

BUILDING FAMILY STRENGTHS CONTENTMENT

Family contentment can be the measure of a family's mastery of the majority of the ten identified family strengths. Families must constantly evaluate goals and make decisions that will determine their contentment. If families can be open and discuss these goals and decisions, they are more likely to be contented and happy.

WHAT IS CONTENTMENT?

Contentment is the state of being happy and the satisfaction with the resources and circumstances that define the family. Fulfillment, satisfaction and happiness are terms related to family contentment. Contentment cannot be determined on what or how much we have — but on what we do with what we are given. Most families believe that good health, a strong faith and love are more important than material wealth or fame. Optimistic feelings are closely related to a sense of contentment for families. Happiness can be defined in a variety of ways. Permanent happiness does not come from winning the lottery, finding Mr./Miss Right, a big promotion, or receiving an "A" in Math. True happiness and contentment is ongoing and evolves as the family grows and develops throughout the years.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTENTMENT WITHIN FAMILIES

Families can promote more contentment with a family approach to goal-setting and decision-making.

Members of a family are happier when they feel their opinions matter and that they are respected as contributing members of the family. A family can use the model below to discuss important family decisions.

- Identify the issue.
- Identify and discuss possible options.
- Compare the possible options — pros and cons.
- Make a joint family decision.
- Apply the decision.
- Evaluate the decision — revisit the issue if necessary.

Participating in this decision-making process can encourage family communication. Family members feel that their opinions, ideas, values and feelings are respected. This process can teach children to . . .

- Become aware of the concept of responsibility for their individual decisions.
- Understand what is involved in choosing a responsible course of action.
- Explore several options in all decisions.
- Take responsibility for their own decisions.
- Develop more personal responsibility.
- Understand that all decisions have consequences.





PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

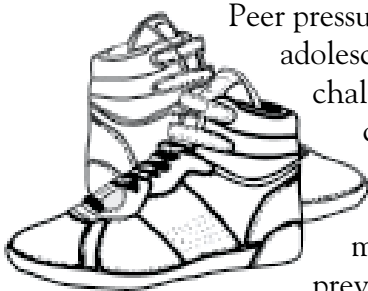
Young children have a natural zest for enjoying life and an innocence that allows them to be contented at this stage of development. It is still important to begin making them feel a valued part of the family by including them in family decisions. Selfishness with toys and personal items may be exhibited, but for the most part, this is a time filled with much happiness and can set the tone for years to come.

ELEMENTARY CHILDREN

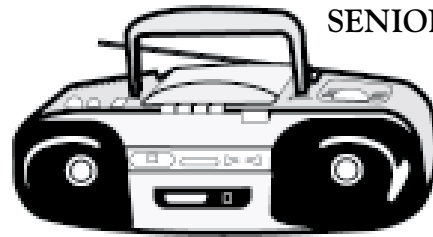


Children begin to experience the socialization process of attending school and their circle of influence is broadened. It is difficult for some children to accept that they may not have all the same resources as other children. This situation can be improved if the children have high-self esteem and can learn that happiness comes from within and is not measured by possessions and wealth.

MIDDLE/JUNIOR HIGH ADOLESCENTS

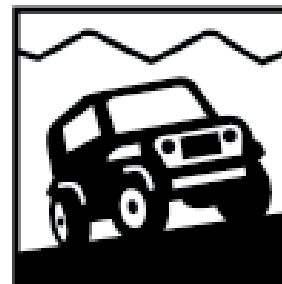


Peer pressure abounds during adolescence and youth are challenged to remain self-confident and contented. Happiness comes and goes as the mood swings of puberty prevail. It is critical that youth at this age begin to clarify their values and make decisions that will enable them to be content and happy during this exciting and challenging time of their lives.



SENIOR HIGH TEENS

Approaching adulthood, teens are at a crossroads where daily decisions can chart their course for future happiness. Those teens who have high self-esteem can use their families, friends and their own value systems to ensure that the decisions they make today lead them to a healthy, productive and contented future. Even though teens begin to venture further from the family at this stage, it is likely that the strong family ties that have been developed will remain.



ADULTS

As adults move through the stages of life, the definition of happiness and contentment may vary. Ultimately, if decisions are made with care given to the consequences, adults can maintain a contented lifestyle even during challenging times. The family can continue to be a source of contentment and happiness throughout the different stages of life and be a source of comfort and security in later years.

SUMMARY

Contentment, happiness and effective decision-making are key elements for strong families. Families can build on their strengths by choosing to strive for contentment in their daily life.

CONTENTMENT

Family Activity

Directions: Read the following statements and discuss what they mean to you. Discuss with your family how they might relate to your own family and share family stories to illustrate your point.

- Be happy with what you have while working for what you want.
- The grass may be greener on the other side, but you still have to cut it.
- Sometimes we spend too much time adding up our troubles that we forget to count our blessings.
- True contentment is realizing that life is a gift, not a right.
- Guilt is concerned with the past. Worry is concerned about the future. Contentment enjoys the present.
- No matter what may be your lot in life, build something on it.
- Contentment isn't getting what we want but being satisfied with what we have.
- Life is not a problem to be solved but a gift to be enjoyed.
- Happiness is similar to a butterfly. The more you chase it, the less likely you will catch it. But if you ignore it, it may land softly on your shoulder.
- Keeping up with the "Joneses" may cause you to lose sight of the _____ (insert your family name here).
- Happiness is not based on possessions, power or prestige, but on relationships with people you love and respect.
- You don't always realize what you have until it is gone.
- Happiness makes the world go around; envy causes war.

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