

Stress. We hear that word a lot. Usually we talk about stress as it affects an individual. But families also have stress they experience as a collective unit. Life changes such as death, divorce, sibling conflict, relocation or illness affect all members of a family. The level of impact that stressor has on the family is based on the resources they have for dealing with the event. If a family has developed appropriate resources, they will see life changes as challenges to be met. If not, they may view a stressor as uncontrollable. The way that a family responds to stress is called family coping. It is the action the family takes to manage the stressor, live with a difficult situation or develop new resources in response to a crisis.

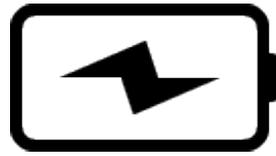
Complete the chart in Part 1 to rate your family’s coping skills. You can do this together as a group or have each member do it independently, then discuss the results. Read each statement, then ask yourself, “How well does this statement describe our family?” Rate each statement on a scale of 1–5 (1 = your family is weak in this area; 5 = your family is extremely strong in this area). Discuss each statement and the responses you had. Pay particular attention to areas that were 1–2 or where there was disagreement about responses.

Remember to respect each person’s opinions as valid and important.

WEAK <----->STRONG

	1	2	3	4	5
1. We do many things together.					
2. We talk about important matters that affect our family.					
3. We help each other whenever possible.					
4. Our family is a priority to each of us.					
5. We encourage each other to participate in activities outside the family.					
6. We express appreciation to one another.					
7. We try to look on the bright side no matter what happens.					
8. We are free to express a variety of feelings in our family.					
9. We are each active in clubs and organizations.					
10. We can count on family and friends for help when needed.					
11. Our family gets together with other families who have the same interests					
12. We ignore criticism of others.					
13. We believe there are more advantages than disadvantages to the way we live.					
14. Our roles in the family are shared.					
15. We believe our family values make us better people and stronger as a family					
16. We work on problems until they are resolved.					
17. We relieve tension through sports, exercise, talking or relaxing.					
18. We try to stay healthy by eating healthy and keeping active.					
19. All members of our family get enough sleep most nights (8–9 hours for adolescents, 6–8 for adults)					
20. Our family is able to accept outside help when we need it.					

After discussing everyone’s answers, move on to Part 2 on the back of this sheet.



## PART TWO

Families can decrease the negative effects of a stressful situation by building their coping strengths. Assign one member of the family to read each of the following questions. Then take time to answer them. The goal is to help your family realize the positive strengths they already have. Learning to communicate with each other during stressful periods will help build on those strengths.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

Families who communicate can better handle the stresses of life. Here are some questions to get the conversation going.

- What do you consider to be our family's greatest achievement (group not individual)?
- When our family faces a difficult situation, what do we do that makes me feel safe?
- What family activities do you most enjoy doing?
- What one thing could other family members do to make you happy?
- What one thing could you do to make another family member happy?
- What family tradition means the most to you?
- What is something our family has improved over the past 2 years?
- What 3 words could be a family motto we can all believe in?



Families that COPE STRONG see life changes as challenges to be met!

MAKE THE MOST OF TEACHABLE MOMENTS TO TALK WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT NOT USING ALCOHOL.