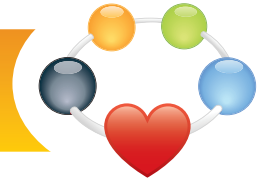




Growing Family Connections



Content on this side is intended for the educator's reference. The information on the back can be photocopied and shared with clients.

Objective: Clients will recognize the numerous ways extended family members provide support for one another and identify ways they can build and maintain those relationships.

Audience: This tool is applicable to all individuals. It will be particularly helpful for those who need help finding ways to seek help from and strengthen relationships with extended family.

Estimated Time: 20-30 minutes

Educator Instructions: Review the instructions printed on the tool. Have clients name several extended family members with whom they provide mutual support. Talk about some different ways they offer each other support – both when things are going well and when someone is going through some struggles. Ask how it feels to both give and receive support from their extended family. It is also important to have clients think about how much interaction or involvement they want with extended family. There may be some situations where it would be better to limit involvement of extended family members who have a negative impact on the couple relationship.

Discussion Starter: When you hear the word “family,” what comes to mind? Each of us defines family in a different way. Some of us only think of people we live with, such as our spouse or partner, our children, and maybe some other relatives or friends. Others include relatives outside of their home, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, as well as close friends and neighbors who provide support. Our family includes people who we love and who love us, and those with whom we have a shared history or experiences. Families give each other love and support that helps us get through good times and bad. Thinking about who is in your family and the role each person plays is important because it can help you make your family stronger.

Follow-up: In future conversations, talk about how the clients have interacted with extended family since your last visit. Have they needed to request help or have they offered support? What types and how has it made them feel?



HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIP
& MARRIAGE
EDUCATION
TRAINING

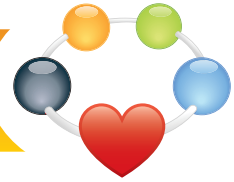
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Adapted from: Cole, K., Clark, J. A., & Gable, S. *Promoting family strengths*. GH6640. University of Missouri Extension.

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Growing Family Connections



Extended family members offer love and support in good times and in bad. When we spend pleasant, positive time together with extended family, we build up a reserve of good feelings. When we are having some difficult times, those good feelings make it easier to reach out for help and also offer support to others.

Who is in your extended family? What are some ways they offer you help and support with your relationship? What are some ways you help them? List your answers in the spaces below.

People in my family:	Ways they help us:	Ways we help them:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

How does it feel when you receive help from your extended family?

How does this support help strengthen your relationship with your partner? Your children?

How do you feel when you offer support to your extended family?

Additional Tips

- Getting along with in-laws and relatives is not always easy. Family members can avoid hurting each other's feelings by not repeating past mistakes. Focus on the present and work together to build stronger relationships for the future.
- It is important for couples to talk about how much interaction they want with other relatives. Some couples like to spend more time with relatives, while other couples prefer to spend more time alone. Talk about your expectations with your relatives.
- Adults and children need opportunities to have fun and learn from extended family. Building and maintaining supportive relationships among family members and with people in the community is important for you and your children.

***Maintaining extended family relationships takes work,
but it can strengthen your couple relationship!***