

# Building Strong Families Curriculum for Youth



## Framework

*The Building Strong Families: Challenges and Choices Curriculum for Youth* helps children, ages 5-12, build strengths, develop life skills and learn more about themselves. The program uses hands-on activities. Each module also has a fun children's book to reinforce the topic.

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 built upon if the person is involved in the learning process.*

## Target Audience

*Building Strong Families for Youth* can be adapted to reach many different families and groups, but its primary target is children, ages 5-12. The ideal BSF facilitator will truly believe that every family has strengths, and will be able to identify with and relate to children of all types in many different settings and situations.

*Building Strong Families for Youth* can be used alone or with the *Building Strong Families Program for Adults* for a "whole family" approach. If using this method, adults and children meet together for the first part of the session, separate for their individual sessions, and then rejoin each other for the end. This way, each member of the family is learning about similar concepts, but in an age-appropriate way.

It is 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 only an audience but co-learners in a community-based process.

## Topics

This curriculum for youth includes the information you need to offer sessions on these different topics: Family Strengths; Communicating; Managing Stress; Self Esteem; Balancing Responsibilities; Food and Fitness, Healthy Home and Money Matters.

## Number of Sessions

Research shows that family programs are most effective when participants come to several sessions. 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 provided by University of Missouri Extension. Building Strong Families for Youth is a joint effort by Human Environmental Sciences Extension and 4-H.

# Building Strong Families Curriculum for Youth



## Family Strengths

The family has a greater influence than anyone can imagine! Families have the first and foremost influence on a child's development. Children are important contributing members to the family and can affect changes within the family. In the Family Strengths module, youth will recognize what families do, why families are important, how families can be strong and what makes their family unique.

## Goals and objectives

- To learn what families do
- To learn that not all families are the same
- To know what makes families strong
- To find strong traits in your own family

## Target audience

Children ages 5-12

## 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
Rock Families .....	10 minutes
Next Steps .....	10 minutes

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## Communicating

Knowing how to communicate clearly is an important skill children can develop. This is a skill that they will use in many aspects for the rest of their lives. In the Communicating module, youth will learn to understand different feelings, that communication is more than just talking, positive ways to express their feelings and how actions affect feelings.

### Goals and objectives

- To understand feelings and appropriate ways to communicate
- To understand and show that communication is a two-way process
- To learn that nonverbal communication is as important as verbal communication
- To find out how positive words, messages and behaviors show feelings of respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, and caring

### Target audience

Children ages 5-12

### Activities

Welcome and Introduction .....	15 minutes
Identifying Feelings .....	20 minutes
Listening .....	10 minutes
Non Verbal Communication .....	5 minutes
Break .....	10 minutes
Character Traits and Communicating .....	45 minutes
Closing Session and Next Steps.....	10 minutes



# Building Strong Families Curriculum for Youth



## Managing Stress

Stress is the body's response to change or conflict. If one family member is affected by stress, all members are affected. Strong families know how to deal with stress in healthy ways. This module helps children identify some signs and symptoms of stress and also some ways to reduce stress in the family. It also helps set up goals to help all family members lower stress in their lives.

## Goals and objectives

- To understand feelings that go with worry and stress
- To practice physical activities that help reduce stress
- To practice relaxing as a way to reduce stress
- To find ways to deal with your stress

## Target audience

Children ages 5-12

## Activities

Welcome and Introduction .....	15 minutes
Ever Feel Nervous and Worried? .....	15 minutes
Shake It Off: Physical Activity and Exercise.....	20 minutes
Break .....	10 minutes
Book: Cool Cats Calm Kids.....	45 minutes
Relaxation Techniques .....	10 minutes
Play, Play, Play .....	20 minutes
Next Steps .....	15 minutes



# Building Strong Families Curriculum for Youth



## Balancing Responsibilities

Most people are very busy – even children and teens. Between school, chores, taking care of younger brothers and sisters, sports and much more there is a lot to do! Sometimes it is hard to keep up with everything, which may make youth feel overwhelmed or stressed. If a family is to remain "strong," members need adequate time to nurture, support and enjoy each other. This module helps children find ways to make adjustments to improve their relationships, find ways to create balance in their life, discover who does what in the family and find ways to share roles.

## Goals and objectives

- To appreciate and learn about family responsibilities
- To learn skills and practice household jobs
- To explore what family jobs girls and boys can do
- To discuss ways to create balance in families
- To practice deciding who will do what in your family

## Target audience

Children ages 5-12

## Activities

Welcome and Introduction .....	20 minutes
What is Responsibility and Family? .....	5 minutes
Helper Hats .....	15 minutes
Break .....	10 minutes
Whose Job Is It Anyway? .....	15 minutes
Chore Galore .....	25 minutes
Next Steps .....	5 minutes



# Building Strong Families Curriculum for Youth



## Self-Esteem

A good sense of self-worth is critical for a child's life. In order to succeed, children need to gain confidence in their abilities and believe that they can do things on their own. An "I can do it!" attitude helps children learn, grow, and cope with life's frustrations and inevitable problems. In this module, we will talk about how self-esteem affects a child's self-confidence, the choices s/he makes, how well s/he does in school and many other things. Youth will understand and appreciate the skills they have and will be able to recognize how thoughts and behaviors affect self-esteem.

## Goals and objectives

- To understand and appreciate what you can do
- To see yourself in a positive way
- To recognize how thoughts and behaviors affect self-esteem
- To see that what you think and do can affect how you feel about yourself

## Target audience

Children ages 5-12

## Activities

Welcome and Introduction .....	20 minutes
Identifying and Enhancing Talents and Abilities.....	10 minutes
What I Do Well and How I Share It with Others .....	20 minutes
Break .....	10 minutes
The Power of Words and Deeds: Paper Doll Activity .....	15 minutes
Family Chain of Love .....	15 minutes
Closing and Next Steps .....	15 minutes



# Building Strong Families Curriculum for Youth

## Healthy Home

Have you ever stopped to think about whether your house and indoor air are healthy? The health and economic consequences of indoor air pollution are a national health concern. Indoor air pollutants cause acute and chronic health effects including lung cancer, asthma and allergies.



Children, however, cannot do all that is necessary for home maintenance or for keeping the home healthy. This workshop helps youth become involved in keeping their rooms or spaces cleaner and healthier. While an adult may have the resources and ability to replace a leaky faucet to keep mold from growing in the bathroom, the youth is more limited in those types of actions.

The experiences show children that they can play a very important role in keeping their space and themselves healthier. They can learn new skills (like being more aware of allergy and asthma triggers, picking up trash in their rooms, changing their pillow cases, keeping toys in boxes and off the floor, and cleaning up after food spills), take responsibility for their things and add to the family's well-being.

Families who work together to make their homes healthier miss less school and work and have fewer visits to the doctor. Children and adults can work together to make sure that their home is healthy and the air they breathe is as healthy as possible.

## Goals and objectives

- To learn what causes unhealthy indoor air and how it affects you
- To learn and practice habits that keep your room healthy
- To know how to help your family make your home more healthy

## Target audience

Children ages 5-12

## Activities for Healthy Home for Youth

Welcome and Introduction .....	20 minutes
Home Sweet Home .....	15 minutes
The Nose Knows.....	10 minutes
Dust Mites Unleashed (optional activity) .....	10 minutes
The Nose Doesn't Always Know: Carbon Monoxide .....	10 minutes
Book: <i>Pigsty</i> .....	15 minutes
Break .....	10 minutes
Keeping It Clean .....	30 minutes
Trash or Treasure? .....	15 minutes
Closing Session and Next Steps.....	15 minutes



# Building Strong Families

## Curriculum for Youth

### Food and Fitness

Making healthy food choices and staying active as a family can be a challenge. Good nutrition and fitness habits can be learned, and this workshop gives youth information and ways to practice healthy lifestyles.



Approximately 16% of children ages 6-19 are thought to be overweight. This number is three times as high as it was in 1980. The answer, however, is not to focus on dieting or restricting certain foods. Placing emphasis on balanced eating helps people and youth eat what they enjoy without feeling deprived.

Furthermore, as children eat more meals away from home and are faced with many food choices at school, it is important for them to learn about balanced eating, as well.

Being physically active can be a great benefit to adults and youth (CDC, 2005). Activity reduces the risk of many diseases and conditions (like heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure) and lowers stress. If family members feel better and are able to handle stress better, they can create a strong family with more positive interactions.

### Goals and objectives

- To learn how to be more active every day
- To learn the best way to wash our hands
- To learn about and try fresh vegetables and fruits
- To learn about and try whole grain foods
- To learn about drinking more milk (or appropriate milk products for lactose intolerant youth) and not drinking as many sweetened drinks

### Target audience

Children ages 5-12

## Activities

Welcome and Introduction .....	15 minutes
Take a Hike or Indoor Walking.....	15 minutes
Book – <i>Green Eggs and Ham</i> .....	15 minutes
Break .....	10 minutes
Food Safety – Hand Washing .....	10 minutes
Veggie and Fruit Medley .....	10 minutes
Grains: Make Half Your Grains Whole .....	10 minutes
Couch Potato Challenge .....	10 minutes
Got Milk?.....	10 minutes
Closing Session and Next Steps.....	15 minutes



# Building Strong Families

## Curriculum for Youth

### Money Matters

Children who are taught money lessons have better money habits throughout their life. Children and teenagers earn, save, spend and borrow billions of dollars each year in the marketplace. They have more money to spend than previous generations and develop spending patterns at a younger age.



The buying habits of children and teenagers are learned by experience. Their money management skills will develop from the ideas, attitudes, and spending habits they learn at home, school, and in the marketplace. Those who learn good money management skills are more likely to become adults who can make sound financial decisions, avoid excessive debt, and manage income and expenses to reach their financial goals.

Money is a tool. A hammer and nails are tools we use to build something. Money is a tool we use to get the things we need to live. In this workshop youth learn about how we get money and ways we use it like spending, saving and sharing.

We also want families to remember that family and health are more important than money. A hug, a smile, or time spent together is something money cannot buy.

### Goals and objectives

Youth will:

- Explore the concept of money and feelings.
- Learn the difference between wants and needs, and how they relate to spending.
- Develop a plan for spending money.
- Learn about saving and sharing money.

### Target audience

Children ages 5-12

## Activities

Welcome and Introduction .....15 minutes

### Youth Only Time

Money and Feelings.....10 minutes

Getting Money—Money Doesn't Grow on Trees.....10 minutes

Do I Want It or Need It? .....5 minutes

Break .....10 minutes

Book, *Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday*.....20 minutes

Using Money: Spending .....15 minutes

Using Money: Saving .....15 minutes

Using Money: Sharing.....5 minutes

### Family Time

Closing Session and Next Steps: Putting it Together.....15 minutes

