

## Shrink Rap: What Does It Take to Have a Healthy Family?

Does everyone fight like this? Why do my kids have such attitudes? Am I being too hard on my kids? Am I being too easy on them?

All are legitimate questions, but try not to overwhelm yourself with negative thinking. If you look for the negative, you will surely find it. Instead, take a deep breath and think it through. Take a positive approach by asking yourself “What is a healthy family?” “What would help make our relationships stronger?” “How can we be happier?”

To help with identifying characteristics of a healthy family, rate your family on the following list. Give your family a 5 if you do well, grade down 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 if this is an area of struggle. It will help you determine your area of need to make your family a healthier place.

**CHARACTERISTICS:** We have fun together. We feel loved no matter what. We are willing to work through conflicts. We encourage one another. We cooperate together as a team. We respect one another. We express anger safely. We respect and talk about feelings. We compromise with one another. All members have power according to their age and abilities. Girls and boys are treated equally. Accomplishments are noticed and celebrated. It is OK to make mistakes. People are comfortable to say they are wrong. Punishments are fair and appropriate. We really listen to one another. Resources are readily shared. We are warm and affectionate with each other. We respect privacy and space boundaries. Mealtimes are shared, calm, and enjoyable. Individual differences are respected. We can be silly together. We are honest with one another. Our family is a place of safety.

Ask all members of the family to rate these characteristics on their own, without influence from parents or siblings. Come together as a family to discuss everyone's ratings. Any characteristics rated a 3 or below need to be identified as a area of needed growth. ( If you have more than half of the characteristics rated 2 or below it may be best to get a pastor, or professional counselor to help with the discussion.)

Ask how your family could work together to bring that score higher. Be open to hearing ideas. Listen to the feelings behind the words. Be sensitive to the needs of your family members. Be flexible. Look for ways to compromise while maintaining good boundaries.

In healthy families all can agree to disagree without tempers flaring. Children respond to parental boundaries in healthy families, and parents feel competent, connected, and unified as partners. Work together to make changes with the goal of having a happier, healthy family.

If your family is unable to accomplish this rating without arguing, raised, voices, hurt feelings, it is time to get professional help for a healthier family.

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