

The Flourishing Family

There are few things more complicated or rewarding than family. While all families are different, what makes one thrive and another one falter comes down to the same fundamental elements: boundaries, respect, and communication. The way family members interact with, relate to, love, and support one another contributes to the overall dynamic. Form better bonds and watch your family thrive with the help of your Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Healthy boundaries

Establishing boundaries is a way of maintaining your closest relationships. Whether it's between you and your spouse or partner, you and your parents or siblings, or even between you and your children, setting healthy boundaries is crucial to ensuring that everyone in your family gets what they need from the other members.

Setting boundaries means drawing clear lines around the behaviors you will and won't tolerate, how you expect to be treated, and how you're willing to spend your time, with whom, and for how long. Boundaries can be as simple as saying, *"Please don't watch the next episode of that show without me,"* or as serious as, *"I will no longer participate in game night if you continue to belittle me in front of our friends."* They may also come in the form of house rules like, *"Always knock before entering another person's room,"* or *"No sleepovers on weeknights."*

Mutual respect and trust

Respect and trust are two of the most important aspects of healthy relationships. In healthy families, the members exhibit mutual respect by valuing and taking care of one another with their words, attitudes, and actions. Members of a healthy family trust one another with their feelings, vulnerabilities, and their individual truths; they're willing to be honest with one another, no matter how unpleasant or shameful the facts might be. While there will undoubtedly be disagreements and conflict, listening and reacting to such honesty with respect and without judgment lets others know they are safe to share and be who they are within the family unit.

Trust and respect take practice and are earned little by little. Standing by your family member through the challenges, and demonstrating your commitment through your actions, deepens the sense of connection that is crucial in close relationships.

Open communication

As with any type of relationship, communication is key within the family unit. In healthy families, open communication is prioritized and valued among all members. Children and adults alike are encouraged and permitted to speak for themselves; express their feelings, needs, and concerns; and talk about what's going on with them. Perhaps most importantly, all who speak are listened to (not simply heard) with respect, care, and concern, and without judgment. Only when there is open and honest communication can issues be safely voiced, understood, and properly addressed.

The family dynamic is complex and can be difficult to navigate at times, which is why your EAP is here for you. Call any time, day or night—licensed counselors are available 24 hours a day to offer resources and support and to provide expert guidance to help you and your loved ones sort through any manner of family challenge.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to eligible federal employees at no cost.

24 HOURS A DAY

800-222-0364

TTY: 888-262-7848

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