

NCFR FACT SHEET

- Contrary to expectation, it doesn't matter which of three kinds of couple relationship one has--volatile, avoidant, or validating--but it does matter that we give five positives for each negative. Positivity is the key to closeness.
- Kindness may be more important in family relationships than communication skills.
- Children's character and moral development may depend more on the cultivation of empathy than anything else.
- One characteristic of resilient children---those who flourish in spite of challenges---is that they have someone in their lives who is crazy about them.
- Being of service has a remarkable inoculating effect on adolescents.
- The healthiest people are not the most realistic. Research shows that the healthiest people tend to be unrealistically optimistic.
- Emphasis on self-esteem may have created more problems than it solved.
- People systematically distort information. Those who focus on problems often create greater problems. Those who focus on strengths tend to transcend many problems.
- Controlling stress is not done by avoiding it, as much as using the resources we have and managing the way we think about it.

QUALIFICATIONS OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATORS

Many groups have felt a pressing need to provide family life education for their members or patrons. When, for instance, governmental agencies in various states undertook to fund family life education, it was not clear who qualified to be a family life educator. Sometimes they resorted to using physicians and nurses--people with professional training, but no specific training in family life education. Specific training and certification for family life educators was badly needed.

Since 1985, the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) has sponsored the only national program to certify family life educators. Certified Family Life Educators (CFLE) demonstrate training and experience in ten vital areas of family life education:

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|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Families in Society | Family Resource Management |
| Internal Dynamics of Families | Parent Education and Guidance |
| Human Growth and Lifespan Development | Family Law and Public Policy |
| Human Sexuality | Ethics |
| Interpersonal Relationships | FLE Methodology |

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Knowledge is power. If we hope for family members to have satisfying and growth-promoting relationships, they need the best knowledge and skills available. Working harder while using inaccurate information will not improve families. Based on research, policy recommendations include:

- Provide training in relationships, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving at all levels of public education.
- Support the development of research based programs that may be delivered by schools, agencies, businesses, and faith communities.
- Support newspaper, radio, and television dissemination with current, well-written information about families.
- Strengthen community mental health organizations.
- Encourage businesses to support family life education in the workplace.
- Encourage policy makers to consult with family professionals on the impact of new policies on families.
- Encourage all organizations to prevent family problems through the teaching and support of relationship skill-building.

There are now 1285 active CFLEs and 72 university programs approved to train CFLEs. The Certified Family Life Educator has become a designation that is widely recognized and valued. CFLEs are prepared to teach and strengthen the next generation of families.

AUTHORS

NCFR wishes to thank the following authors for the development of this fact sheet and for their commitment to family life education:

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ABOUT NCFR

The National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) is the only professional organization focused solely on family research, policy, and practice. NCFR provides a forum for family researchers, educators, and practitioners to share in the development and dissemination of knowledge about families and family relationships, establishes professional standards, and works to promote family well-being. It is the oldest multidisciplinary family organization in the United States and is highly regarded as an authority for information on a broad range of family concerns.

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Assuring the Future: Family Life Education

THE PROFESSION OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

Family life education (FLE) is any organized effort to provide family members with information, skills, experiences or resources intended to strengthen, improve or enrich their family experience. **The objective of all family life education is to enrich and improve the quality of individual and family life.**

FLE does not impose some arbitrary definition of what constitutes a family. It emphasizes *processes* that help people develop into healthy adults, processes that help people work together in close relationships, and processes that help people bring out the best in others.

THE WORK OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATORS

Family life educators use many methods and innumerable settings to provide valuable training to people who want to be more effective family members. Here are a few examples of family life educators at work to strengthen diverse American families:

- In Houston, Texas local judges appoint offenders and divorcing couples with minor children to attend Edward Stasney's anger management and co-parenting workshops.
- In Saratoga Springs, Utah, Paula Fellingham does a "Solutions for Families" radio show providing family information to listeners, writes columns for local newspapers, and has written two family books.
- In Chattanooga, Tennessee, besides teaching premarital and marriage education, step family strengthening, fathering and parenting seminars, Julie Baumgardner works with "First Things First" to promote family-friendly workplace policies and increase community awareness of the importance of strong marriages and families through public service campaigns.
- In Arkansas, Wally Goddard is an Extension Family Life Specialist with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension. He has developed "Guiding Children Successfully," a public television series that is being broadcast nationally. He also trains county agents in every corner of Arkansas to deliver effective partnering and parenting education in their communities.

THE NEED FOR FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

We can fit our citizens for the challenges of family life or we can pay a large and enduring social cost. Families face unprecedented challenges. Stresses come from many directions and impose great burdens on all families. There was a time when most young people got family life training in informal apprenticeships with their parents.

Purpose

Families are our nation's most important resource. They provide the buffer and protection that keep children and other members safe. However, many of the great discoveries about family life are not getting to the people who need them. Only a small percentage of Americans are ever reached by family life education. There may be no arena of life in which education may be as valuable as in family life.

While there are various professions that help families in many ways such as clergy, social workers, and health care professionals, it is family life educators who incorporate a preventative and educational approach to individual and family issues. Family life educators provide the skills and knowledge to enrich individual and family life.

When considering legislation to assist the well being of families, policy makers should support family life education and the families it serves. Strong families make for a strong future.

Today, with greater challenges than ever before, we provide less training and preparation for family roles than we have in the past. It is no wonder that families feel flooded by the challenges they face.

Many people feel that they know a lot about families because they grew up in one. Yet there are big surprises in recent discoveries in family life education. Many of the processes that people assume to be helpful in families are not. **Research continues to show new and better ways to strengthen couple relationships and to raise healthy, balanced children. Examples of a few of the intriguing discoveries that need to be delivered to families include the following:**