

10 Characteristics All Healthy Families Share



There is a quote by Desmond Tutu that begins with “You don’t choose your family.”

The word “family” stirs up polarized feelings in people due to a variety of experiences. For many people, they probably would not have chosen the family into which they were born.

However, there are more types of families than just your biological family. In fact, for an increasing number of people, they equate family with one of the following groups:

1. Family by Choice: This is a group that offers the support system of a family without familial ties, such as in the case of classmates, community groups, live-in partners, adoptive families, a military community, or a religious group.

2. Blended Family: This is when divorced or widowed parents with children remarry a new spouse, with or without children of their own, to create a new family.

3. Extended Family: The family that consists of a minimum of three generations: grandparents, adult children, and grandchildren. For many extended families, it is the grandparents that raise the rising generation.

4. Joint Family: These families consist of multiple generations and their spouses living together.

Regardless of which group you classify as your family, there are common characteristics ¹ that all healthy families share:

1. They are willing to go the extra mile for each other.

A consistent aspect of any lasting family is knowing that whomever you consider your family will have you in mind always and be willing to make the extra effort to support your individual interests and concerns.

2. They respect one another.

At times in any family, communication can break down due to conflict. One family characteristic that sets lasting families apart is the willingness to pause during the conversation, clarify and respect the other family members' perspectives while showing care for the relationship until the connection between family members can be restored.

3. They delight in each other.

Taking time to share new experiences and retell past ones is one of the special joys of being a part of a family. Those inside jokes and shared family adventures are the core of what truly makes a family. In fact, a successful family is built through shared experiences of challenges, family fun, and family development. Each family member is left feeling something bigger and more beautiful has been built by being a family.

4. They communicate effectively.

Healthy communication between family members is the key to creating relationships where commonality, unity, safety, and trust exist. It is the role of the family leader in any family model to emulate healthy horizontal communication for the rising generation so the rising generation will model it for their next generation.

5. They recognize and grow from their mistakes.

As they say: "it's never too late to learn." Well, it is never too late to learn from other family members either. There are no dress rehearsals in life, but members in lasting families are open to growing from their mistakes and showing grace when other family members need it.

6. They value effort, not results.

For many, the family is their strongest support system. Part of that support is valuing the individual effort of each family member, regardless of the outcome. When families celebrate effort over the outcome, it produces an environment where it is safe for family members to try new things. This is especially important for children who look to family leaders for affirmation and are encouraged to step out as future family leaders.

7. They solve problems together.

Lasting families learn to solve problems together. Meetings are regularly held to address issues pertaining to the entire group, and individual concerns are openly addressed and considered. Resolutions are regularly attained on behalf of the entire group.

8. They identify and celebrate family values.

The Family Wealth Blueprint™ is a document that helps the family identify their purpose. One of the first steps at creating this document is for the family leadership to identify how they see their family in 50 years. Then each member of the family identifies the personal values that are most important to them in terms of the family, and a final commonly agreed-upon list of values is adopted. It is these family values that shape every future decision that the family makes for the generations to come.

9. They react well to successes and failures.

A key aspect of any family is safety. It is important for all family members to create and foster an environment where all forms of success are celebrated, and all failures are met with humility and grace.

10. They openly express their gratitude and say “I love you” to each other.

The most important part of any family structure is love between members. Openly expressing gratitude and love for each family member is paramount if a family is going to be successful for generations to come.

Although it is important to recognize who you identify as family, it is even more important to make a concerted effort to contribute positively to those whom you call your family now. You will be well on your way to connecting your family in a meaningful way if you intentionally establishing some of these attributes.

1) Ten Family Characteristics That Nurture Smart Kids - dummies