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Strong Families

At this time of holiday togetherness, sometimes families are going in many different directions. What makes your family strong, even when apart?

Researchers at the University of Nebraska asked that very question to over 24,000 family members from all 50 states and 34 other countries around the world. Remarkably, the answers were similar from culture to culture. So what strengths do strong families have?

Six common strengths summarize the answers:

Appreciation and affection—People in strong families deeply care for one another and they let each other know this on a regular basis.

Commitment—Members of strong families show a strong commitment to one another, investing time and energy in family activities and not letting their work or other priorities take too much time away from family interaction.

Positive communication—Successful families are often task-oriented in their communication, identifying problems and discussing how to solve them together. More importantly, strong families also spend time talking with and listening to one another just to stay connected.

Enjoyable time together—The study found that these qualities made time together enjoyable: quality time in great quantity; sharing memories with each other; enjoying each other's company; sharing fun times; and simple, inexpensive good times.

Spiritual well-being—Spirituality or religion can be important to strong families, according to the study. Spiritual well-being can be the caring center within each individual that promotes sharing, love, and compassion.

Successful management of stress and crisis—Strong families are not immune to stress and crisis, but they do possess the ability to manage both daily stressors and difficult life crises effectively with creativity.

By using this foundation of strengths, strong families do not need to be something we wish for, but something that we can attain, even when apart.

To learn more about strong families, go to <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs>

Source: DeFrain, J., Swanson, D., Friesen, J., Brand, G. (2008) “What Is a Strong Family?”, Nebraska Extension NebGuide