

Our Family Strengths

CELEBRATE YOUR FAMILY

“Celebrate Your Family” is intended to help your family develop its strengths. The only two requirements for celebrating your family are a desire to do something that will strengthen the family further, and a family commitment to set aside some time for strength-building activities.

Every family has strengths, abilities, and assets that are unknown and unused. “Celebrate Your Family” is designed to help you and your family unlock, discover, and improve these strengths. By celebrating your family, you all can grow stronger and be better able to deal with the many challenges that face families today.

A celebration requires some preparation and effort, and celebrating your family is no exception. Every family that is strong has had to decide to work at improving its life. The strong family has spent time together thinking, talking, and doing those things that have helped it grow and flourish.

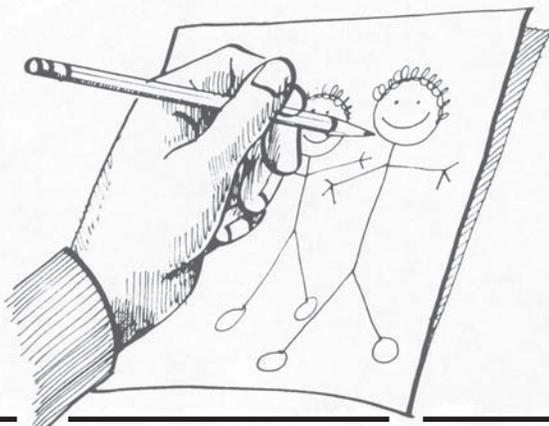
To begin, the family needs to take an inventory to discover and unlock hidden assets and capabilities. Taking an inventory very simply means taking a good look at what the family has going for it.

Get started by choosing a time when all the family members can spend thirty minutes together. If there are young children, it might be better to set aside two shorter periods of time.

FAMILY ACTIVITY 1.

Let’s draw our family.

Assemble the family members around the dining table. Make sure each person can see all the others. Have pieces of plain paper and crayons or pencils available.



The parent begins, “We help each other out in a lot of ways.” (Give examples, such as Joe helps Mom do (?), Dad helps Sue with (?), etc.) “We do things together.” (Ask for suggestions from each person of things family members recently did together.)

The parent continues, “Let’s talk about our family. When I say ‘our family,’ what do you think of?” (Give each person a piece of paper and a crayon or pencil.) “Let’s each take a piece of paper and crayon or pencil and draw a picture of our family.” (Allow enough time for everyone to complete a picture.) “When you’re finished, put your picture in front of you. Tell the rest of us about your picture.” (Each member should be given the opportunity, and it’s advisable to begin with a younger child.)

FAMILY ACTIVITY 2.

Let’s see what makes our family special.

Assemble all the members of the family around the dining table or in the living room.

The parent begins, “Let’s talk about what makes our family what it is. What are our family strengths? What do we do that makes you happy that you are in our family?” *or* “Why do you like being part of our family?” *or* “What is it that makes our family special to you?” (A parent or older child should list on a sheet of paper each person’s ideas.) If the family has difficulty getting stalled, a parent can begin by giving one or two ideas, such as, “I’m glad I’m part of our family because we all help each other,” *or* “Our family is special to me because we can do things together.” A young child may better understand a question such as, “What makes Mommy (or Daddy) special?”

When the list has grown and all members seem to have shared their ideas, put the list in a prominent place so everyone can easily see it.

Spend a few minutes talking about the family strengths listed on the paper.

FAMILY ACTIVITY 3.

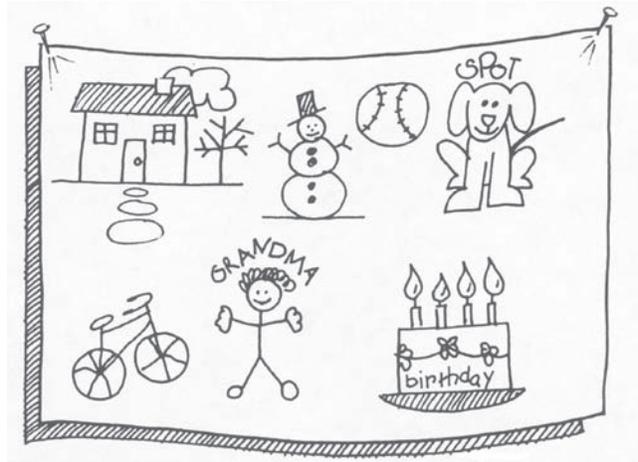
Let's make a family banner.

Making a family banner is a creative and enjoyable way to help family members determine family strengths as well as show how each person's strengths contribute to the whole family's strength. The banner is a visible picture of the family.

Have available a large sheet of paper, an old bed sheet, or a 2- to 3-foot piece of shelf paper or brown wrapping paper and crayons or felt-tip markers.

The parent begins, "Let's make a family banner. Each of you draw pictures on the banner of those things that have a special meaning for you as a member of our family. You might include pictures of your favorite things or activities, and pictures of family activities that are special to you. The idea is for you to put on the banner as much about yourself as possible. Don't worry about whether you can draw or not. Just do the best you can. No one else will see the banner. It's just for us. When we're finished, we'll hang it up and talk about it."

If the paper is large enough, all or most of the family members can work on the banner at the same time. When the banner is complete, hang it up in a prominent place and ask each person to talk about the pictures he or she drew. Keep the banner up for several days or more so that members will see it and refer to it.



A family banner

By James E. Van Horn, Extension Specialist, Family Sociology, The Pennsylvania State University.

Reprinted for use in Kansas by Charles A. Smith, Extension Specialist, Human Development.

Publications from Kansas State University are available on the World Wide Web at: www.oznet.ksu.edu

Rapid change in the world affects us. In many families this change creates a good amount of stress. If we allow negative stress to pile up, it can have damaging effects on our family. One of the best ways to combat negative family stress is to identify the strengths the family already has but may take for granted. Once a family recognizes the strengths it has, the members of a family working together can take some positive steps to strengthen the family even more.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

MF-776

August 1985

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Fred A. Cholick, Director.