

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY FAMILY

***Note:** The jottings below are based on an article of Fr. J. Pimenta s.j. in the Magazine “Awakening Faith”
The materials therein not cast into the style of an article, but in the form of a learning session aimed mainly to Parents and Teaching*

Starter: A true life incident.

At the end of a fruitful Parenting Conference, a lady from the audience stood up and in a worried voice asked the Speaker: “Sir, I guess what a unhealthy family is – *one with big problems like drug, alcoholism, alienation or loss of faith.* Our family, thanks be to God, is not like that. But it is not as happy as it could be. Kindly could you give us the signs or characteristics of healthy family?”

PersonalWork

Instructions for the Moderator

*Give the participants copies of the form below:
Ask them to reflect and write down their thoughts*

A QUESTIONNAIRE SIGNS OF A HEALTHY FAMILY ARE

Instructions:

Kindly, write down in the lines below, what do you think would be signs and characteristics of a healthy family:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____
- 11 _____
- 12 _____
- 13 _____

Group Sharing and Discussion

Moderator

Lead a discussion on the views of the participants as they share their replies to the questionnaire.

Write on the board the main signs or characteristics of a healthy family.

APPENDIX

Below here, you will find 13 signs or characteristics of a healthy family, as suggested by Fr. J. Pimenta.

1. The healthy family has a strong sense of family belonging: Even if the family members have to move far away from home, they still retain a feeling of caring, closeness and belonging. The members of that family, so to say, carry an automatic switchboard operator within whereby – they keep track of where the family members are and what they are doing.

2. A healthy family has meaningful social and religious celebrations and traditions: Religious and social traditions are important to the health of a family. Its members. Even after they left their parents home, in later years, they keep practicing them. Surely, family prayers and family joyous celebrations are foundational to the health of a family.

3. A healthy family has control of its family life : Family life has not be ruled by an outside calendar of social celebrations and obligations, however valuable in themselves. Such things coupled with outside work duties and school and college studies can rob the family of the time they need to be together. “How can we enjoy each other’s company when we don’t even see each other?”

4. The healthy family demands responsibility from all members towards the common needs. All family members, children included, are to be responsible towards the common needs and burdens of the family. We found that in families where each member - child or grown up - is made to feel responsible for some of the family chores plus all his or her own school and organizational work, there is a sense of pride and accomplishment. The family is not mom’s or dad’s responsibility only, but everyone’s .

5. A healthy family demands mutual respect for one other :

Respect thrives in the family that never humiliates others, not even the smallest children, nor discusses anyone's shortcomings in front of others, belittles them or makes them victims of others' failures. The healthy family, is loyal to one another

6. A healthy Family allows its members to do mistakes.

We learn by trial and error. Do not expect the members of your family to be perfect from the very start. Do not blame them for the mistakes they do, rather teach them how to do things the right way. Actions speak louder than words..

7. The healthy family is able to deal with adversity as well as success:

The healthy family gathers together in an effort to deal with any problem, be it unemployment, alcoholism, school or college failure or whatever. The family self image is not shattered if there is a problem and all are most willing to help.

8. The healthy family communicates : The healthy family enjoys sharing with one another their joys and sorrows, not good news only but also, disappointments, failures and dreams, as well.

9. Members of a healthy family spend time along each other. I do not mean the time when the family meets together, but about the time when one person spends time alone with another member of the family. Unfortunately, time is not an abundant commodity today, yet time spent together, is one of the most effective means to cement loving relationships within the family.

10. The healthy family develops a sense of play and humour: The degree of fun and humor among families varies widely. Yet, it is important to note that a happy family have to play together and laugh together quite many times. Play and humor relax and glue the family members together Humor keeps things in the proper perspective

11. The healthy family develops trust: Children must be trusted, and at the same time they should know and experience that they can trust their parents. Lack of trust at home, becomes a most destructive weapon and sickness within the family, Parents in a healthy family keep their word so that their children can trust them. It is a two-way gift, trusting and being trusted.

12. The healthy family lets each child to be the person God created:
Some families unfortunately, force their children into a mould of conformity. The motto of a healthy family should be: "Be and let be" Children like beautiful flowers should grow to be ; what God made them to be. Parents should be like skillful gardeners. not like ruthless stone sculptors.

13. The healthy family lets go: Parents shouldn't be too possessive, when the time is come for the child to leave the home, let him/her go. The purpose of home and family is to nurture the children until they become mature enough to venture out of their nest on their own. One of the greatest gifts we can give children is the gift of letting them go when they are ready to take their place in the world as young adults