

# An Ounce of Prevention

Complimentary

May 2014

Issue 209

**Printed by:**

Gary J. Meiers, Ph. D., Jo Ann Hammond, Ph. D.,  
& Associates, Ltd.

10009 – 85 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T6E 2J9



Website: [drsgaryjoannmeierspsychologist.com](http://drsgaryjoannmeierspsychologist.com)

Phone: (780) 433-2269

Fax: (780) 431-0463

E-Mail: [psychrec@gmail.com](mailto:psychrec@gmail.com)

## Family Resilience

According to the National Network for Family Resiliency (1995), resilience is the ability of an individual, or in this case a family, to use its strengths in order to positively meet life's challenges. It involves the family's ability to return to previous levels of functioning following a challenge or crisis.

Throughout the 21st century, individuals and families will be characterized by increased diversity, which could be experienced as stressful. Because of this, individual and family resilience may become increasingly important.

Resilience is exercised when family members demonstrate such behaviours as confidence, hard work, cooperation and forgiveness. These behaviours contribute to the effectiveness of *Family Protective Factors* - factors that help families withstand stressors throughout the family life cycle. For example, shared experiences such as family time, yearly vacations, holiday celebrations and other traditions can help strengthen the bonds among family members.

When a family is confronted with a crisis, *Family Recovery Factors* become critical. These are factors that help promote a family's ability to bounce back following a period of difficult family functioning. Events in which recovery factors may be especially beneficial include coping with a serious illness, an untimely death, the loss of a primary job or a natural disaster. Aids to recovery include the availability of family and community support, participation in recreational activities, optimism about the situation and shared family experiences.

### Characteristics of Strong Families

- **Adaptability**  
Strong families are able to cope with every day and unanticipated stressors.
- **Appreciation**  
Because they care about other family members, individuals frequently do positive things for one another.
- **Clear roles**  
Family members are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are able to remain flexible.
- **Commitments to family**  
Family members are committed to the family as a system, and members recognize each individual's worth and importance to the family.
- **Communication**  
Family members are open and honest with one another, and they are willing to listen to other members' views;
- Conflicts are managed and resolved when they arise.
- **Community and family ties**  
Strong families are connected to the community and they are involved in community organizations.

- **Encouragement of individuals**

Individual development is encouraged both inside and outside of the family system.

- **Shared time**

Both quality and quantity time are shared.

### Strategies for Strengthening Families

- Spend quality time alone with each child at least once a week.
- Respond to children with patience and respect their feelings and abilities.
- Encourage family members by asking them to share their accomplishments.
- Visit and find ways to help at your child's school.
- Eat a meal together as a family at least once a day and involve family members in mealtime tasks.
- Hold family meetings that give all family members an opportunity to talk openly.
- Develop a family mission statement that includes your family's purpose, goals and objectives.
- Develop and maintain family traditions and rituals.

### Building and maintaining healthy family relationships

In recent decades, a number of changes have contributed to a reshaping of American families. Examples include high rates unmarried childbearing adolescents, a high divorce rate, single-parent households, stepfamilies and dual-earner families. Families need to be prepared to cope with these and other stressors and demands that may be placed upon them. Regardless of family type, there are times when all families need to be nurtured. Nurturing families in times of need can provide family members with a greater opportunity for building and maintaining healthy relationships.

A number of recommendations have been offered that can help families build and maintain healthy relationships. Selected recommendations follow.

#### Encourage open communication

- Communicate not only through words, but also through actions.
- Be aware of body language and tone of voice.
- Show that you understand what the other person is saying.
- Maintain good relationships with extended family members to increase sources of support and resources.
- Maintain and strengthen relationships in the family
- **Parent-child**  
Set and enforce family rules; be a patient parent; praise your children's efforts and accomplishments.

- **Marital**  
Share housework and child care responsibilities; agree on family priorities and goals; value and nurture the relationship.
- **Siblings**  
Develop sibling rituals and traditions; acknowledge one another as individuals; provide encouragement.

### Manage Crises & Conflict

- Avoid taking things personally, which may help you avoid unnecessary conflict.
- When conflict does arise, resolve the problem before moving on.
- Direct attention to solving the problem rather than determining who is to blame.
- Understand what the conflict is about and model appropriate problem-solving strategies.
- Avoid holding grudges.
- Accept responsibility for your mistakes.
- Negotiations, compromises or apologies may be necessary before reconciliation is complete.

### Conclusions

Families have evolved in a number of ways over time, and these patterns of change can only be expected to become more common in the future. These transformations may be challenging for families, but the strategies outlined here can help minimize the stress these families experience. It is important to remember that all families have some strengths; although these strengths may be more evident in some families than in others. Individual family members play a significant role in determining how well a family functions. Although each member's actions are important, strengthening family relationships requires the commitment and cooperation of all family members. By working together, family members can build and maintain close relationships during periods of normal family functioning as well as during times of stress.

#### Full article Link:

<http://muextension.missouri.edu/explore/hesguide/humanrel/gh6640.htm>

### ***Crying! Just doing what comes naturally***

You know your baby will cry, but do you know how frustrating listening to that crying can be?

Shaken baby syndrome happens when a frustrated caregiver loses control and violently shakes a baby. Shaking a baby is very dangerous and can cause blindness, seizures, learning and physical disabilities and even death.

Try the following tips to help comfort your crying baby:

- Give the baby a warm bath
- Swaddle the baby in a soft blanket
- Have the baby listen to and watch running water
- Lay the baby tummy-down across your lap and gently pat its back
- Run a vacuum cleaner
- Give the baby something new to look at or hold
- Take the baby outside for a walk in fresh air
- Take the baby for a ride in a car

*Remember, these tips won't work every time. Try other ideas and ask for help if you need it. As you try to*

*survive your baby's crying times, it is comforting to know that infant crying is normal and will eventually stop.*

### Normal crying:

- Crying increases and peaks around 2 months of age
- Crying happens more in the evening
- Crying lasts 30-40 minutes and even longer
- Crying babies may look like they are in pain, but they may not be
- Crying continues no matter what you do
- Crying comes and goes, for no reason

*Remember, it doesn't mean there is anything wrong with you or your baby if your otherwise healthy baby cries a lot.*

### Tips to calm yourself:

- Do something to take a break from the sound
- Listen to music
- Run the shower or bath
- Exercise
- Call a friend or relative and talk about your frustrations

*Remember, there will be times that you get frustrated. If you feel yourself getting angry, put the baby in a safe place and take a moment to deal with your own stress. No baby has ever died from crying, but they have died from being shaken.*

*Originally Published by the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome (2010).*

### Parenting Corner

#### Helping Children Cope with Trauma

<http://www.aftertheinjury.org/>

A web site designed for parents whose child has experienced a Pediatric injury.

**Search:** [Early Childhood Investments Substantially Boost Adult Health](#)

**Search:** [Six Core Strengths for Healthy Child Development: An Overview](#)

**Search:** [Head Start - Trauma Smart](#)

### Benefits of EMDR

**A series of video stores about the value and benefits of EMDR can be found by googling "scoopit" then "EMDR"**

### \*\*\*Net News\*\*\*

Here are some web sites you & your family may find helpful:

**Search:** [EMDR – 20/20 Report](#)

**Search:** [EMDR and PTSD](#)

**Search:** [EMDR – A documentary film](#)

### Self-Help Corner:

City of Edmonton Community Resources: 211

Support Network / Distress Line: 780-482-HELP

Kids Help Line: 1-800-668-6868