

## The Family Tree

**Directions** A family tree is a graphic picture of your family. Many people find it interesting to trace their origins back through the generations. Follow the steps below to trace your family tree and show the results visually.

- 1 Start with your name.** Near the bottom of a large sheet of paper, write your own name and date of birth.
- 2 Add your parents.** Above your name, write the names of your parents, side by side, with their dates of birth. Link these two names with a horizontal line. Draw a vertical line downward from this line to your name. This shows that you are descended from these two people.
- 3 Add your siblings.** If you have siblings, put their names on the paper next to yours and draw lines to connect them to your parents as well. Siblings should be lined up from left to right in order of age, so older siblings go to the left of you on the page and younger siblings go to the right. If any siblings are married, put their spouses' names next to them, linking them with a horizontal line as done for your parents. If they have children, list their names below, linking them with a vertical line the way you linked yourself to your parents. Include birth dates for all.
- 4 Add any stepparents.** If either of your parents has remarried, add the stepparent's name to the family tree next to your parent's name and link the names with a horizontal line. Below this pair of names, you can add the names of any half-siblings you may have from this marriage. Add birth dates if possible.
- 5 Add your grandparents' generation.** You have now completed two (or perhaps three) generations of your family tree. At this point, move up to your grandparents' generation. Add the names of your parents' parents above their names. Then add the names of your parents' siblings—your uncles and aunts—next to theirs. If any of them are married, fill in their spouses' names next to theirs and expand their branch of the family tree downward to include their children. For any relatives who are deceased, include death dates as well as birth dates.
- 6 Continue expanding.** Your family tree can go back through the generations until you run out of room—or information. At some point, you may reach the first generation of your relatives to live in this country. Beyond that, you will be listing the names of people who were born in other countries. These records may be sketchy, so you may have only partial information about these generations.

## Laughter—The Best Medicine

**Directions** Laughter is healing as well as fun. Read the information below and answer the questions that follow. Then try one or more of the Discovery activities.

What role does humor play in building a strong family? Can laughter help strengthen family relationships? Researchers have found that laughter and humor play a significant role in reducing stress, maintaining health, and even in relieving pain.

It is almost impossible to laugh and feel stressed or angry at the same time. Humor helps relieve anger, frustration, and stress because it allows people to view a problem from a new perspective. In fact, looking at life from a new perspective is what humor is all about.

Some writers and philosophers have pointed out that comedy and tragedy are simply different ways of looking at the same problem or stressful event. Humor lets people step back from a problem situation and see its absurdities. The trick is to find some way of laughing at a situation that might otherwise be troubling or overwhelming.

Family tensions and crises can be relieved when family members learn to find some humor in problem situations. Laughter can serve as a distraction, sometimes allowing a family member to cool down.

A variety of techniques can be used to help put humor in your life. Watching comedies, reading humorous books or articles, and looking at comics or cartoons can help you develop your sense of humor. Other techniques include exaggerating a situation until it becomes absurd, thinking of something funny, or keeping a collection of funny pictures to pull out when you need a laugh. The idea is not to worry about feeling foolish but to concentrate on having a good time by yourself and with your family. Laughing not only relieves stress, but the shared experience of laughing together builds family bonds.

1. What makes something funny? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Why is humor useful? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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**CHAPTER 9 Building Strong Families (Continued)**

**Focus on *Humor***

- 3. When is humor inappropriate? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Do you have to laugh to experience humor? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5. How might people improve their sense of humor? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Can you laugh at yourself? Why is this ability helpful? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discovery**

- A. Observations** Use observation to learn more about laughter. How often do people laugh in certain settings or situations, such as an evening with your family? Create a plan for observing laughter and report what you discover.
- B. Impacts of Humor** Find out how humor impacts people. Plan an experiment that tests blood pressure in people before and after watching both tense and humorous movies. Summarize what you learn in a report.
- C. Types of Humor** Investigate different types of humor. Collect oxymorons (jumbo shrimp), humorous newspaper headlines, blooper stories, or newspaper columns. Share samples in class.
- D. Humor Analysis** Make a list of television programs and movies that are funny and choose one to analyze. Watch it with your family and keep track of when people laugh and why. Why do people react differently to the same humor? Is laughter contagious? Why do some programs use laugh tracks?
- E. Family Joke Book** Collect jokes that your family would like. Incorporate them in a family joke book. Share the jokes at mealtime or other family time. Expand the book with real-life humor. Collect anecdotes about humorous incidents family members recall and record them to be enjoyed for years to come.