring about family togetherness. Make time for vacations together, have fun at home, go on frequent outings together.

Love your spouse. If you're married, work on your marriage regularly and invest in it through activities like frequent dates. This is important because a loving marriage brings hope and security to your children.

Remember that the best things in life aren't things. Follow a budget to live below your means, avoid debt, tithe and give in other generous ways, and save regularly. This produces positive family priorities.

Energize your family's spiritual growth. Your greatest calling in life is to leave a spiritual legacy for your children. So make your relationship with God through Christ your top priority.

A healthy family's foundation of mutual respect and love will not only create a blanket of support and security for your children and grandchildren; but will foster an atmosphere that cultivates citizens for heaven.