

◇ Unit 4
Support Family and Friends

Family & Community Involvement

DEAL WITH STRESS SUCCESSFULLY

Stress is a very serious problem today. People of all ages — even *young* children — may have a hard time dealing with stress. As we enter the twenty-first century, we have many time- and labor-saving devices, but for some reason they haven't enabled us to lead more balanced, relaxed lives. Why is that?

Spend an evening discussing this important topic with your family. Begin by asking older family members how the stress felt by adults and by children has changed since they were young. Then give all family members a chance to talk about the stress they feel. Not all stress is bad! Stress can help you do your best or carefully decide how you will handle a situation. How else can stress be helpful?

1. With family members, brainstorm strategies that can help everyone in the family decrease their stress level. Put your list on the refrigerator where everyone can see it. How can working together as a family help reduce everyone's stress?
2. Imagine that you and your family are creating guidelines for reducing stress on families. What do you think would help alleviate some of the stress on parents and children? What special recommendations would you have for parents of young adults?
3. Discuss with your family how each of the items listed in the following chart could cause either "low" or "high" stress.

Activity or Experience	Low Stress	High Stress
After-school activities		
Divorce		
Doing homework		
Reading the newspaper		
Relationships		
Starting college		
Taking tests		
Technology		
Watching television		
Working part-time		

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HUMOR WITH A PURPOSE

You have probably seen television shows of blended families. In real life, people often have a more difficult time than the families on television. The newly married parents want their children to get along. They've taken a big step by marrying again, and they often feel pressure to make things right. Likewise, getting used to a new stepparent, new stepbrothers or stepsisters, and perhaps even a new house takes a lot of understanding and time — sometimes as long as three to five years.

Imagine that someone close to you has just become part of a newly blended family.

1. What words of wisdom can you offer your friend in the following areas? Write your answers on separate paper.
 - a. getting to know a new stepparent
 - b. feeling like the parent you aren't living with has been forgotten

- c. sharing space with other children your age and younger

Add other topics here that you think are important:

2. You know that laughter can be healing. To help your friend, you decide to create a comic-book character whose words and actions encourage positive ways to handle becoming part of a blended family. Invite a family member or friend to help you create a six-frame comic strip that will help your friend laugh. Use the frames below to create the strip.

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DESIGNING FOR OLDER ADULTS

Directions: Talk with some older relatives and neighbors. Ask them for the names of products or other items that they find difficult to use. Ask them what makes using these items difficult. Write those items on the chart below. Add your own ideas to the list as well.

Item	Why It's Difficult to Use
Hand can opener	It is hard to grip the handle together tightly enough to open the cans.

Choose one item on your list and brainstorm design changes that could make the item easier to use. Then, design a prototype that gives your audience an idea of how your invention works. Include a sketch of the item. When you present it, explain for whom it is designed, and demonstrate why it will help. Who knows? It could launch a new business!

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CREATE LASTING MEMORIES

The idea of “keeping someone in your heart” is nothing new. When someone we love dies, we search for ways to keep that person’s memory alive. It is our way of feeling close to the person who is gone.

Memories are good ways to keep people you love in your heart. You might also have something that belonged to the person who died. For example, shortly before Maya’s grandmother died, she gave Maya a shawl she had made when she was a young girl. The shawl in itself was nothing great. It wasn’t worth a lot of money, but to Maya, it was a very special gift. After her grandmother died, Maya spent many nights curled up with the shawl, grieving for her grandmother. Matt’s experience was similar. His father gave him tapes of jazz music he had recorded when he was younger. Listening to the tapes helps Matt feel close to his father, who died last year.

1. What can you imagine giving someone now that would create the same kind of loving reminder of you? What could you keep in a safe place to give to a younger family member, perhaps sixty or seventy years from now? It could be a photograph, a book of poems you wrote, or perhaps a favorite jacket. Imagine the item, and fill in the details here:

- a. The item:

- b. To whom I imagine giving it someday:

- c. What I would want the person to know about this object:

d. Why it would be a special reminder of me:

2. Talk with your parents and grandparents about objects that are special reminders of relatives who have died. Listen to the stories behind these items. Ask your parents whether it is okay for you to tape-record these stories as reminders of the time you spent listening together. The tapes may become something you will someday pass down to your own children.

Write the History of an Object

Visit a flea market or an antique store, or explore items in an old trunk or the attic. Pick one item, such as a quilt or a small wooden box. Look at it carefully. Make a drawing of it, or take a photo of it. Imagine its history and write about it as though you are that object. Describe the journey you have taken over time. How did you end up in this location? Whom do you have “in your heart?”