

PROBLEM PREVENTION

LESSON FIFTEEN

Follow-up (As a family discuss the assignment for the lesson *Rules and Consequences*.)

1. How do we feel about our family rules?
2. How about consequences to the rules? Did we decide on some consequences? Are we following through and applying consequences for disobedience? How are our attitudes?

Concept

To avoid conflicts, families should do all they can to prevent problems before they occur. Rather than wait until a conflict arises, it is always better to anticipate it and avoid it.

There are several ways we can help prevent problems:

1. Use a kind tone of voice when speaking.
2. Communicate our feelings and let people know how they can help us.
2. Avoid sarcastic humor and eliminate criticism.
4. Try to sense how a family member is feeling and carefully speak or act in a way that will help him.
5. Keep an open mind and consider the ideas and suggestions of others. Don't be defensive.
6. Give one another high, positive expectations for behavior.
Example: Parent to child: "I know that as soon as you're finished eating, you'll start doing your homework."
Example: Child to parent: "I'm sure you'll try to understand what I have to say."
7. Think through and discuss possible problem situations before they happen.
Example: What if a stranger asked to take you home?
Example: What if you were at school and an older student pushed you?

Talking about things that might occur helps us make decisions in advance. Hopefully, when the time comes to make a similar decision, we will have thought it through and will choose wisely. Preventing a problem is usually easier, and more desirable, than trying to solve the problem.

Family Survey Review

Statement #15. ***We try to prevent problems before they occur.***

- When we see something which might become a problem, how do we try to prevent it?
- How can we improve in preventing family problems?

Story

For years an old farmer plowed around a large rock in his field. The times he hit the rock by mistake resulted in one broken cultivator and two broken plowshares. Each time he approached the rock he worried about how much crop land he was losing because of it, and he resented the damage it had done to his equipment.

One day he decided he had suffered enough, and the farmer set out to dig the rock up and be done with it. Putting a large crowbar under one side, he found to his surprise that the rock was less than a foot deep in the ground. Soon he had it in his wagon and was carrying it away. The farmer smiled as he thought about how that “big” old rock had caused him many years of needless problems.

Discussion

1. How could the old farmer have prevented breaking his farm equipment?
2. Are we sometimes like the farmer? With just a little effort, can we avoid some of our problems? How can we do this?
3. How can talking with a caring person help prevent problems sometimes?

Activity

For our activity we're going to play the “What If?” game. We can use the questions in the lesson, or we can make up our own. Questions asked should be ones which can help us prevent possible problems. (Everyone should participate in answering the questions.)

1. What if a fire started in the home while you were alone?
2. What if you were at a party when people started doing things you think are wrong?
3. What if you were tending someone's child when he cut himself badly?
4. What if you were taking a test at school when the student behind you asked for an answer?
5. What if you were at a friend's house, and when it was time to go home, the movie you were watching wasn't finished?

Assignment

Choose one or both of the following assignments:

- 1. Read the Additional Solution for Success: Choices Which Prevent and Solve Problems.*
- 2. Read the Additional Solution for Success: Coping With Family Stress.*

ADDITIONAL SOLUTION FOR SUCCESS

CHOICES WHICH PREVENT AND SOLVE PROBLEMS

- ◆ **Simplify Your Life.** *It's easy to get too busy. Whenever possible, eliminate activities that complicate your life. Choose the most important things and concentrate on them. Simplify your life.*
- ◆ **Keep Things in Perspective.** *Problems are a normal part of life. Remember that everyone has problems. Occasionally ask yourself, "Will this really matter in ten years?" Keep a long-term perspective on life and your problems.*
- ◆ **Rid Yourself of Worries.** *Worry weakens your energy. It reduces your ability to function well. Do something about the things which worry you. If you can't do anything about a problem, worrying won't make it better. When you wake up each morning, set goals you can reach that day. Do your best, then don't worry about things you can't do.*
- ◆ **Live Outside of Yourself.** *Helping others and providing support for others is a good way to forget your own problems. Develop friendships and positive relationships outside of your family. Love and care for people, animals and the environment. Living out-side of yourself will bring you great joy.*
- ◆ **Enjoy Nature as a Family.** *Many families find outdoor activities refreshing. There is something special and rejuvenating about being out in nature. Try walks, picnics, camping, zoos, fishing, outdoor sports. Exercise is very beneficial to your well-being. Develop exercise habits you can enjoy as a family.*
- ◆ **Develop a Sense of Humor.** *Humor can drive away stress and worry. Humor can prevent problems in almost magical ways. Being able to laugh at some of the things that happen to us keeps life in perspective. Humor lightens loads and helps people relax. Laugh at yourself and laugh with others. Find the humor in your life.*

ADDITIONAL SOLUTION FOR SUCCESS

COPING WITH FAMILY STRESS

We have heard much in recent years about how stress affects individuals. It can lead to health problems, emotional problems, and decreased productivity. How do families cope with stress?

Stress can cause some family members to get angry or depressed. However, members of healthy families have learned ways to cope with stress so they don't feel overwhelmed. A key to successfully dealing with stress is to develop an attitude of confidence in your ability to productively deal with life's challenges.

*In their book, *Secrets of Strong Families*, family experts Nick Stinnet and John DeFrain have identified some coping skills which healthy families have in common. Not all families use every skill, but in their nationwide study of 3000 families they identified six keys to coping with stress successfully.*

- 1. Seeing something good in the stress.** Families who cope well are able to find something positive in the stress and crises they face. For example, a family where the father became ill and unable to work was thankful that he was home more and could spend time with his children.
- 3. Pull together.** Members of healthy families unite when problems occur. No individual feels as though he must face his problems alone. Family members support and help one another.
- 3. Call on others for help.** In addition to relying on each other, members of healthy families turn to other resources for help. They seek out support from their church or synagogue, friends, neighbors, and their extended family. Family friends may help with childcare or meals during illness. A church group may take up a special collection. An important resource is the family's ability to talk about the problem with others.
- 4. Spiritual resources.** Most families have spiritual convictions that help them cope with crises. Such convictions can be a source of stability to families who rely on them for a philosophy of life, perspective on the situation, and for hope and comfort.

5. **Keep Communicating.** Another resource that members of healthy families have is their ability to talk with each other during the crisis. For example, if one family member is struggling with grief or guilt over a mistake or a loss, the other family members are able to talk with him and help.
6. **Go with the flow.** Finally, strong families have learned that sometimes it is necessary to just stop fighting a problem and adapt to it. That may mean changing jobs, redefining who does what around the house, or cutting back on expenses. Even positive things like retirement, a wedding, or the birth of a child require the family to be adaptable and flexible. Being able to make necessary changes in family structure and how things are done enables families to solve problems and retain close relationships.

Successful families find a happy balance between stability and adaptability. For example, if Mom returns to work, some things such as household chores need to be adapted. Retaining other things, like bedtime stories or playing board games, can maintain stability.

We usually think of stress as something to be avoided. That is not possible, nor is it necessarily desirable. While stress that reaches unmanageable levels is destructive, some stress is good. It motivates us to do more, keeps life interesting, and it forces us to keep growing and learning.

A few additional thoughts on how to cope with stress:

- Keep things in perspective. Everybody has stress.
- Keep a sense of humor. Find something humorous in the situation.
- Take things one step, one day at a time.
- Stop worrying about things you can not control.
- Do not let little things diminish your happiness. Clear them up or forget them.
- Share your problems with others.
- If possible, change your routine. Get variety in your life.
- Take time for a favorite activity.
- Meditate; pray.
- Learn to relax and take a fresh look at the problem.
- Get outside.
- Exercise.
- Learn to say no; cut back on demands and commitments.