

Family

We first learn about loving and caring relationships from our families. Family is defined as a domestic group of people with some degree of kinship – whether through blood, marriage, or adoption.

Ideally each child is nurtured, respected, and grows up to care for others and develop strong and healthy relationships. This does not mean that it is always easy to make and keep friends; it just means that we share the goal of having strong relationships.

"Family" includes your siblings and parents, as well as relatives who you may not interact with every day, such as your cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and stepparents.

These are probably the people you are closest to and with whom you spend the most time. **Having healthy relationships with your family members is both important and difficult.**

Families in the 21st century come in all shapes and sizes: traditional, single parent, blended (more than one family together in the same house), and gay and lesbian parents – just to name a few. No matter the "type" of family you have, there are going to be highs and lows – good times and bad.

Many times, however, **families become blocked in their relationships by hurt, anger, mistrust, and confusion.** These emotions are natural and normal, and few families do not have at least a few experiences with them. The worst time for most families, is during a [divorce](#).

By making a few simple changes in the way we look at the world and deal with other people, it is possible to create happier, more stable relationships. Families need to be units of mutual caring and support; they can be sources of lifelong strength for all individuals.

It is never too late to begin the process of improving family relationships – even if they are already of good quality – by developing some simple skills.

Whereas in other situations you can step back and assess the relationship, it is often hard to do this with your family. Your family may be a constant presence in your life, so when an argument or issue arises, it may seem impossible to handle.

Remember that [communication](#) is key to resolving conflict. While it may seem that your siblings are constantly present to annoy you or boss you around, they are also there to communicate.

Use your family's presence to your advantage – **communicate with each other, develop ways to value [boundaries](#), and build [trust](#) and [respect](#).**

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Last Reviewed: October 2013

Sources:

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[Healthy Relationships: A Guide for Teens](#), Center for Young Women's Health.

Sometimes families experience mental illness. If you live with a parent suffering from borderline personality disorder,

[Nancy Brown's article](#) might help.