

Family Visions

An appreciative proactive approach empowers the family and increases the likelihood that the family can cope with stress

By Irene Hansen Savarese

We are busier than ever before. Two incomes have become necessary. Families with low paying jobs cannot survive and spend time with their children at the same time.

Expectations from workplace and school to perform more efficiently have put severe strains on the family unit. Children have hours of homework even during weekends and vacations. Parents bring work home or work long hours. Fear of falling behind, losing a job, or not measuring up to these higher expectations causes stress, depression and anxiety in both children and adults.

The reality of today's family is that we spend less time at home together. Furthermore we don't take the time to connect to each other on an emotional level. The emotional quality of the relationship between family members is essential for how well the family functions as a unit, and how well family members are coping with stress.

The family will develop its potential when its members feel appreciated and respected in a non-blaming atmosphere. Each member of the family has important knowledge and experience that needs to be taken into account to empower the family and make the family unit productive. Talk openly about the many stressors facing your family. In spite of age or position, fears and worries such as fear of parents having a divorce, fear of losing a job, fear of getting low grades etc. should be validated and respected. Have dinner together as many evenings as possible. Plan family meetings and fun activities to do together.

The family is not the problem. The problem *is* the problem, and it is having an adverse effect on the family. Families have expertise, skills, competencies and knowledge that can be made available to them to assist with reclaiming their lives from the influence of the problem.

What we focus on becomes our reality. Focus on strengths and abilities gained by having the problem. The problem-story is never the whole story. Problems never successfully claim 100% of our lives. Prioritize your focus by investigating what is most important for your family.

Be **proactive**. Create a **family vision** statement. Write down individual hopes and dreams and those shared by all family members.

Create a **family mission** statement. Write down individual and shared goals and steps to take to achieve these goals. Review and renew this plan when needed. Post it where all family members can view it.

Irene Hansen Savarese is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (# MH 4862) in Private Practice in Fort Lauderdale. She is the creator of Center For Empowerment facilitating Individuals, Couples, Families and Groups. Please direct questions regarding this article to her office or email: irenesavarese@yahoo.com

