

Building Strong Families

Framework

The Building Strong Families: Challenges and Choices program helps families build strengths, face challenges, and make choices. The program covers 13 topics and uses hands-on activities to involve participants.



Building Strong Families is based on research showing family members can make significant changes in their behavior by focusing on strengths rather than on problems. Program developers believe that *all individuals and families have strengths that can be enhanced if they are treated as partners in their own learning process.*

In fact, researchers have identified a number of strengths that are found in families of all types in many different situations and settings, and adult learning theory says that adults learn better in partnership with a facilitator.

In this program, the topic of *family strengths* is explored within the framework of nine particular strengths identified by researchers. They can be found in any family, regardless of its particular makeup or circumstances. They are:

- Caring and Appreciation
- Time Together
- Encouragement
- Commitment
- Communication
- Coping with Change
- Spirituality
- Community and Family Ties
- Clear Roles

Target Audience

Building Strong Families can be adapted to reach many different families and groups, but its primary target is *working families with children*. The ideal BSF facilitator will truly believe that every family has strengths, and will be able to identify with and relate to families of all types in many different settings and situations.

It will be important to work directly with families and other groups in a targeted community in program planning, design, implementation and evaluation. Using this approach, the *audience* is not really an audience but co-learners in a community-based process.

Topics

This curriculum includes the information you need to offer sessions on thirteen different topics:

- Family Strengths
- Communicating
- Managing Stress
- Child Self-Care
- Food and Fitness
- Working
- Go For It! — Setting Goals
- Positive Discipline
- Money Matters
- Balancing Responsibilities
- Consumer Beware
- Healthy House
- Kids and Self-Esteem

Number of Sessions

The program philosophy requires that the first module, *Family Strengths*, begin each multi-session program. Research shows that family programs are most effective when participants come to several sessions.

The program design team recommends at least seven sessions for each group of families who participate in the program. **At a minimum, facilitators are strongly encouraged to teach at least three sessions per group and are required to begin with the *Family Strengths* module.**

Building Strong Families is supported by University of Missouri Extension.

Building Strong Families

Family Strengths



Families are crucial in the development of human competence and character. Recent research tells us that the family's influence is even greater than we have imagined. Families play a major role in how well children do in school, how well they perform on the job as adults and how well they contribute to society in general. Families have the first and foremost influence on our development.

Goals and objectives

- To recognize the functions of families;
- To identify and become familiar with types of families;
- To understand nine traits that strengthen families;
- To identify personal family strengths;
- To set goals for personal family strength development.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	15 minutes
What Is a Family?	10 minutes
What Does a Family Do?	5 minutes
Who Does What?	10 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Block Activity--Characteristics of Strong Families	25 minutes
Strengths in the Bag	25 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Next Steps	15 minutes

Building Strong Families

Communicating

When family members take the time to really listen to and learn about each other, they discover ways to more effectively communicate. To achieve understanding in communication, a person must listen, make sense of the message, and give feedback about the message. Communication includes speaking, writing, reading, listening, comprehending, and evaluating. However we define it, positive communication strengthens family relationships.



Goals and objectives

- To understand and demonstrate that communication is a two-way process;
- To realize the importance of nonverbal communication;
- To learn how to change “you” messages into “I” messages;
- To show how positive, supportive messages convey feelings of worthiness;
- To understand and practice the process of reflective listening;
- To identify steps for improving communication within the family.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	10 minutes
Communication Model	15 minutes
Back-to-Back Drawing Activity	10 minutes
Changing “You” Messages to “I” Messages	10 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Video: Art of Communication	35 minutes
Role Plays.....	20 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Next Steps	5 minutes

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Managing Stress



Stress is the body's response to change or conflict. Understanding our personal response to change and recognizing that everyone reacts differently helps us work with our families to manage stress effectively. Coping strategies include changing how we think about a stressor, changing how our bodies react to it, and changing the situation or removing the stressor. Learning to deal with stress takes practice.

Goals and objectives

- To define stress and identify stressors;
- To recognize physical and emotional reactions to stress;
- To identify warning signs of stress;
- To practice techniques to eliminate or reduce stress;
- To set personal goals to deal with stress.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	10 minutes
What is Stress? What are Stressors?	15 minutes
A Stressful Picture	10 minutes
Stress and Your Health	10 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Stress Management Activities	40 minutes
Stress Management Video, How to Handle Life's Challenges	15 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Next Steps	5 minutes

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Child Self-Care



Children have differing timetables for social, physical, and emotional development and maturity. Even children within the same family grow and develop at different rates. Eventually, however, children reach that significant time in their lives when they make the transition from being "cared for" to caring for themselves. Parents are then faced with making many important decisions to provide a safe environment for their children.

Goals and objectives

- To identify developmental stages and characteristics of children;
- To understand "stay alone" readiness signs for children;
- To recognize that self-care is a joint decision of parents and child;
- To understand effective guidelines for establishing "at-home-alone" rules;
- To determine and practice safety rules and procedures.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	15 minutes
Ages and Stages of Youth	10 minutes
Know Your Child's Characteristics	5 minutes
The Family Decision: Is Your Child Ready?.....	10 minutes
Preparing Your Child to Stay Alone	10 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Provide Structure With Rules	10 minutes
Safety Rules/Skits/Role Play.....	40 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Next Steps	5 minutes

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Food and Fitness

Our health and well-being affect everything our families do. Many factors influence health, including what we eat and how active we are. Eating healthy meals and exercising are family activities that help strengthen relationships. Memorable family traditions are often linked to food and fun physical activities.



Goals and objectives

- Learn to use MyPyramid to make healthier food choices
- Learn about balanced eating
- Understand the importance of family meals
- Increase meal planning skills with kids
- Define basic fitness concepts
- Learn how to incorporate physical activity into your life
- Establish small steps for a healthier life style

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	10 minutes
MyPyramid.....	25 minutes
What's on Your Plate	10 minutes
Label Reading for Better Eating.....	10 minutes
Small Changes Can Make a Big Difference (Hidden Sugars).....	10 minutes
Family Meals.....	25 minutes
Picky Eaters (optional)	10 minutes
Kids Who Overeat (optional)	10 minutes
Costs of Foods (optional).....	10 minutes
Fitness	10 minutes
Balloon or Scarf Activity	5 minutes
Defining Terms.....	10 minutes
Moving Relay	15 minutes
Fitness and Wellness for a Lifetime DVDs (optional)	time varies
Next Steps	5 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes

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Working

Meeting the demands of an employer can be difficult for any employee, especially when no one is at home during the day to meet the demands of a family. Researchers have identified skills that can contribute to employee success in any job. Strong families "work" on developing such skills to maintain employment or advance in an increasingly changeable and diverse workplace.



Goals and objectives

- To identify personal beliefs about working;
- To identify competencies and skills that employers expect;
- To identify personal strengths that can contribute to employment success;
- To translate personal strengths into skills that can be used on a resume or job application;
- To practice interviewing.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	15 minutes
What Do Workers Expect?.....	10 minutes
What Do Employers Expect?	10 minutes
What Strengths Do You Bring to the Job?	20 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Marketing Yourself in the Workplace	25 minutes
The Interview	20 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Next Steps	5 minutes

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Go For It!—Setting Goals



Busy families can fall into the trap of moving from event to event or crisis to crisis. When families work together on short and long-term goals, they are more likely to accomplish the things that are really important to them. Strong families work on their common goals together and support each other's individual goals. Reaching goals contributes to a sense that changes in behavior are possible.

Goals and objectives

- To recognize the connection between dreams and achievable goals;
- To understand the importance of breaking goals down into manageable steps;
- To identify one important personal goal and break it down into achievable steps;
- To design a reward system to celebrate achievement of steps and goals;
- To discuss personal and family goals with other family members.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	10 minutes
Getting Started.....	20 minutes
Getting on a Roll	30 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Steps to My Goal	25 minutes
Planning Your Rewards	5 minutes
Next Steps	10 minutes
Reaching Your Goals.....	5 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes

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Positive Discipline

Discipline helps children learn from experience. Positive discipline corrects and guides children by helping them understand the consequences of their actions. Positive discipline respects the unique needs, situations and developmental capabilities of children.



Goals and objectives

- To identify and understand the difference between discipline and punishment;
- To recognize personal parenting styles and understand the potential outcomes of different parenting behaviors for children's development;
- To learn positive discipline and guidance strategies that correspond to the unique developmental needs of different aged children;
- To learn how positive and effective child discipline and guidance represent long-term investments in building a strong family unit.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	10 minutes
What is Discipline? What is Your Parenting Style?	30 minutes
Discipline Choices and Strategies.....	25 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Avoid Physical Punishment.....	35 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Next Steps	5 minutes

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Money Matters



Not having enough money at the end of the month can create stresses for even the strongest family. “Money” conflicts are actually about who gets to have and do what. Money is just a medium for exchanging goods and services with each other. For that reason, this session focuses considerable attention on money values and family communication about money.

Goals and objectives

- To identify personal money styles and how they developed;
- To practice allocating resources within a simulated family unit;
- To learn to negotiate with others about spending decisions;
- To understand the need for a spending plan.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	10 minutes
Money Values	35 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Bean Game	40 minutes
Planning Your Family’s Spending	15 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Next Steps	5 minutes

Building Strong Families

Balancing Responsibilities



One of the major social changes during the past 30 years has been the dramatic increase in the number of women who are employed outside the home. Yet many businesses and community support systems lag behind this trend. Much of the responsibility for keeping things in "balance" has been left to family members themselves. If a family is to remain "strong," members need adequate time to nurture, support and enjoy each other.

Goals and objectives

- To identify contributing causes for a lack of balance in managing work, family and community responsibilities;
- To discuss solutions for creating a balance in work, family and community responsibilities;
- To identify steps for developing personal and family goals that will help achieve a greater balance in work and family;
- To identify strategies for development of family-oriented work policies.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	15 minutes
Group Juggle	10 minutes
Roles and Responsibilities	5 minutes
Self-Responsibility/Self-Care	5 minutes
How to Have a Really Bad Day	10 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Solutions	55 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Next Steps	5 minutes

Building Strong Families

Consumer Beware



Even the strongest family sometimes goes through periods of difficulty and vulnerability. It is at such times that family members could fall victim to consumer fraud or make decisions that are not in the best interest of their family. If family members recognize the warning signs of frauds and scams, and gain skills to avoid becoming victims, they are less likely to fall prey to deceptive practices during vulnerable periods in their lives.

Goals and objectives

- To understand why consumers are vulnerable to fraudulent schemes;
- To recognize some of the warning signs of frauds and consumer scams;
- To understand basic principles or guidelines necessary for avoiding fraud;
- To determine appropriate action if victimized by fraud.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	15 minutes
Background Information	15 minutes
Small Group Discussion: Deceptions and Frauds.....	20 minutes
How to Avoid Fraud	10 minutes
Break	15 minutes
Small Group Discussion: “You’ve Just Won a ‘Prize!’”	25 minutes
What to Do If You Are Conned.....	10 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Next Steps	5 minutes

Building Strong Families

Healthy House



Have you ever stopped to think whether the air you breathe at home is healthy? Many people are aware that outdoor air pollution can be hazardous to their health but do not know that indoor air pollution can have serious health effects. Everyday decisions and practices affect the quality of indoor air. Research has found that indoor air can be more polluted than outdoor air. Fortunately, we can easily control or eliminate most air pollutants.

Goals and objectives

- To identify sources of common indoor air pollutants at home;
- To understand potential health effects of common residential air pollutants;
- To identify ways to reduce indoor air contamination in the home;
- To identify potentially hazardous household products and learn safe use practices;
- To adopt practices to improve air quality in the home.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	5 minutes
Is Your Home Healthy? Identifying Air Pollutants.....	15 minutes
How Do Indoor Pollutants Affect Your Family's Health?	10 minutes
Sources of Indoor Air Pollution/IAQ Video	15 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Bugs, Mold and Rot: Reducing Biological Contaminants	15 minutes
Choosing and Using Household Products	10 minutes
Combustion Products.....	10 minutes
Improving Your Home's Indoor Air Quality	20 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Next Steps	5 minutes

Building Strong Families

Kids and Self-Esteem



Strong families are made up of strong family members. A sense of self-worth is critical for developing resiliency. An "I can do it!" attitude helps us learn, grow, and cope with life's frustrations and inevitable problems. In order to succeed, children need to gain confidence in their abilities and gain a sense that they can do things on their own.

Goals and objectives

- To understand causes of low self-esteem and lack of self-awareness;
- To identify and discuss ways to create resilient family members with healthy self images;
- To develop goals for achieving healthy self-esteem and self-awareness for one's self and one's children;
- To identify strategies for developing a more resilient family.

Target audience

Working families with children

Activities

Welcome and Introduction	10 minutes
Participants' Introductions	10 minutes
Strategies for Enhancing Self-Esteem and Self-Awareness	10 minutes
Listen and Acknowledge	15 minutes
Question Relay	15 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Reasonable Control: So Many Choices	20 minutes
Reinforce: Way to Go!.....	10 minutes
Model: Mirror, Mirror on the Wall.....	10 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Next Steps	5 minutes