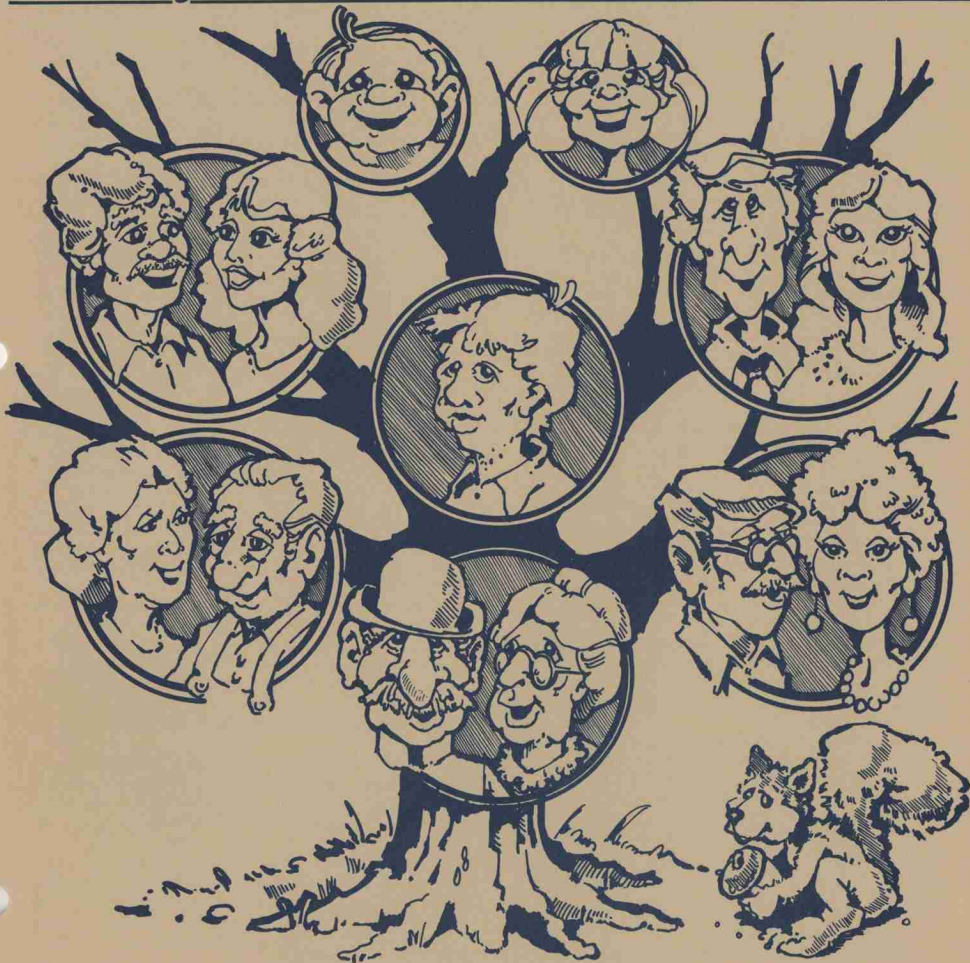


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# My Family

## PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



### 4-H MEMBER MANUAL 3

Nearly everyone spends most of his life in a family. The first 20 years or so are spent growing up in our family of orientation. Then many of us will marry, have children and live the rest of our lives in our family of procreation. In Level III, studying about the family you have now and the family you expect to have in the future should help you appreciate them both. The study should also help you to recognize your family heritage and evaluate your family values, to be aware of the responsibilities of families and their need for community support, and to think about the kind of family you would like to have some day.



## What To Do

- Read the *Family Strengths 4-H Project Planning Guide*, 4H PG-10-24.
- Talk with your 4-H leader and project leader about your plans.
- Join the 4-H Family Strengths Project group or ask your leaders to look in the *4-H Family Strengths Project Leaders Guide* for ways to help you.
- Talk with your family about your plans. Discuss some activities in which your family can participate.
- List your learning plan in *My 4-H Plan*, 4H R-1-80.
- Keep appropriate project records.
- When you finish this *4-H Family Strengths Project*, *My Family — Past, Present, and Future*, Level III, review your work and complete *My 4-H Plan*.
- Share what you did with your family, your leaders and others.
- You will be awarded a certificate when you complete this project satisfactorily.

## MY FAMILY — PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

### Family Functions of the Past and Present

Families of 100 years ago produced more goods and services for family members than families today. In rural areas food was grown on the family farm and brought from the woods and streams. Clothing was often constructed from materials grown on the farm. In isolated areas families took care of education, religion and recreation, if there was any. In cities even 100 years ago, the activities mentioned above were shared with grocery stores, bakeries, schools, churches and recreation departments.

What families do depends upon the situation and where the family lives. Most families now do not grow their own food, but they plan, purchase and eat the food that others produce and process. As for education, religion and recreation, most families share these functions with public and private agencies and organizations.

Some functions of families are just as important as ever:

1. **The rearing of children** is still the primary responsibility of each family. Child care agencies and schools help, but without the family or a fami-

ly substitute, very few children would be successfully reared.

2. **Families give nurturance and support for all family members.** Every person of any age must have a family or friendly household to serve as the center to support life.
3. **Families organize and give structure** to all the family functions of the past. Families manage money and see to it that their economic needs are met. They keep up the repairs, pay the bills and generally provide all the things that a modern family demands.

Families also organize and carry out recreation, even though they cooperate with other groups. Families make the important decisions about education and religion. All the decisions about how, when, and where are made by families. Since families still make these decisions, we can say that families are as important as they ever were.

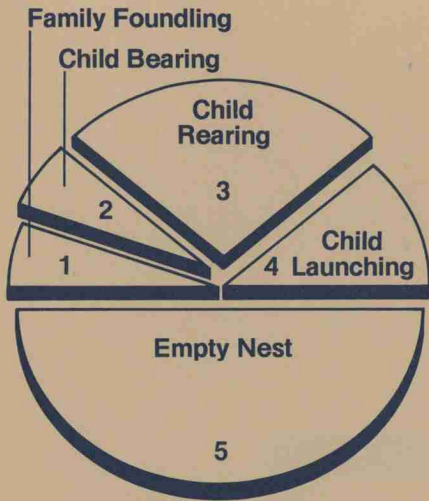
Social changes, however, sometimes force families to adapt in ways that hurt some people. Unemployment from a plant's closing and moving away may uproot many families. Families cannot always provide nurturance and support when they have little money, little education and little opportunity for improvement. We see the results in divorce, mental illness, delinquency, alcoholism and teenage pregnancy—social ills that are sometimes blamed on families.

Families share their part of the responsibility for success or failure. But the total community — government, schools and industry as well as families — works together for the success or failure of its families.

### Growth and Change in Families

One way to look at yourself and your changing family is through the concept of the family life cycle and the stages of life. If you imagine your life in the family as an on-going cycle, it looks like the drawing on the next page.

Remember that no two families will look the same when you add the individuals. Also remember that a lot of people live in very different types of families and households: stepfamilies, adoptive families, single-parent families, single adults and unmarried people.



Stages of most families can be shown as follows:

**1. Family Founding**

- Couple focuses on marriage and making a home.

**2. Child Bearing**

- Infants, toddlers and preschoolers come along quickly.
- Responsibilities of parenthood are great.

Parents learn quickly to adapt and change. They keep the infant warm, dry and fed. They also talk, smile and play with the new person, knowing that self-esteem and language development have already started.

For toddlers and preschoolers, parents talk, play, read books and ask for advice when they don't know what to do. Just when parents think they have learned how to cope, children enter a new phase of development; then dramatic changes in a child's behavior can occur in a few months.

**3. Child Rearing**

- Middle childhood and adolescence require greater time, energies and money.
- Finances, housing and community involvement needs are greater.
- Children grow toward independence.

Parents usually work hard to meet the particular needs of growing children. Then, they must begin, during the middle and late childhood periods, to see a youth moving away from the family's influence.

**4. Child Launching**

- Sometimes this stage of leaving home happens in adolescence; at other times, a person stays in the parental home for many years.
- Young adults establish their own families.

**5. Empty Nest**

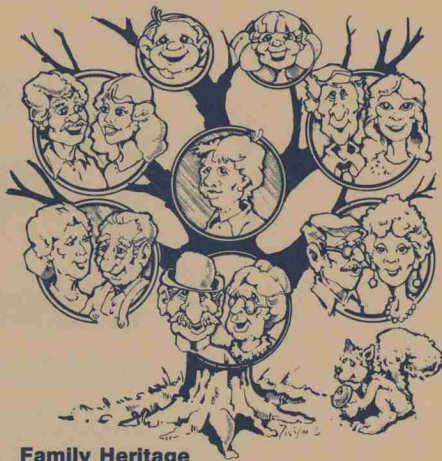
- This stage can be delayed when a young adult returns home.
- **Adulthood.** These adult children are beginning their own careers and families.

- **Middle Age.** This family deals both with older parents and children moving into adulthood.
- **Retirement years.** The joys of being grandparents help to compensate for losing contact with friends at work.

A family never ends. It goes on through generations as each family sends out its satellites during launching to insure the family's continuity.

When the original couple reaches the retirement years, the oldest child is likely to have children in middle childhood or even in adolescence.

The original couple who are parents will always be parents as long as children live. They also become grandparents and carry on their philosophy of life and child-rearing in the next generation.

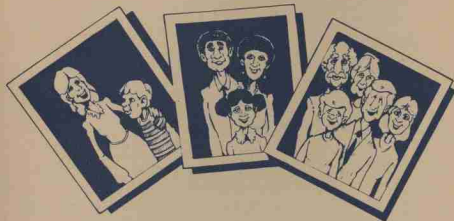


**Family Heritage**

If you prepare a genealogy of your family or study about the first families to live in your community, you will discover that it usually takes several generations to develop successful community leaders. Education must come first; then the family may show success in farming, business or industry. From such people — their children and grandchildren — will come the people who take civic responsibility and try to establish better government, schools and churches.

This is the reason why it is important to know some family history. From such knowledge, we pick up a heritage of values and purposes. Many young people who choose to go into business or a profession that has been established in the family can go much further than their parents because a lot of groundwork has already been laid.

A study of family heritage shows us clearly that it is not just the individuals who encourage communities and governments to be better for human living. Family members influence communities through their decisions about where to shop, what schools to attend, what the community needs and what is good for family living.



## Different Family Forms

Families have always reorganized themselves so they could adapt to the pressures of social change. For instance, in 1982, almost one of every five children in North Carolina under age 18 was in a one-parent family. Most of these families are headed by a woman, and many of them are poor or nearly poor.

The stepfamily is another type of family that is on the rise. The vast majority of men and women who divorce will marry again within an average of three years. Often one or both of those will already have children to bring into the new family. An estimated one of every eight children living with two parents lives with a stepparent. Stepfamilies are also formed as a result of widowhood.

Another large group of people in households in North Carolina are single adults. These single, widowed, separated and divorced adults numbered 1,873,333 in 1980. For this reason, approximately one-fourth of all households in North Carolina are classified as nonfamily households.

There are smaller numbers of families with adopted children, families with three generations under one roof, and households in which nonkin adults live. The point is that people form many types of families and households in order to meet their changing needs. Most of these different families are strong and do as well a job as the families with a husband, wife and children.



## My Future Family

While thinking about families of the past and present, it is hard not to imagine that someday you will have a family of your own. Serious courtship and marriage may be many years away, but young people are getting ready for that adventure. You practice by having successful relationships with your friends of both sexes.

You practice by knowing many of your relatives and the relatives of your friends. Like everyone else, you get caught up in a culture that you will probably help carry to another generation.

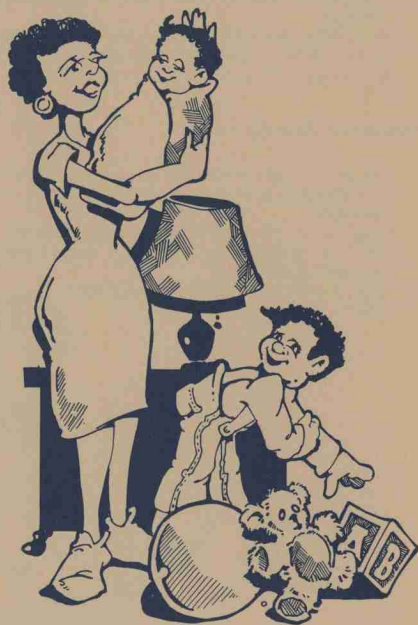
There are a few big questions which you should consider now, and seriously reflect on later, before getting married.

1. Who am I?
2. What do I expect of a marriage and family?
3. Can I speak clearly and listen when others speak?
4. Can I make a permanent commitment?
5. Can I make room for other people in my life?

Finally a few questions a person should ask when thinking about becoming a parent are:

1. Do I like children?
2. Do I handle anger easily without violence?
3. Do I express affection easily?
4. What do I know about discipline and freedom?
5. Do I have and understand a set of values and goals for my life?
6. What do I expect to gain from being a parent?
7. Do I know enough to discuss parenting questions with my partner?

A settled household which contains peace, love and enough money to be comfortable makes it easier to be a good parent.



## ACTIVITIES

### Family Functions

1. Compare what families are expected to do today with those expectations of 100 years ago.
2. Make a study of agencies and organizations in your county or community that help families. Make a list of family support services needed in your community.
3. Prepare an autobiography describing how your family has helped you to become a mature person.

### Growth and Change in Families

1. Study the different parenting styles needed at each stage in the family life cycle.
2. Prepare a family life cycle chart for your present family and project the next five years.
3. Describe ways that you are helping other members of your family to grow and change.
4. Describe some big changes in your family and how you faced them.

### Family Heritage

1. Prepare a genealogy of your family.
2. Study disease patterns across generations of your family and consider possible genetic causes.
3. Write about why you are proud of your family heritage.
4. Read about the first families that lived in your community. Do any of their descendants still live there? Do any of the first dwellings remain?

### Different Family Forms

1. Interview a young person living in a stepfamily and compare that family with your family or a family on television.
2. Study about the characteristics of strong families. What can your community do to help single-parent families be stronger?
3. Talk to a family counselor or read about grief in families.

4. Study the statistics on families in your county. How many marriages, divorces or deaths occurred in the last year?
5. Read about earlier experiments in alternate lifestyles in this and other countries.

### My Future Family

1. Interview never-married men and women concerning the pros and cons of singlehood.
2. Interview a childless couple concerning the pros and cons of having children.
3. Describe the kind of person you would need to help you rear a future family.
4. Describe some family traditions you hope will be carried on in future generations of your family.
5. Describe the relationships you expect to have with your present family 20 years from now.

### References

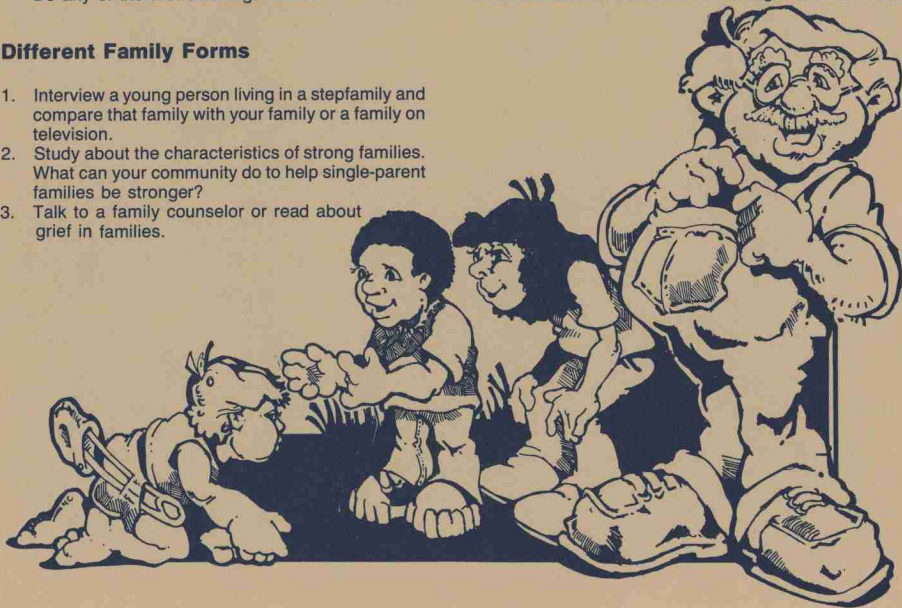
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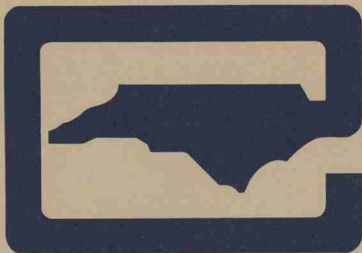
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