

BOX 6-1
Family-Strengthening Goals to
Promote Family Resilience and Well-Being

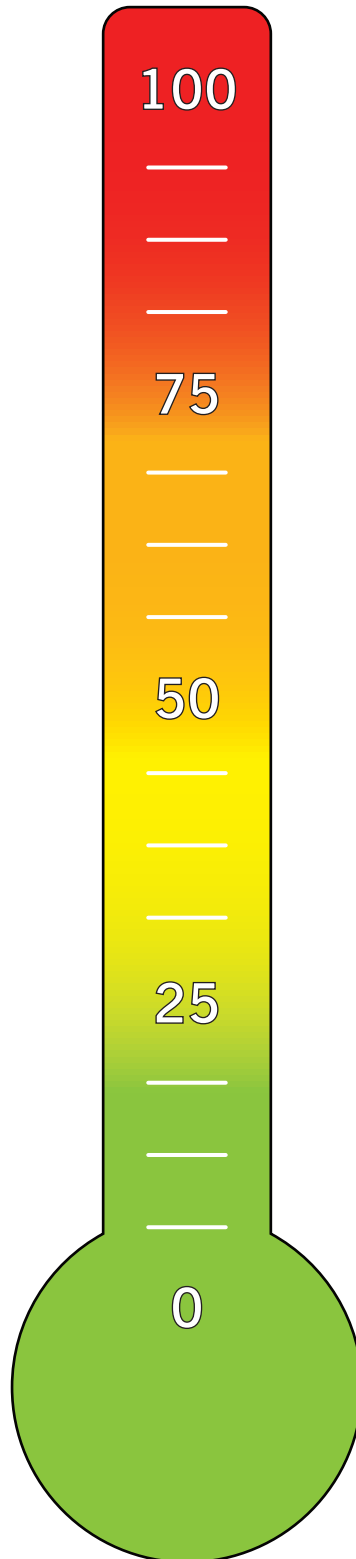
1. ***Maintain a physically safe and structured environment***, protecting against interpersonal aggression among adults and children, and ensuring that children have adequate structure and support, have consistency in routines and rules, and are effectively monitored.
2. ***Engage required resources***, accessing instrumental and social support within and outside the family to support adults and children, dyadic relationships and the family as a whole, and teaching family members how to effectively use their support opportunities (friends, extended family, teachers, coaches, faith-based communities, etc.).
3. ***Develop and share knowledge within and outside of the family***, building shared understanding about stressors, including service members' injury or illness, as well as modeling and teaching effective communication strategies among adults and children.
4. ***Build a positive, emotionally safe, and warm family environment***, including effective stress reduction and emotional regulation strategies for parents to engage in and model for children, as well as engaging in activities that are calming and enjoyable for all.
5. ***Master and model important interpersonal skills***, including individual and relational problem solving and conflict resolution and incorporating evidence-based strategies.
6. ***Maintain a vision of hope and future optimism for the family***, engendering positive expectations among family members and creating a hope-filled family narrative.
7. ***Utilize competent and authoritative parenting***, encouraging consequence-based strategies that promote mastery and minimizing harsh disciplinary practices.
8. ***Incorporate trauma-informed approaches to care***, recognizing that families faced with stress and adversity are likely to be affected by trauma and loss experiences that uniquely impact adults and children within families, their relationships, and their development.
9. ***Promote security among adults and children***, strengthening parent-child relationships that are known to contribute to individual and relational wellness for both adults and children, and focusing on effective conflict resolution between spouses or partners.
10. ***Highlight the unique developmental needs of family members***, helping parents and other engaged adults in the family recognize and respond to their family members' needs effectively at each developmental stage.

SOURCE: Compiled by the Committee on the Well-Being of Military Families. Source for Goal #5 is Dausch and Saliman (2009); Gewirtz et al. (2018b); source for Goal # 6 is Saltzman et al. (2011).

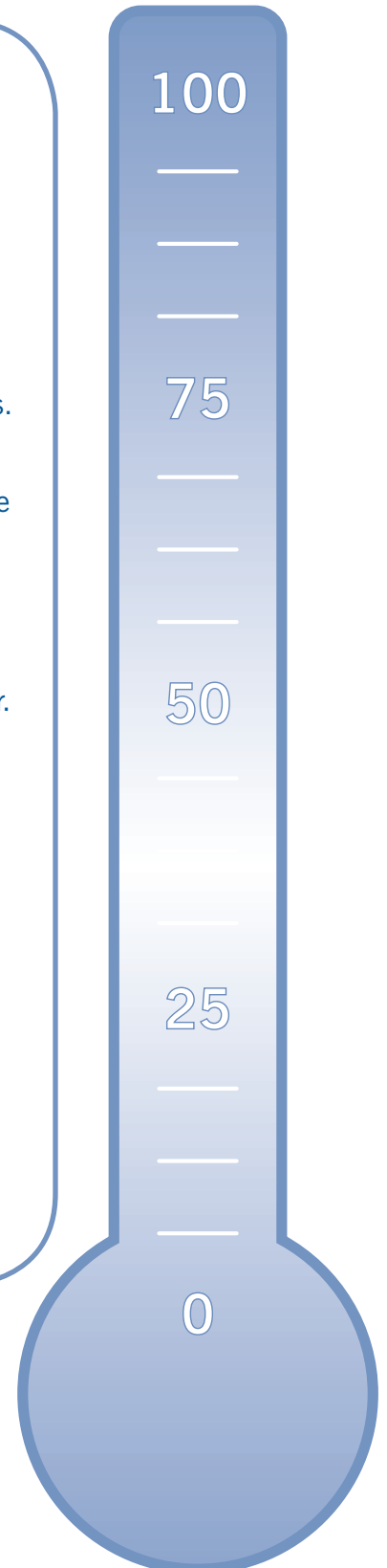
Adolescent Development

	Tweens to Late Adolescence	Adulthood	
PHYSICAL	<p>Over the next 6 to 8 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops reproductive organs • Has changes to body, voice, body hair & sweat glands • Builds muscles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops strength • Gets taller, develops • Grows from awkward “tween” to attractive young person if healthy 	Reaches physical maturity
COGNITIVE	<p>Slowly becomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More self-conscious • More observing • Able to (and does) compare self to others • Is more contemplative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to reflect more • Develops abstract thought • Explores his/her values, beliefs, theories • Begins to understand cause and effect 	Develops identity, is emotionally more mature, understands cause & effect
SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL	<p>Over time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops emotional self-efficacy (ability to identify emotions & to express them in a positive & effective manner) • Forms individual identity (first emerges; then evolves); • Questions & explores values • Shifts away from family • Connects to other kids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages in peer/groups • Grows in emotional maturity • Develops intimate relationships • Improves relationship to adults (parents last); • Becomes more egalitarian • Shoulders more responsibility • May build long-term commitments by late adolescence 	Creates mutually beneficial social networks with bosses, co-workers, acquaintances. Is able to form long-term healthy intimate relationship
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigid conformity to peer culture • Develops talent or skills in sports, arts, other activities • Connects to mentor/coach • Learns public transportation; travels on bike or skateboard to create distance with home • Eligible for driver’s permit & license 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School events (dances, sports events, competitions) • First romance/dating • First job • Senior prom • Graduation from high or trade school • Moves away from home, goes to college, or joins service 	Re-connects to family & strengthens ties again
OBSTACLES TO GROWTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggles to fit in • Conforming to peer pressure • Style, choices, values, may baffle parents (especially when rejects family values) • Struggles to form own identity may come up against rigid family or cultural belief systems • Risky behaviors such as using cigarettes, alcohol, & drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks of sexual activity, such as pregnancy, STDs • Dating violence • Community violence • Economic downturns affecting ability to get basic needs met • Intellectual or developmental disabilities 	Eventually remembers you on Mothers or Fathers Day or comes home for Thanksgiving!

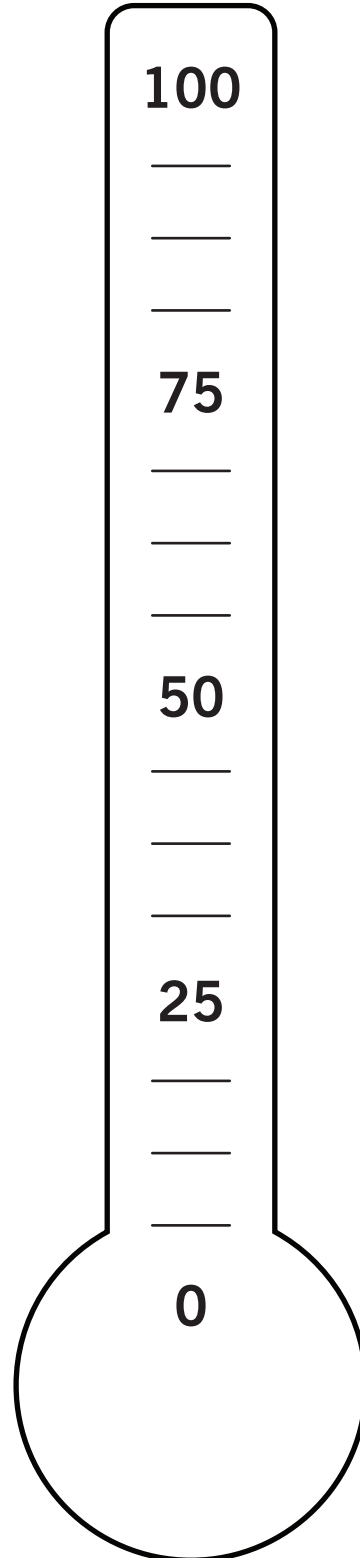
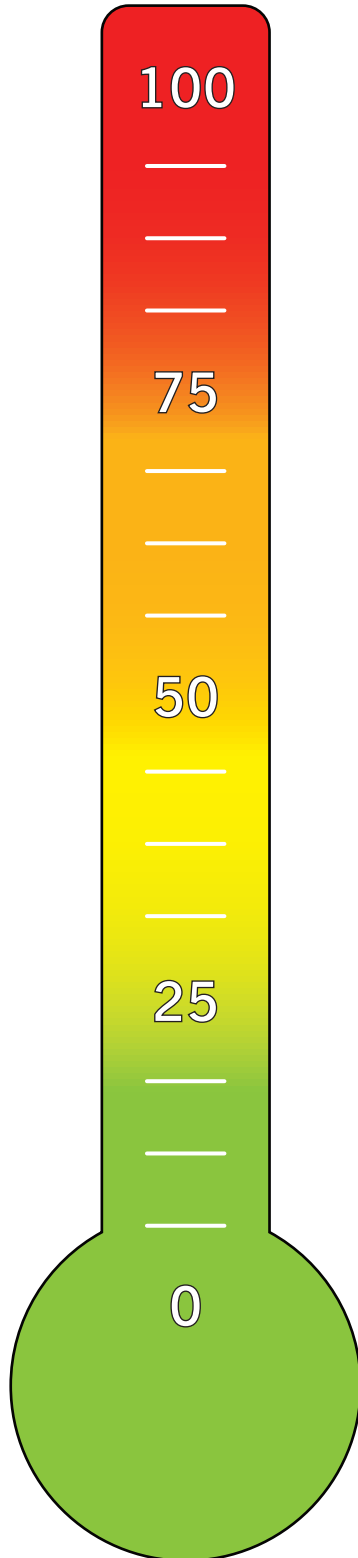
Feeling Thermometer



- Step 1:** Give each family member participating in the exercise a copy of the Feeling Thermometer handout.
- Step 2:** Explain the color zones of the thermometer and how it can be used to rank things that make them feel “comfortable” or “uncomfortable”. Make it clear that all family members can have very different things that make them feel this way. Provide examples.
- Step 3:** Ask everyone to write down or draw something that puts them in the green zone; in the yellow zone; and in the orange or red zone. Have them write or draw these things on the left of the thermometer.
- Step 4:** Go around and have each family member share his/her thermometer. After a family member shares his/her thermometer, have the other family members comment if any of the thermometer reactions was new information to them (“I didn’t know that....”).
- Step 5:** Have family members then write down things they can do to feel better on the right side of the thermometer. And then things other family members can do to help them feel better.
- Step 6:** Share these coping ideas and discuss how family members can notice when another is feeling bad and help him/her to feel better.



Feeling Thermometer



“Feeling Foxes” Feeling Chart



How are you feeling today?



calm



confused



excited



surprised



frustrated



happy



mad



yucky



nervous



proud



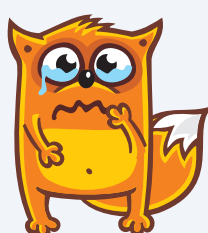
sad



silly



scared



worried



tired

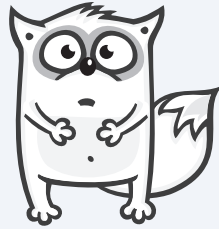
“Feeling Foxes” Feeling Chart



How are you feeling today?



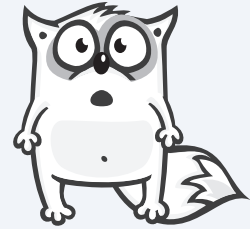
calm



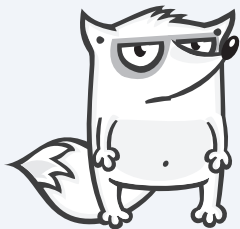
confused



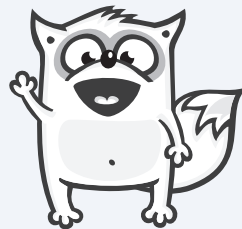
excited



surprised



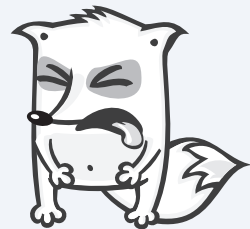
frustrated



happy



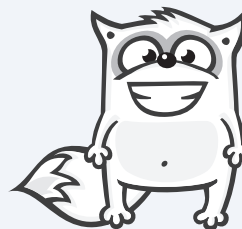
mad



yucky



nervous



proud



sad



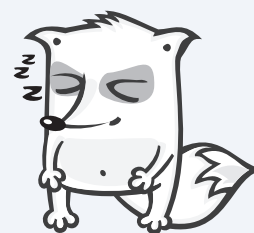
silly



scared



worried



tired

Getting to Green

- Look into an aquarium
- Make a snow angel
- Knit a scarf
- Throw a penny into a wishing well
- Play an instrument
- Turn off your email and cell phone
- Walk along the beach
- Find a four leaf clover
- Make a scrapbook
- Say a prayer
- Get a massage
- Take a road trip
- Meditate
- Send a "thank-you" card
- Review a photo album
- Organize your desk
- Think positive thoughts
- Paint a portrait
- Give a compliment
- Drink a cup of tea
- Get lost in a book
- Cuddle with your pet
- Read a story to a child
- Plan a picnic
- Find a constellation
- Smell some flowers
- Exercise
- Smile at a stranger
- Join a cause
- Dance in the rain
- Look for the silver lining
- Practice forgiveness
- Garden
- Laugh
- Take a long bath
- Watch a movie
- Cook a warm meal
- Order dessert
- Stretch
- Hug a loved one
- Take a nap
- Appreciate the little things in life
- Take the day off
- Do a kind gesture
- Make up a song
- Eat a piece of chocolate
- Go on a hike
-

Getting to Green: Teens

- Complete a puzzle
- Make a snow angel
- Knit a scarf
- Throw a penny into a wishing well
- Play an instrument
- Send an email to a friend
- Walk along the beach
- Find a four leaf clover
- Make a scrapbook
- Say a prayer
- Call your best friend
- Write in a journal
- Meditate
- Send a “thank-you” card
- Review a photo album
- Organize your desk
- Think positive thoughts
- Read a comic strip
- Give a compliment
- Drink a cup of hot cocoa
- Get lost in a book
- Cuddle with your pet
- Read a story to a child
- Play a video game
- Find a constellation
- Smell some flowers
- Exercise
- Smile at a stranger
- Volunteer
- Dance in the rain
- Take a photo
- Practice forgiveness
- Help your neighbor garden
- Laugh
- Take a long bath
- Watch a movie
- Hang out with friends
- Bake cookies
- Stretch
- Hug someone you care about
- Take a nap
- Appreciate the little things in life
- Listen to music
- Do a kind gesture
- Make up a song
- Eat a piece of candy
- Go on a hike
- _____
- _____



Effective Communication Skills

Active listening is one of the most important tools for effective communication. A crucial component of active listening is letting your partner know that he or she has been heard and understood. Active listening occurs when partners:

Take turns when talking.

Listen to each other without interrupting.

Nod and make eye contact.

Paraphrasing helps make it clear to your partner that his or her message has been received.

When paraphrasing, it can help to begin with a phrase like, "I hear you saying that..."

Reflecting your partner's feelings helps to acknowledge his or her emotional state.

A simple template for reflecting your partner's feelings may look like, "It seems like you felt (insert feeling) because (insert reason behind your partner's feelings)."

Ask for clarification in a curious, non accusatory way to show interest and attention to your partner's experience. For example:

"I want to understand. Did you feel frustrated because you thought I had extended my deployment on purpose? Or just because we wouldn't be seeing each other as soon as we thought?"

Ask for more information to show your interest in—and attention to—your partner's experience.

For example:

"Tell me more about what it felt like to be living with your parents while I was deployed."

Being curious involves inquiring about the story behind your partner's opinions, feelings, and reactions. Your curiosity demonstrates that you value your partner's experiences. For example:

"Giving gifts to the children seems very important to you. Is there a story behind that?"

How to Hold a Family Meeting

As family leaders, parent(s) decide to begin holding family meetings.

Work together as a family to get everyone's commitment to the process.

Describe the meetings as an opportunity for the whole family to meet without anything else going on (meals, games, TV, relatives) to talk about goals & plans and strengthen what is already so great about the family.

Decide together when and where to hold meetings.

Parent(s) lead the first meeting and share leader duties as the meetings continue.

Create Family Meeting ground rules at the beginning of the meeting. Some examples:

- **Listen to others**
- **One person talks at a time**
- **Respect**
- **Kind words**
- **No criticism**
- **No fighting (take a time out)**

Throughout the meeting, parent(s) model praise and encouragement, active listening, asking open-ended questions and supporting everyone in sharing.

Try using a "sharing object" to facilitate discussion. Only the person holding the object is allowed to speak.

Or try using the "go around" method. Choose a topic, for example: something nice that happened today or last week, and then go around and have everyone answer the topic.

Before ending the meeting decide on the next family meeting date and put it on the calendar.

End the meeting by having everyone say one thing they learned or gained from the meeting, close with an activity, a game, a story or a fun plan!

Coming To TERMS

with Combat Injury, Illness, & Trauma Parent Guide

When a parent is injured or ill, all family members are affected, including even very young children. Children pay close attention to their parents and seek clues about how to address the injury and resulting changes in the family. It is important for parents to open the door to talk about Combat Injury, Illness, or Trauma and how the family roles, routines, and responsibilities are impacted.

Coming to TERMS provides a way to prepare for discussions about parental injury with children. Read through the Talking Guide and complete the worksheet to practice talking with your children about the injury, illness, or trauma.

T**Talk with children about the injury or illness in words they can understand.**

Be calm, clear, confident and honest.

Use simple and clear language and avoid detailed description of the injury.

E**Explain how changes impact the family.**

Discuss how roles, responsibilities, and routines are different.

Consider any positive changes that may result.

Encourage ongoing discussion of the injury's impact and meaning.

R**Re-assure children by addressing safety, fears, and concerns.**

Address possible worries of death, fear of parental loss, and guilt.

Express hope and optimism when possible.

Repeat assurance whenever possible.

M**Monitor reactions.**

Observe how your children handle and react to the changes in the family.

Teach and practice positive coping skills, such as relaxation or calming techniques, as a family.

S**Share feelings and encourage children to do so with trusted adults.**

Talk about feelings as normal reactions to family changes.

Model talking about feelings and describe what you do to calm yourself down.

Encourage communication of feelings through talking, playing, and writing. Children can express feelings in a variety of ways.

Coming To TERMS

with Combat Injury, Illness, & Trauma Parent Guide

Using the Coming to TERMS Talking Guide, answer the following questions to prepare for what you might say to your children about the injury, illness, or trauma.

Talk with children about the injury or illness in words they can understand.

Write a general statement introducing the injury or illness to your children using simple and clear language.

How might your children respond?

T **E**xplain how changes impact the family.

List a few ways your children's roles, responsibilities and routines are different.

What is a positive outcome of these changes?

Write a statement inviting the children to talk to you about their concerns or reactions in the future.

T **E** **R**e-assure children by addressing their safety, fears, and concerns.

What is one worry your children may have?

Write a reassuring statement that might soothe your children's concerns.

Coming To TERMS

with Combat Injury, Illness, & Trauma Parent Guide

T E R M Monitor reactions.

How might you know if your children are having reactions to the injury, what will you see?

How might you respond if your children become upset about the injury?

What are some ways that have worked in the past to help your children calm down?

T E R M S hare feelings and encourage children to do so with trusted adults.

State one feeling you have about the injury or change and what you do to get support or calm down.

What are some ways that your children express their feelings appropriately?

NOTES:

Tips for Managing Reminders

Sometimes past experiences can affect the way we react to stressful situations. Identifying helpful coping strategies for dealing with stress can help you manage these reactions, especially during challenging situations.

Increase your awareness

Pay attention to how your body feels. Your body's cues can let you know when you are starting to have a stress reaction before you become upset or uncomfortable.

Allow for "time outs"

When you are feeling stressed, take a break. Distance yourself from the setting, either physically or mentally. Sometimes stepping back can help you see the situation from a different angle.

Practice relaxation techniques

Take three slow deep breaths or count slowly to 10. Try these techniques until you feel better. You might need to take more deep breaths or count to 10 a second or third time.

Positive self-talk

Remind yourself of things you do well and that these emotions will pass (e.g. "I can get through this," "I will be OK").

Maintain good self-care

Give your body what it needs, including sleep, exercise, and a healthy diet.

Survey your skills

Once you feel calm, take a moment to think about what strategies worked well. Write down some strategies that you can use in the future.

Access support from others

Talk and spend time with people who care about you. Sometimes a supportive friend can have good suggestions or remind you that you are loved.

Plan a strategic distraction

When you know a period of intense stress is around the corner, plan a time to do something you enjoy – a fun weekend activity with family or friends, reading a book, watching a movie, or just hanging out.

Family Scrapbook

Description:

A Family Scrapbook or Album allows your family to address missed developmental moments during the deployment period. Work together as a family on the album or scrapbook and include pictures of events or accomplishments in the child(ren)'s lives that occurred when the deployed parent was away. This can be an ongoing project that your family works on over a number of weeks. This is an opportunity for your family to engage in a cooperative project that opens communication, sharing, and family closeness.

Supplies:

The Scrapbook can be an official photo album from an art supply store, office supply store, or drugstore. Many craft supply stores also have entire scrapbook aisles filled with various creative options. Your family should choose what works best for you. Photos, glue, scissors, markers, magazine pictures, stickers, pens, and other creative supplies can be used to create your scrapbook.

Directions:

The Scrapbook can be added to over days and weeks, as family members recall important events that the deployed parent missed. If you do not have a photo of the event, it can be represented with drawings, written description, or magazine collage. The Scrapbook will tell the story of what was happening at home while the deployed parent was gone and allow the child(ren) to share events that they feel are important.



Family Collage

Description:

The Family Collage is a creative project that allows your family to work together, express yourselves, spend time creating something artistic, and make something that will represent your values, family intentions, and unique family expression.

Supplies:

Large piece of posterboard, gluesticks, scissors (for children and parents), old magazines to be cut up (5-10), a recent photo of your family together, trash can for cleanup.

Optional: stickers, markers, photos of pets, etc.

Directions:



Collage can be made on the floor or large table. The only rule about making the collage is that everyone in the family must agree on what is put in the collage. The theme of the collage should be something like: things that represent our family, who we are as a family, what we value as a family, what makes us a family, etc. The recent family photo should be glued in the middle of the collage before adding other images. Family members search through the magazines to find images and words that match the theme of the collage and cut them out. Before gluing cut out pictures to the posterboard, the image/word must be agreed upon by each member of the

family. Parents should help children cooperate with each other if there are challenges getting siblings to agree to each other's pictures. Family members can remind each other that the theme is the family as a whole, not separate and possibly differing individual likes/dislikes. When complete, you can talk about the collage, identify the images and representations that make up your family expression, and decide where to hang the collage so everyone can see it!



S.N.A.P. Problem-Solving Model

It can be helpful to have a step-by-step way to solve problems.

Think of a problem that puts your family in the yellow zone and use the following steps to help you solve it.

STEP 1: **S**tate the problem

- Identify only one problem, clearly stated in one sentence.

STEP 2: **N**ame the Goal

- Be realistic and specific in a positively worded sentence. In other words, state exactly what behavior you want to see.

STEP 3: **A**ll possible solutions

- Make a list of all possible actions you could take even if some of them might not be the best solution. Generate as many options as possible.
- Think about strategies that you have used in the past and that you might want to add to the list.
- When problem solving as a family, encourage all family members to contribute to the list.

STEP 4: **P**ick the best option and try it out

- Evaluate the strength and weakness of each option. Reach a decision about which option to try.
- Try out the option you selected. Select another option if the first one does not achieve the intended goal.



FAMILIES

TACKLING TOUGH TIMES

TOGETHER



FAMILY

YOUTH

We Share Our Feelings Constructively! Open Emotional Expression

If we think back to our teenage years, we probably prefer not to repeat them. It's hard to manage the physical, emotional, and other life changes that happen ALL AT ONCE! On top of this, life has thrown COVID-19 into the mix, causing strong emotions for teens. Fortunately, our teens can learn skills to help manage their emotions. We can support our teens and help them learn to manage their emotions while teaching them how to show compassion and [empathy](#) through being a good listener.

Being a Good Listener and Teaching Empathy

It is important for families to find ways to share thoughts and feelings with each other. We can let our teens know that we understand their emotions by showing them we care about how they feel and what they have to say. Being a good listener helps us to gain a different perspective and better understand what our teens are going through. Reacting to our teen's emotions in a positive way helps them to feel better understood.

Listening and Empathy Activities

- **Thinking about a story from a different point of view.** Encourage your teen to think of a favorite book or news article they've read. Ask them to think about the following questions: Who is telling the story? Whose point of view is the story being told from? How might the story be different if it were being told from a different character's point of view? How might the story be different if the character were a different gender or from a different country? How does point of view influence the information received?
- **Validating feelings.** Sometimes when people share feelings of fear, anger, or sadness, those they share with try to "fix" these difficult feelings. They may say things like "Don't think like that" or "Don't worry, things will get better." Listen carefully and support your teen's feelings by saying things like "I can see how you would feel that way," "It must be hard to feel that way," or "That is an awful lot to be feeling right now." Encourage your teen to validate the feelings of others as they learn how to listen and see things from a different view.
- **A minute of freedom.** Oftentimes, we edit what we say to others. Give your teen a chance to say *exactly* what they think or feel by offering them a "Minute of Freedom." Encourage your teen to do this, letting them know that there will be no consequences and you won't talk about it later. Invite your teen to enjoy their freedom (for a minute)! Keep in mind that if your teen says something that makes you think they are in danger or are planning to do something against the law, it is important to let someone know.

To learn more about the science behind teaching empathy, you may wish to read the below research:

- [The Science of Empathy](#)
- [The Emerging Study of Positive Empathy](#)