

Building Stronger Families- National Families Week

As a result of multiple social and cultural changes there are now many single-parent families, stepfamilies, same-sex couples, foster families and adoptive families raising children. Families of all kinds are experiencing difficulties due to the pace of modern life. Strong families make for healthier communities. It is important that families take the time to develop skills to maintain and strengthen their relationships so that society as a whole can thrive.

Here are some suggestions to help you and your family build and maintain stronger connections:

For Parents

1. Be a leader

You can do this by making rules. Include your children in making rules when appropriate, ensuring that they reflect your values. Rules should be specific and easily understood. Stick together as parents and support your joint decisions, ensuring that you incorporate rewards and consequences into the raising of your children. Doing this will foster feelings of safety in your children.

2. Be a role model

Children learn by watching and imitating. It is therefore important to show them through your actions and words the preferred ways of behaviour. Take time to encourage each child, listen and talk to them. Tell each one what you appreciate about them.

3. Expect change

Families should expect change – it is the mark of all healthy families. It is normal to experience resistance and it is recommended that families take one step at a time. Draw on outside support when necessary.

4. Learn to recognise problems within the family.

Having a problem you don't know how to solve creates stress and this is the signal that something new is needed. Ask for help within the family and encourage each other to speak about difficult issues. Talking helps clarify problems, however it is necessary that family members listen carefully to each other, acknowledging all feelings, thoughts and fears.

5. Commit to solving problems

Tackle one problem at a time and involve everyone that is affected. Make a plan: state the problem, write the result you want and list all possible solutions to get the result. Decide together on the solution(s) to implement. Finally carry out the plan. Make sure to re-evaluate to check if the plan is working and get outside help if the problem continues.



For Children

1. Develop your abilities

When you are good at something it will help you feel and be successful. Choose something to get good at and plan time to work on it. Ask for help from your parents if you need it. Learn to speak up respectfully, to listen carefully and negotiate with those around you. Being able to cooperate with others is an important skill to learn.

2. Grow your sense of belonging

Everyone has something to contribute. Keep in mind that this is your family too, so always try to put something into the “box” to enhance family life. A smile, a kind word to family members and helping around the house are all good examples of valuable contributions. Strive to follow rules at home, at school and within the community. This will contribute to your overall confidence and serve to enhance your feelings of belonging.



As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support. You can call Relationships Australia WA on 1300 364 277 or visit www.relationshipswa.org.au

Education - Our professional facilitators run a variety of family and parenting courses, including *Building Stronger Families*.

4families - If you live in Albany, Bunbury, Busselton, Cockburn, Kwinana, Mandurah, Manjimup, Margaret River or Rockingham you can get free support through our 4families service.

4Dads - The 4Dads program offers information, education, referrals and support for fathers of children up to 18 years in the Mandurah and Pinjarra areas.

Education - Our professional facilitators offer a range of courses to help you address parenting challenges.

Counselling - We provide counselling for families, including group and individual sessions. Our counsellors are experienced and skilled in dealing with family relationship challenges and can help support families to assess their needs, identify areas for change, better understand and relate to each other, restore trust and communication and to ultimately strengthen relationships within the family unit.