

## CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTHY FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS



Good health includes not only good physical health, but also good mental and social health. A healthy family relationship is one that keeps family stresses in check, which enables you to cope with other stresses and have good mental and social health. Listed below are seven characteristics of Healthy Family Relationships.

### 1. ORIENTATION

Family atmosphere is influenced by a belief in helping each other, acknowledging human needs for reassurance and support, and viewing mistakes as human.

Remember that if your family atmosphere is not where you want it to be, you can change it! Each incident or event you experience builds on itself to create the future. Patience and compassion are your best allies to evaluate your present family orientation.

### 2. BOUNDARIES

Clear boundaries between family members means that the responsibilities of adults are clear and separate from the responsibilities of the growing child(ren). Boundaries also refer to the permeability of the stability of your immediate family to the larger extended family and outside community. A cohesive sense of family must be balanced with acceptance of outside persons and resources to be flexible and resilient.

### 3. POWER & INTIMACY

People are able to relate intimately when they feel they have equal power. Attention to equal consideration, which leads to joint decisions, promotes intimacy because those decisions were made in consideration of others.

### 4. HONESTY & FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Members of a family are free to express themselves autonomously, including different opinions or viewpoints if the family interactions support individuality.

### 5. WARMTH, JOY, & HUMOR

When there is joy and humor in relationships, people seek out the comfort of these interactions. Humor plays a very important role in family bonding. One aspect of mental health is the ability to laugh at ourselves good-naturedly. It is the shared experience of humor that lightens up the potential to take ourselves too seriously.

### 6. ORGANIZATION & NEGOTIATION SKILL

A necessary aspect of family life is coordinating tasks, negotiating differences and being able to reach closure effectively. Negotiating skills include the ability to listen and make choices in what family members feel is a fair process.

### 7. VALUE SYSTEM

Part of the health and vibrancy of any family is also dealing with weaknesses, fears, and stresses in the system itself. Nobody is perfect and no system is perfect. But in healthy families, truth is accepted as not absolute. Different perspectives on reality are acceptable and people are basically good.

With these tips, you can look forward to less family stresses and better mental health.

### Here are some questions for you to ask yourself and think about in your own life and family:

1. What are the basic attitudes, beliefs or philosophy that influenced you in your childhood family?
2. How do you see your present family with respect to clarity of roles, expectations, and responsibilities?
3. How were decisions made in my childhood family? Were people's feelings considered?
4. Can you remember good times and times of laughter that bonded you as a family. In your present family life, how often do you laugh together?
5. What kind of organization do you want to have in your current home life?
6. What kind of values do you want to pass onto your children?

Source: [www.parentsplace.com](http://www.parentsplace.com)

## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS VS. ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS



While we all strive to be in a healthy relationships that may not always be the case. In reality, what we perceive as a healthy relationship may be one that is characterized by subtle forms of abuse. The examples shown below can help identify traits of abusive and healthy relationships.

### Healthy Relationships

#### Non-Threatening Behavior

- Talking and acting so that your partner feels safe and comfortable doing and saying things
- Conflict is faced directly and resolved

#### Respect

- Balance of giving and receiving
- Communication is open and spontaneous
- Each can enjoy being alone and privacy is respected

#### Trust and Support

- Supporting your partner's goals in life
- Respecting your partner's right to his or her own feelings, friends, activities, and opinions
- Personal growth, change, and exploration is encouraged

#### Honesty and Accountability

- Admitting being wrong when it is appropriate
- Communicating openly and truthfully and accepting responsibility for yourself
- Mistakes are accepted and learned from

#### Responsible Parenting

- Sharing parental responsibilities
- Being a positive, non-violent role model for children

#### Shared Responsibility

- Making family decisions together
- Mutually agreeing on a fair distribution of work

#### Safe Touch

- Mutually agreed upon boundaries for touching, including sex

### Abusive Relationships

#### Using Intimidation

- Creating fear in your partner by using looks, actions, gestures
- Silent or overt raging

#### Using Emotional Abuse

- Humiliating your partner, whether through direct attacks or "jokes"
- Creating guilt in your partner

#### Using Isolation

- Controlling what your partner does, who he or she sees and talks to, what he or she reads, where he or she goes
- Cutting your partner off from prior friends, activities, and social interaction

#### Minimizing, Denying, and Blame Shifting

- Saying the abuse wasn't that bad or that the abuse didn't happen
- Shifting responsibility for your abusive behavior to your partner
- Making light of the abuse and not taking your partner's concerns seriously

#### Using Children

- Using the children to relay messages
- Making your partner feel guilty about the children

#### Using Gender Privilege

- Making all the big decisions
- Acting like "master of the castle"

#### Domestic Violence

- Holding, restraining, pushing, hitting, unwanted physical touch including unwanted sexual contact

Abusive relationships do not change without sustained individual and couples therapy specifically targeted toward the abusive relationship patterns. Group therapy is highly recommended for abusers, as it helps them to break through the denial that is generally a part of the abusive patterns. This applies to the partners of abusers as well - group therapy helps them to break through the denial by seeing the relationship patterns from a wider view.

If the abuser is unwilling to own their behavior and seek help, the prudent course of action is to remove yourself totally from the situation. This is painful, but is generally safer and ultimately better for both parties than allowing the cycle of abuse to continue. Be prepared for the abuse to increase after you leave - stepping out of the cycle enrages the abuser, as it shatters their illusion of control. Learn how to protect and care for yourself. Detachment with love is difficult, but it is the best solution if your partner is unwilling to work through the issues. If you are in an abusive relationship and need assistance, contact EASE at (216) 241-3273 OR (800) 521-3273.

Article Resource: [www.recovery-man.com](http://www.recovery-man.com)  
National Domestic Violence Hotline  
1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY)

Website: <http://www.ndvh.org>

## SOME FACTS ABOUT GROWING OLD IN AMERICA TODAY

- **According to the U.S. Census Bureau, currently one in eight Americans is 65 years old.** By the year 2010, the ratio will be one in five, and by the year 2025, 20% of Americans will be over age 65.



- **Alzheimer's disease is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States.** One million people over 65 are severely afflicted with Alzheimer's and two million are moderately affected.
- **The highest suicide rate in America is among those 65 and older.** Almost 6,000 older Americans commit suicide each year.

- **Older Americans under-utilize mental health services.** It is estimated that only half of those who acknowledge mental health problems receive treatment. (Older Adults and Mental Health, 2001)
- **Health Service psychologists serve as vital members of health care teams providing quality care to the elderly in hospitals, nursing homes and hospices.** Psychologists work with the elderly to help them manage incontinence, adhere to their medical regimen, maintain independent lives, and cope with depression and other mental illnesses that are so prevalent among older adults.

*American Psychological Association*

Contact EASE and we will put you in touch with a member of our eldercare team.

Contact EASE at (800) 521-3273 or (216) 241-3273 or visit our website at [www.easeatwork.com](http://www.easeatwork.com)

**Are you planning a vacation, looking for ways to save for retirement, or getting your children ready for college?** If you need help planning for your financial future, contact EASE. Our financial advisor can assist you with a complementary one-hour consultation.

Call EASE, we can help!

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## TEN TIPS FOR FUELING YOUR CHILD'S BRAIN POWER

National PTA suggests the following essential tips to make sure your children have the proper nutrition and all around well-being to help them perform their best once school starts up.



1. Show your child love and affection.
2. Feed your child breakfast every day.
3. Ensure your child receives 9 to 10-hours of sleep each night.

4. Schedule regular health checkups for your child.
5. Take an active role in your child's education.
6. Dedicate 10 to 60-minutes a day to your child's homework.
7. Set high, but realistic expectations for your child.
8. Engage your child in cultural arts activities.
9. Make sure your child participates in one hour of physical activity per day.
10. Give your child time for creative play.

Source: [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

## THE SCHOOL BULLY CAN TAKE A TOLL ON YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

Ask any child what a bully looks like, and he or she is likely to describe someone who is bigger and stronger. Yet, while bullies certainly are known for their ability to overpower others physically, mental bullying can be just as damaging to children.



When bullies pick on children, whether physically or mentally, many feel the need to suffer in silence for fear that speaking up will provoke further torture. But bullying is not a problem that usually just takes care of itself. Action needs to be taken.

Parents and caregivers are sometimes reluctant to intervene in conflicts between children but they can teach children not to take part in—or become victims of—bullying. Children can be taught to assert themselves effectively. As a caring adult, you can:

- **Demonstrate assertive behavior.** Teach children to ask for things directly and respond directly to each other. It is OK to say "no" to an unacceptable demand. Let children role-play with puppets or dolls.
- **Teach social skills.** Suggest ways for children to compromise or to express their feelings in a positive way. Show children how to resolve problems firmly and fairly.

- **Identify potential friendship problems and correct them.** Teach children how to ignore routine teasing. Not all-provocative behavior must be acknowledged. Teach children the value of making new friends.
- **Teach common courtesy skills.** Teach children to ask nicely and to respond appropriately to polite requests.
- **Identify ways to respond to bullies.** Help children identify acts of aggression, bossiness or discrimination. Encourage children not to give up objects or territory to bullies. This discourages bullying behavior.
- **Demonstrate the rewards of personal achievement.** Teach children to trust and value their own feelings. They will be more likely to resist peer pressure, respect warm and caring adults, and be successful in achieving their personal goals.

[www.girlpower.gov](http://www.girlpower.gov)

Children who are victims or witnesses to acts of bullying often suffer from serious emotional problems, including depression and anxiety. If your child needs assistance, call EASE@Work and schedule an appointment for your child to be seen by a professional counselor.

EASE (800) 521-3273 or (216) 241-3273

### FACT:

Because addiction runs in families, many children are likely to become addicted themselves. Contact EASE for assistance for counseling, 12-step programs, AA meetings, or other resources to help!

[www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

**EASE@WORK****News You Can Use@Work**

Better personal lives. For better work lives.

**HOW DO EMPLOYEES BENEFIT FROM AN ALCOHOL AND DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE?**

Working for a company that is alcohol and drug free has a number of advantages. Employers who maintain alcohol and drug free workplaces do more than just protect their business assets - they contribute to the improved safety, health, and well-being of their workforce. Employees benefit from knowing that a drug-free workplace program applies not only to them, but also to all the co-workers and managers on whom their safety and security depends. Take a moment to consider the positive impact a drug-free environment has on:

**1. Safety**

Think about the construction contractor whose personal safety depends on his fellow workers being alert and focused at all times.

**2. Health**

Consider the restaurant server who knows his own health won't be compromised because he has to work a double shift to cover for a colleague who regularly calls in sick due to a hangover.

**3. Productivity**

Think about the high-tech worker who knows he won't miss an important deadline because he's covering for a colleague whose output lags due to drug abuse.

**4. Morale**

Picture the nurse who arrives for work each day with the knowledge that the level of patient care won't suffer due to a coworker's abuse of alcohol or other drugs.

**5. Security**

Consider the electronics store sales associate who doesn't worry that the cash register she shares will be short at the end of the day because a coworker steals to support a drug habit.

**6. Well-Being**

Think about the accountant who worked hard to achieve recovery and finds that his supportive work environment plays an important role in his continued sobriety and success.

*U.S. Department of Labor/www.dol.gov*

**Self-Assessment Test**

1. Has anyone ever questioned you about your alcohol or other drug use?
2. Have you ever missed work because you were sick from using too much alcohol or other drugs?
3. If you cannot use alcohol or other drugs, do you get jumpy, shaky, cranky, nervous, or have cravings?
4. Are you in debt because of your alcohol or other drug use?
5. Have you ever been in the hospital as a result of your drinking or drug use?
6. Have you ever used alcohol or other drugs at work?

If you answered "yes" to more than one of these questions, there may be reason for concern about abuse or addiction. For assistance, call EASE@Work at (800) 521-3273 or (216) 241-3273.

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**ACCESS THE FOLLOWING SERVICES ONLINE:**

- Legal and Financial Referrals
- Search for Child Care programs
- Request assistance from our Eldercare team
- Inquire about our Counseling Services
- Browse through the library of information
- Link to other valuable resources

Visit our website at [www.easeatwork.com](http://www.easeatwork.com) and click on the EASEy Access tab.

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