Characteristics of Healthy Relationships

Families need to arm themselves with weapons to fight against the stressors of marriage and family. Research shows that there are nine characteristics of a strong, healthy relationship: love and appreciation, time together, encouragement, commitment, communication, adaptability, faith, connections, and clear responsibilities. These strengths can serve as weapons that couples arm themselves with when building the kind of family life they want.

It's important to realize that no family has all of these strengths; and these strengths don't represent a mold into which you must pour your family to be a strong family. Instead, these strengths are guideposts for you to consider as you form your own healthy, unique family. These strengths have been found in all types of families, regardless of their type, shape and size.

This may not be

EASY

but will be

worth

the effort.

Fleet and Family Support Center

The Navy Fleet and Family Support Center provides individual, couple, family and group counseling services to service members and their families.

Call your local FFSC to schedule an appointment.

Military One Source

Military One Source is a free support service that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

The Department of Defense provides Military One Source as a supplement to existing installation services. It offers resources, referrals, consultations and counseling services on issues that affect families.

CREDO

The Navy uses a program called CREDO, also known as the Chaplains Religious Enrichment Development Operation, to help Sailors and Marines adjust to life in the military. The program began almost four decades ago, near the close of the Vietnam War, and covers all phases of family life in the military. Retreats can focus on marriage enrichment for couples, but can help their children as well. Personal growth, spirituality and teenage issues are additional topics included in CREDO.

In the Marriage Enrichment retreats, couples explore how they may better grow together in intimacy and love. Couples on this retreat will reflect upon and actively explore the health of their relationship by looking together at where they are in their relationship, how they got there and where they want to go.

The Fleet & Family Support Center

CNIC ★ FLEET ★ FIGHTER ★ FAMILY

Home is Not a War Zone: Bringing Peace to Relationships

Family Advocacy Program

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The Peace Treaty

Why is it that military couples are more likely to stay together than their civilian counterparts, given the increased stress faced by military families?

It may be because the military provides families with a variety of services aimed at helping service members and their families handle the stress caused by multiple deployments, limited extended family and friend support systems, strenuous mission requirements and unpredictable work hours.

Making Peace

Navy families face unique challenges that can either strengthen or hinder family relationships. A couple's ability to communicate emotions and positively interact with each other is extremely important to the prevention of domestic violence.

When military couples experience multiple stressors and lack the fundamental communication skills to resolve conflict without violence, it can place them at risk for maltreatment. Knowing how to access the needed support services allows families to maintain stability and better ensure their safety and well-being.

State-of-the-Union

Couples often have difficulty finding the time to talk about their relationship concerns. Much like a snowball effect, this can spiral into a huge problem, as small issues tend to become larger issues that threaten to destroy a relationship. Having regular couple's meetings can help identify and resolve small issues before they become too large to manage.

A couple's meeting is a regular time a couple spends together each week discussing their problems, solving their problems and planning ways to nurture their relationship. Here's how it works:

- **Plan a time.**
  Coordinate a time each week when you and your partner can talk alone together for at least 30 minutes without distractions or interruptions. Turn off the TV, don't answer the telephone and make sure the kids are occupied. Carving out a fixed, unchangeable time for the protection of your relationship is a tangible way to give your marriage high priority.

- **Discuss problems first.**
  Use the meeting to take stock of how the relationship is going and to discuss problems. When focusing on a problem, work through "problem discussion" first and "problem solution" second. In problem discussion, each partner gets a chance to be a speaker and a listener. The speakers use "I-statements" to express concerns ("I was upset when you forgot our date last week"). When the speaker is satisfied that the listener has understood his or her feelings ("our dates are very important to you and your feelings are hurt when they are forgotten"), the partners switch roles and repeat the process.

- **Nuture the relationship.**
  Couple's meetings focused entirely on problems may become drudgery. Be sure to include time in your meeting for planning activities to nurture your relationship. Plan time for doing the things that brought you together in the first place, such as having fun together (a regular "date night" is a must for most healthy relationships), talking as friends, working on a project together or being intimate. Protect these times from any discussion of problems.

Champions of Peace

The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) refers to and offers a variety of services to help Navy families learn how to build positive, healthy relationships. The focus of FAP is to promote healthy family life, prevent family distress and respond in cases of suspected or reported family violence.

The FAP, located at your local Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC), offers counseling, educational programs and referrals for marital/couples issues, anger management, stress management, parenting, mental health, and substance abuse. These programs and services may help to reinforce your relationship, but also serve to prevent domestic violence as well as decrease the risk for further violence in a relationship.

www.ffsp.navy.mil

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