



# OXYGEN Seminar

FOR

## Parents & Teens

PARTICIPANT GUIDE: TEEN

**STRONGER FAMILIES**  
Oxygen for Your Relationships

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I remember what not being able to breathe felt like.

It was a brisk December California morning and, as a young boy, I couldn't resist that vintage Hot Wheels bike sitting outside on the patio. My mom bundled me up in a snug jacket and off I went.

My grandparents had a big pool in the backyard, and the circumference provided a perfect racetrack. I raced around and around, with each lap pushing the limits, coming closer and closer to the edge. I could feel the adrenaline, the sheer joy of being a boy playing dangerously close to my boundaries. Each lap led to more confidence to push the envelope. Then the unthinkable happened.

I found myself upside down in the pool with my Hot Wheels several feet away on the surface. I tried to swim but my warm winter clothes, now soaking wet and weighing me down, made it impossible.

I remember thinking, "Am I going to make it?" I fought as water took the place of oxygen in my lungs. You never think about breathing until you aren't able to take in air. In this moment, that reality became painfully clear. I was drowning.

Thanks to an amazing mom who saw me, dove into the pool, and resuscitated me—and a medical team that gave me the oxygen I needed to survive—I'm here today to tell this story. I'm also here today because I fought hard to breathe.

How many families today are in that same fight—drowning, fighting for their lives? You've seen them. Maybe you are in one of them.

Through our OXYGEN Seminar, Stronger Families has seen many teens reach out, take the tools we offer, and use them to resuscitate their families. Those families can stand up today to share what they have overcome and how they created an ongoing legacy of strength and security. In a society where teens and parents are increasingly disconnected and disillusioned, Stronger Families is passionate about helping families thrive.

That's where this course comes in. We're glad you're here. We know it's because you are willing to fight for your family. You're willing to do what it takes to keep it alive and make it strong. We're here to offer help, care, and provide the resources and support you need for the journey.

For the team,



Noel Meador

Stronger Families Executive Director

**“The power of the family  
is the smallest battle  
formation to change the  
soul of a nation.”**



# INTRODUCTION

We are excited to partner with you and your parent for this exciting and life-changing program. We will provide you with tools and resources to help strengthen your family.

This program is called OXYGEN for many reasons, but mostly, like air, the principles in this program will help you have a better relationship with your parent. We'll talk throughout the course about the foundational family principles you'll learn and how they are crucial to the life of your family—just like oxygen is the building block to all of life. Oxygen is an essential component of the respiration (breathing) process; without oxygen, most organisms can't make it. It is a key catalyst in chemical reactions, and it plays a role in combustion and igniting fire that can warm, illuminate, and sustain life.

These are among the qualities and by-products of the OXYGEN element. It is our deepest desire, and highest goal, that what you encounter in this seminar will have similar effects on your friends, co-workers, and future romantic relationships.

Vitality	Breath
Combustion	Fire
Catalyst	Life
Ignition	

Prior to the seminar, you were asked to complete the OXYGEN Profile online assessments. (Codes and instructions for the assessment were included with your registration.) We trust you brought your OXYGEN Profile Report with you to the seminar. We also hope you wrote down some insights and questions as you worked through the materials, and brought those with you today as well.

Through this seminar, you will gain practical tools and resources to help you better communicate and increase connection with your family.

We also hope you'll look at other families around you and consider how you can be "family champions" to them. This distinct peer-to-peer "pay it forward" concept is one of the elements that make the OXYGEN Seminar so unique and effective.

Note: This book is written as a companion guide to the OXYGEN Parent and Teen Seminar. It's assumed that at least one parent and one teen will attend the seminar together. Therefore, the singular term "parent" is used throughout this guide. This term can refer to parent or parents, whichever applies in your case. We highly recommend that both parents attend if possible as you set up a game plan and strategy for your family.

Sincerely,  
The Stronger Families Team  
[www.strongerfamilies.com](http://www.strongerfamilies.com)

*“Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.”*

*Oscar Wilde*

*“Tell me and I forget.  
Teach me and I  
remember. Involve me  
and I learn.”*

*Benjamin Franklin*

# SESSION 1

## UNIQUELY MADE: UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING THE OXYGEN PROFILE ASSESSMENT

When you first arrived into your family—either through birth, adoption, or another route—your parent cherished you in the unique, all-encompassing way that parents love their children. This love knows no bounds and is not based on any specific quality you have or don't have. You are loved because you are theirs. And, they are yours. You are sharing this journey of life and you both play incredibly important roles for each other. Your actions, expressions and feelings impact each other's world, and neither has a say in the matter. Ahhh, the joys and trials of family.

There is nothing like a parent-child bond. From the moment you entered this world, you bonded with the person who is going to be your cheerleader, boss, and guide for many years to come. You are both gifts to each other. Your journeys are as entwined as any relationship on earth. Your survival depends on your parent. It is a crucial, key relationship.

As you have grown older and developed your own unique personality, your parent is the vehicle (literally and figuratively) that helps you get to the places you need to go. From basketball to dance to drama to Prom to helping you write essays, take late night math quizzes, and study together under dim lit lamps, and figuring out which college is best for you...you are in this together.

Now, here you are. You have found yourself in the teenage years! Your parents have raised you in the "nest," and you are preparing to fly soon. Or, if you don't make some effort, you may get pushed out! Nonetheless, change is in the air.

You are making more of your own choices, testing boundaries, and learning about yourself. Your parents are running at mock speed trying to keep up and make sense of it. It is important to note that they are not only sometimes scared of being left behind, they feel a strong degree of pressure to not let you down. Your relationship is symbiotic in many ways.

Let us explain. Do your parents want you to grow and be the best you? Of course. Do they want you to launch successfully and achieve your dreams? Definitely. Are they scared of losing the connection they have with you, and do they wonder where they will fit in your life from now on? Yes. Do they sometimes lay awake worried that they are guiding you in the right direction? Definitely. The teenage years are an exciting and uncertain time for everyone.

There may be times you don't see things the same way. You feel one way and your parents feel the other. Or, you want to do something and they don't see the value, but you feel it is important in



order to figure out this sometimes-elusive person...yourself! It is hard to explain that which you don't understand. And yet, there is so much emotion. Passion. Heart. Fear. Pressure. Uncertainty. Insecurity. And invincibility. You see all the possibility but lack the experience to recognize some of the possible roadblocks.

This, my friends, is why you have each other. You need your parents and they need you. The teen years are a giant mish mosh of unknowns, discoveries, and new journeys. All the while, your parents are trying to help and guide you. Have you ever walked around blindfolded? Have you felt that way lately? Well, your parents do.

That is where the OXYGEN Seminar comes in. You may not know the path ahead, but this profile will help you both lift the blindfold a bit and be a greater support to one another.

The fact is, you are different from your parents. You think, process, and communicate in different ways. Yet, you all have a vested interest in your success, happiness, and keeping sanity in the process.

Differences are not necessarily wrong; they are just different. Perspective is a significant key to transformation in your family. The more we understand what motivates each other, the more we can understand and empathize instead of react, criticize, and feel resentful.

Greater understanding encourages mutual appreciation and respect. These are the lifeblood of healthy bonds within the family and beyond. Mastering the balance of appreciation and respect within your family will translate into healthier relationships with future romantic partners, co-workers, teachers, and friends.

The OXYGEN Profile you took to prepare for today is a roadmap to better understand yourself. The most important relationship is your relationship with YOU. How you show up in the world is directly impacted by how well you know yourself and relate to others.

Your OXYGEN Profile results will also help you discover more about how you react, think, and feel. It will give you the ability to better understand what motivates you, how you communicate your needs, and your role in the family structure. What is behind the way you think, the things you do, and how you relate to the world? How do these things show up, react, and interact with your parents' personalities? Get ready for some new insights!

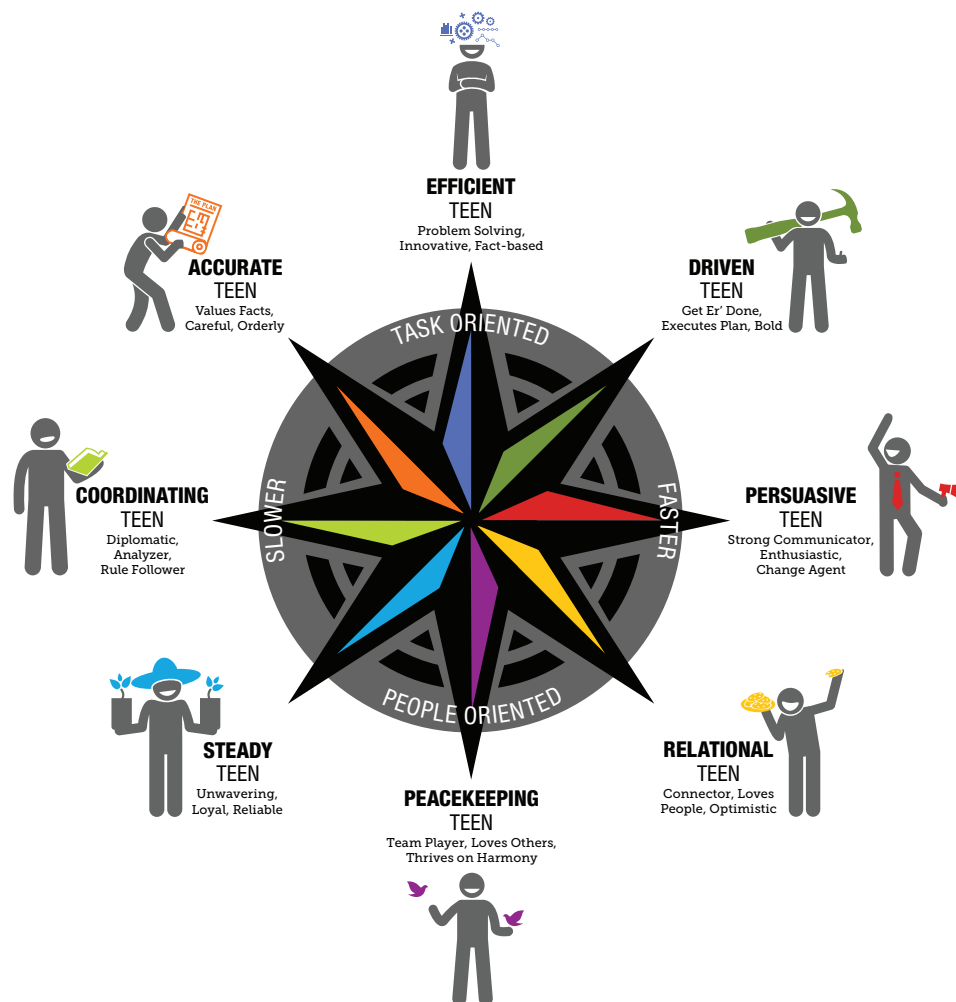
The various personalities within the profile area are as follows: Efficient, Driven, Persuasive, Relational, Peacekeeping, Steady, Coordinating, and Accurate. They all serve their own functions and offer their own strengths and growth areas.

No two people are the same. This OXYGEN Profile Assessment will help you take note about your similarities, differences, and how best to relate and motivate each other. You are in this together and want the same things: communication, freedom to be who you are, connection, and acceptance for how you are uniquely wired.

As you recognize your unique personality, it will show the role you play in your family unit and modes of communication. There are some lessons ahead. Stay open-minded and be ready to revolutionize how you communicate with your parent.

This process starts and ends with you. You will only get out of this seminar what you willingly put into the process. If you truly dig in and work to make a game plan, you will see transformation within your family. Likewise, if you don't invest in the process, you will leave today with the same struggles and feelings of being misunderstood. You decide: which is going to help better your life? We are cheering for you.

You will find our OXYGEN Profile Compass on the next page. After you completed your assessment online, your results were plotted on the compass and sent in a graph to your email. It is important to remember that this is the personality type that most resembles you. If you read through the bullet points and certain aspects don't necessarily resonate 100 percent, it is okay. Each person is unique. Take what stands out the most and study that.



This OXYGEN Profile Compass will help you better understand how you and your parent are uniquely wired, as well as the special value and strengths you each bring to your family. Enjoy!

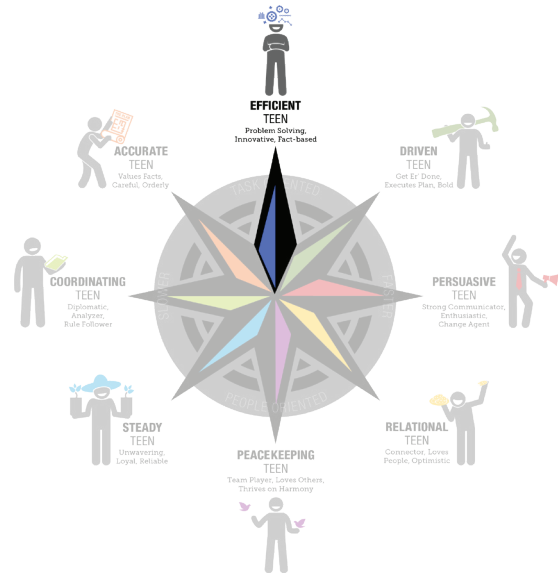
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# EFFICIENT

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Problem Solving. Innovative. Fact-Based.

- High achieving
- Logical method of decision making
- Like facts and will find solutions based on those facts
- Creative and think outside of the box
- Appreciate finding the method to the madness and will spend time to understand systems
- Strong appreciation for planning and design
- Efficient and effective, particularly when it comes to time management
- Lean toward more task focus than people focus
- They will introduce new ideas or methods, but only after thoroughly understanding what is lacking within current options
- Have a strong curiosity and need space in order to fully download their creativity
- Can be persistent if they feel they know there is a better, more effective way to execute



## UNDERSTANDING HOW TO LIVE WITH AN EFFICIENT PERSON:

Efficient people are smart individuals, and they have a large understanding about many areas. Their attention to detail makes them experts in most things. They feel passionately about their feelings and opinions. They rise to the top due to their desire to think outside the box. However, they make these discoveries only after fully understanding the picture and what isn't working. They are excellent assessors. It is important to understand their need for time to process and escape. Deviation from that path will be hard for them unless they understand the reasons WHY. They need facts to be persuaded. Efficient people don't like to be rushed, but they can move at a faster pace due to their creativity and ability to manage their time well.

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# DRIVEN

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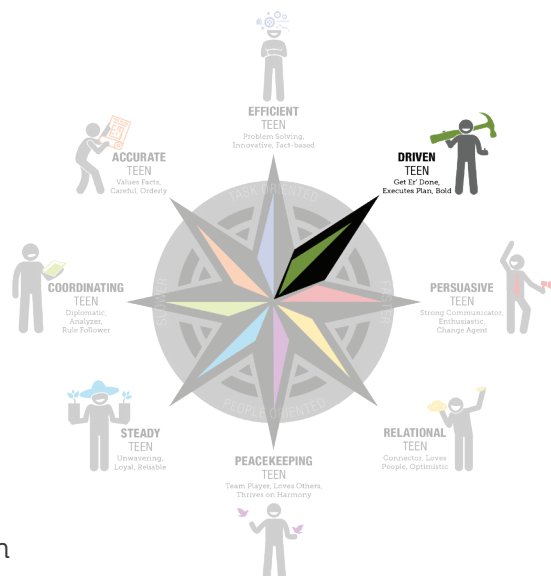
Executes the Plan. Controls Environment. Get Er' Done.

- Born leaders who love to be in charge
- Want immediate results
- Decisive and may not consult others
- Want the "Reader's Digest" length communication – what's the bottom line?
- Not afraid of pressure or confrontation

- Love a good challenge and opportunities to get things done
- Not intimidated to risk big
- Like to accomplish things
- Have a time frame that is RIGHT NOW
- Like to solve problems
- Want their directives followed

#### UNDERSTANDING HOW TO LIVE WITH A DRIVEN PERSON:

Driven people are natural leaders who take charge, get things done, and make things happen. They are bold, love a challenge, and are not afraid to take risks. They keep the family and the world moving forward with one big mountain to conquer after another. They are often visionaries who see the way things could be, should be, and they do it! At times, however, this person can leave others feeling left behind or, at their worst, run over. It is crucial that they step back and look at the big picture before they drive ahead to ensure they aren't running over anything of value. But, they will "make it happen" in whatever situation you place them in. These Driven individuals are powerful forces for change and conquering new territory.



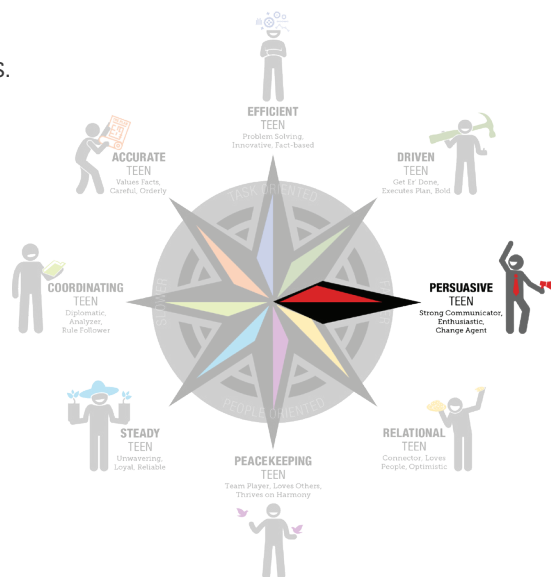

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## PERSUASIVE

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Strong Communicator. Enthusiastic. Likes to Try New Things.

- Accomplish goals by rallying people
- Outgoing
- Persuasive
- Know how to win people over
- Know their audience and how to tailor the message appropriately
- Smile often and use positive body language
- Form genuine connections
- Can be competitive
- Love new ideas and to test those ideas



#### UNDERSTANDING HOW TO LIVE WITH A PERSUASIVE PERSON:

Persuasive individuals thrive by being around people. They know how to get their point across in a persuasive and charming manner. They have a knack for seeing a situation and gauging people involved accurately. Their intuition is strong and they know how to read people and situations innately. They aren't afraid of change and love to try new things. They have high emotional intelligence and can read and react to people in an adept way that draws others to them. They want

to be heard and appreciated for their unique ideas and ability to bring about change. They love to inspire and be heard. They need family members to give them room to dream and the opportunity to share why their dreams matter in the big picture.

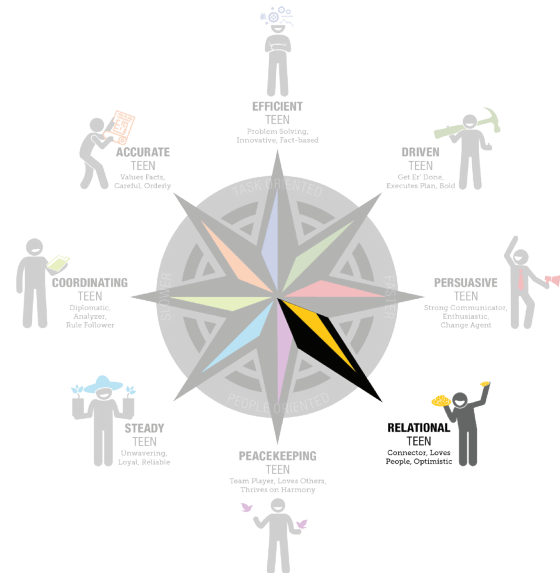
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## RELATIONAL

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The Connector. Brings Everyone Together. Lover of Life & People.

- Life of the party
- Great at motivating others to action
- Tend to avoid confrontation
- Need fun or recognition to motivate
- Optimistic and future-focused (“Trust me, everything will work out fine.”)
- Tend to avoid the fine print and details, struggle with follow through
- Are tremendous networkers (but may not know anyone’s last name)
- Love the spotlight and entertaining others
- Prefer choices and options, not limitations
- Don’t like the word “boundaries;” they are an open book and think everyone else should be the same
- Have a strong desire to be liked and appreciated by others
- Love to cheerlead others and causes they believe in
- Are doers and love to talk
- Want to be involved in decision making and recognized for the role they play
- Enjoy humor and fun activities
- Can have 25 “best friends”



### UNDERSTANDING HOW TO LIVE WITH A RELATIONAL PERSON:

Relational people are the life of the party. They come into a home and make it fun, exciting, and rich with laughter and love. They strongly value connection and this can be seen in all that they do. They mix well with many different people and live to connect and network. They are always thinking of creative ways to do things and choose to see beyond limitation. They love to entertain others and be in the spotlight. They also greatly appreciate having choices. Relational individuals are spontaneous, fun-loving, and are full of ideas and emotion! They struggle to see the need for structure and will often have an environment that is cluttered but filled with items of meaning. This person does well to remember that connection and network are conduits to a bigger picture. Sometimes, it is easy for a relational person to see the fun and not realize there are necessary components to ensure the system works well for everyone.

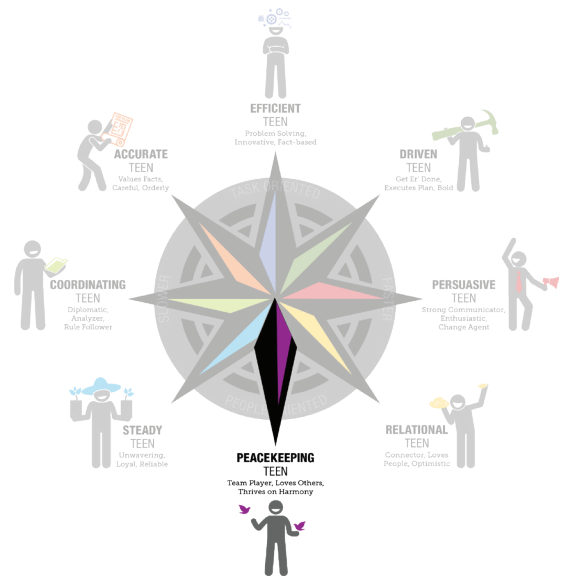
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# PEACEKEEPING

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Team Player. Loves to Serve Others. Thrives in Harmony.

- Often make excellent coaches and counselors
- Appreciate teamwork
- Like to have security in families
- Patient and easygoing
- Steady and secure and appreciate systems
- People oriented
- Loyal and loves to support
- Great at coming alongside and assisting in someone else's vision
- Do not like conflict or dysfunction



## UNDERSTANDING HOW TO LIVE WITH A

### Peacekeeping PERSON:

Peacekeeping people enjoy teaming with their loved ones and supporting them in any way they can. They are the ultimate supporters. They will serve their family endlessly and make sure everyone feels included. They love harmony and will do whatever it takes to accomplish this goal. They often craft excellent home environments due to their ability to focus on people and connection and on creating an environment that is peace-inspiring. They get along well with most people and are valued for their ability to bring security and systems to any situation. Be careful not to move too fast without clear communication and give them time to understand any necessary change. They are not fans of conflict, and they will avoid it at all costs because it uproots the harmony they crave. They are afraid of hurting others. They highly value security in their family life.

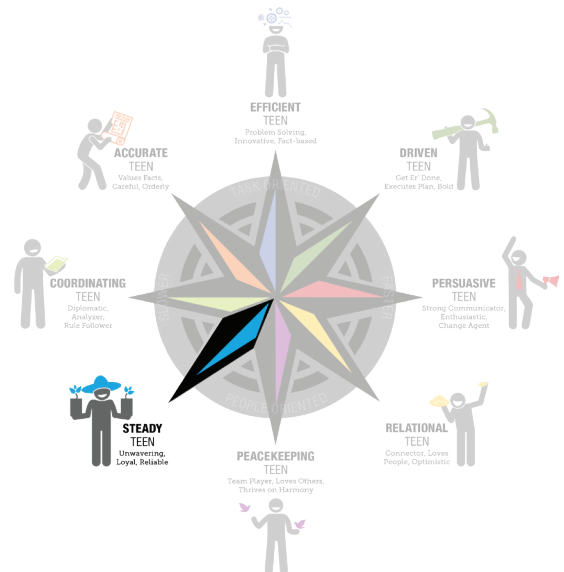
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# STEADY

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Steadfast. Loyal. Reliable. Gets Along with Everyone.

- Above all, are LOYAL; always willing to support
- “Natural” experts at families – generally have a few close friends with deep, close families
- Have hearts full of love, understanding, and compassion
- Do not like change and will react strongly to sudden changes
- Tend to avoid confrontation at all costs
- Are the very definition of the word “adaptable”
- Hold stubbornly to what they feel is right
- Do not like to be put on the spot and are happy for



others to have the spotlight

- Can be indecisive – don't like to make decisions, especially quick ones
- Uncomfortable expressing anger and may repress
- Can absorb intense emotional pain and still remain committed; may hold grudges
- Are great listeners, encouragers, and empathizers
- Can tend to procrastinate
- Similar to a duck treading water, they get a lot done with appearing to exert little effort
- Soft in attitude and action but possess great internal courage and strength
- Have a deep need to please others and are profoundly affected by what others think of them; they derive their value from the love and approval of others

#### UNDERSTANDING HOW TO LIVE WITH A STEADY PERSON:

Steady individuals are warm, loving, caring people. They place a high value on loyalty and are deeply relational. Once you are in their circle, it takes a lot to ever lose your place. If you are hurting, they will hurt with you. If you are happy, they are happy. They avoid fighting and the tension it creates. They want the home, and everyone in it, to be peaceful. They live to support others. While they do not feel a need to control, they do appreciate being valued for their viewpoint. A steady person struggles when they are in a family with someone who is always on the move or wants to put new systems into place. They will arrive at the destination more slowly but when they show up, they show up wholeheartedly. They need time to process change and clear explanations as to the reason behind the changes.

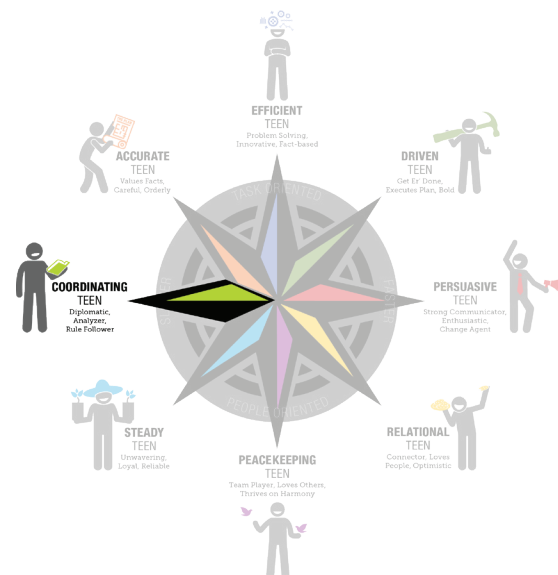
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## COORDINATING

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Diplomatic. Loves to Analyze. Rule Follower.

- Accuracy is very important
- Devoted to the people and causes they believe in
- Like a clear set of rules and guidelines to follow
- Task oriented and do not like to be rushed
- Appreciate people and are able to create order and place people in the appropriate roles
- Standards are very important and always to be followed
- Focused on facts and data, not feelings
- Due to their ability to support others and create structure, they love to inspire cooperation in a family or group



#### UNDERSTANDING HOW TO LIVE WITH A COORDINATING PERSON:

Coordinating people like structure and standards to follow. They will have the house orderly and everyone will know his/her role. They are busy and get a lot done with ease because they naturally see how to make things work together. They study situations and need time to process before taking

action. Due to their immense respect for the facts, they excel at organization and negotiation because they can speak to the details and are great at comparing data.

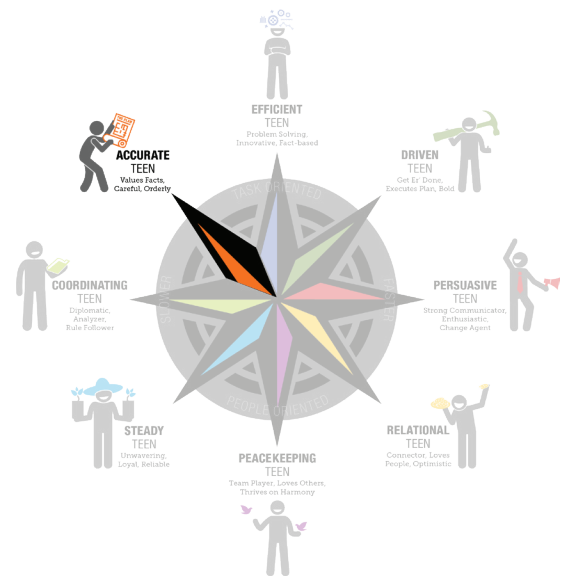
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## ACCURATE

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No Detail is Missed. There is a “Right” Way. Values Facts & Expertise.

- Keep a closed lid on their emotions – they feel they must keep emotions contained
- Actually read the instruction manuals and then alphabetically file them
- Like to make careful and intentional decisions
- Like to use their critical thinking skills to solve problems
- Like the motto “Do it right the first time”
- Freeze up during confrontations and often turn anger inward
- Tend to cite facts, statistics, authorities, and tradition
- Tend to focus on the past
- Like maps, charts, organization
- Provide great quality control
- Have deep feelings for those they love, although they are uncomfortable showing them
- Have a high standard and like consistency and rules
- Slow down under pressure
- Need a non-critical atmosphere to do their best work; can tend to be very sensitive to any critique
- Like to choose their words carefully
- Expect people to conform



### UNDERSTANDING HOW TO LIVE WITH AN ACCURATE PERSON:

Accurate individuals are precise, accurate, thorough, organized, and give great attention to detail. Order is of high value to them. There is a right and a wrong way to do things, and they want to do everything right. Their closets tend to be immaculate, their kitchens spotless, their dresser drawers perfectly organized. When they take on a project, they are meticulous in completing it because they want it to be perfect. They like to make sure things stay “on track.” The more lists and plans you give them, the more their hearts soar. They need structure to thrive.

Now that you understand your OXYGEN Profile styles and how your personality may impact your parent, let’s begin setting up a road map to better understand your family.



# BREAKOUT EXERCISE:

## Understanding the eight different styles and how they impact your family

The OXYGEN Profile is designed to help you better interact with your parent(s) and ask important questions about your role in your family. Answer the questions below to get started on your journey to better understanding yourself and your parent(s).

Choose three statements in particular that cause you to say to yourself, "That's me!"

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

List three things about yourself that you think your parent most appreciates:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Write down specific examples of when you showed these qualities in your family. Ask your parent to give you feedback about them. How did they feel in that moment?

List three words or sentences that describe the way you tend to communicate with others:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## KEYS TO MOTIVATING

Please turn to the "Keys to Motivating" section of your report.

Read and list four motivations (desires) that most resonate with you after reading this section.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

In your family, what tends to motivate you the most? Be honest and draw from the items in this section if needed.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

What would be helpful for your parent to know about your top Key to Motivating?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## THE THREE Rs: RESPOND, RELATE, REINFORCE

The next step to mapping your OXYGEN Profile is to identify the "Three Rs" of your parent. Understanding how to better respond, relate, and reinforce will help you communicate with one another.

Please note: as a child, it is not ever your job to "parent" your parent or take responsibility for their behaviors. Please use the "Reinforce" tips as a guide to offer encouragement and strengthen empathy within your relationship. See the following pages for examples.

The Three Rs include:

1. How to RESPOND to
2. How to RELATE to
3. How to REINFORCE

#### How to Respond to Efficient Parents

- Make sure your response is measured and logical
- Be as succinct and efficient as possible
- Speak to the situation or need using fact-based information

#### How to Relate to Efficient Parents

- Use facts and data when seeking to solve a problem; this is what they respect
- Help them research areas of interest or invite them to help you research areas for you (i.e. colleges, sports, events to attend)
- Appreciate their need to go slowly and help them understand the full picture
- Dream with them and help them look for “new” solutions that may help in your relationship, around the house, or in the family system

#### How to Reinforce Efficient Parents

- Encourage them to help you create or think outside the box
- Value their innovation and time management; they have a strong need for both
- Work alongside them in anything home or family related; lean into their unique ability to create methods that make sense and will be positive for your family



### **EFFICIENT PARENT**

**Problem Solving,  
Innovative, Fact-based**

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#### How to Respond to Driven Parents

- Be direct and concise
- Focus on actions and goals
- Strongly communicate your need to talk with them and ask for their full attention

#### How to Relate to Driven Parents

- Be brief and to the point
- Explain “how to achieve goals”
- Allow them time to consider your ideas; don’t be hurt if they initially disagree. Be tenacious in being heard.



### **DRIVEN PARENT**

**Get Er’ Done,  
Executes Plan, Bold**

## How to Reinforce Driven Parents

- Offer appreciation – this is their greatest need
  - Give them the bottom-line when you are making requests of them
  - Recognize their need to feel in control but also share your need for their trust and your own freedom
- 

## How to Respond to Persuasive Parents

- Show genuine interest in what they are sharing
- Ask questions often
- Engage with their ideas and be a part of “trying” the things they value

## How to Relate to Persuasive Parents

- Show openness and smile
- Be enthusiastic about the things that matter to them
- Make sure you are tuned in when they are engaged with you; they will notice

## How to Reinforce Persuasive Parents

- Show a strong appreciation for their ability to connect
  - Verbalize your approval of them often
  - Know that they like to move fast and have a lot of people interaction; join them in environments where they can have influence and make a difference; pick something fun to do together
- 

## How to Respond to Relational Parents

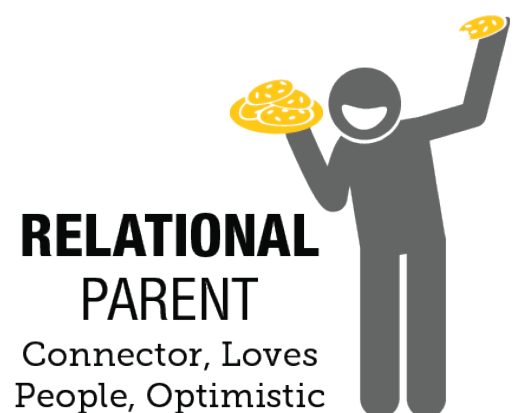
- Be friendly and positive
- Allow for informal dialogue
- Allow time for stimulating and fun activities

## How to Relate to Relational Parents

- Use friendly voice tones
- Allow time for them to verbalize their feelings
- Transfer talk to an action plan
- Make the action plan fun and engaging

## How to Reinforce Relational Parents

- Offer positive encouragement and incentives for taking on tasks
- Help them organize the action plan
- Offer recognition and appreciation for their contributions



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## How to Respond to Peacekeeping Parents

- Give them a purpose in serving others
- Tell them often how much you appreciate their love and support
- Serve them; they often times give much of themselves and will appreciate you doing small things for them

## How to Relate to Peacekeeping Parents

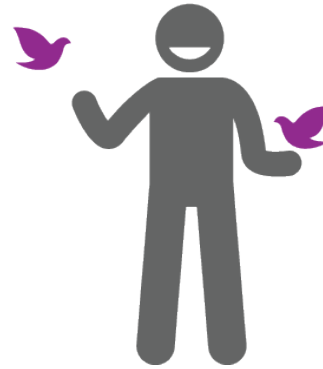
- Speak in a non-threatening, peaceful tone
- Remind them often of the value they bring to you and your family; what you think matters greatly to them
- Talk things through quickly and do not let issues become stagnant; they are extremely loyal but can hold grudges if they feel they are not respected or heard

## How to Reinforce Peacekeeping Parents

- Help them “keep the peace” in any way possible; when dealing with an issue focus, on it being external and try to not make it personal (use “I” statements)
- Create opportunities for them to connect with people they love
- Show appreciation for their systems and regularly point out how much you appreciate them

# PEACEKEEPING PARENT

Team Player, Loves Others,  
Thrives on Harmony



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## How to Respond to Steady Parents

- Be non-threatening and patient
- Allow time to process and adjust to change
- Help keep their environment as peaceful as possible

## How to Relate to Steady Parents

- Use friendly tones when instructing
- Give personal, nonverbal acceptance and assurances
- Allow time to process information

## How to Reinforce Steady Parents

- Repeat any instructions
- Provide hands-on reinforcement
- Be patient in allowing time to take ownership



# STEADY PARENT

Unwavering,  
Loyal, Reliable

---

## How to Respond to Coordinating Parents

- Expect them to multi-task
- Avoid unneeded surprises and give fair warnings
- Cooperate with them as a team

## How to Relate to Coordinating Parents

- Provide facts and data for any decisions in which you would like them to participate
- Give them time to process
- Do not ask them to compromise their firmly held beliefs without laying out strong reasons for change

## How to Reinforce Coordinating Parents

- Request their help and advice when needed
- Affirm them often, as they can be sensitive; they strongly value their beliefs and the opinions of those they love
- Recognize their need to accomplish tasks and team with them on their “to do” lists



**COORDINATING  
PARENT**  
Diplomatic,  
Analyzer,  
Rule Follower

---

## How to Respond to Accurate Parents

- Be specific and accurate
- Make allowance for initial response to be cautious and/or negative
- Allow freedom to ask questions

## How to Relate to Accurate Parents

- Answer questions in a patient and persistent manner
- Mix accurate information with assurances
- Allow time to validate information

## How to Reinforce Accurate Parents

- Provide a step-by-step approach to a goal
- Provide reassurance of support
- Give permission to validate data with third parties



**ACCURATE  
PARENT**  
Values Facts,  
Careful, Orderly



## ACTION PLAN

As you learn to understand and relate to one another based on your profile and your “three Rs,” you both need to remember something VERY important. These principles are meant to help you understand, love, and serve one another. They are not for the purpose of manipulating the other person to accommodate you, but rather to help you learn to modify your own behaviors to accommodate your parent.

---

## CORE AND ADAPTED STYLE

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When you each focus on changing yourself for the better, the results will be transformational. We’ll talk more about that in a later session. But for now, let’s simply keep in mind that being other-centered in this process is the only way to put more OXYGEN back into your family. If applied in the right spirit and with intentionality, these tools can revolutionize your family. It is up to you.

During your breakout session, you have shared observations, written down your motivations, learned about your own and your parent’s communication styles, and have developed a plan to relate, respond, and reinforce each other. Well done!

Now, please take the time to fill out the following questions to complete your Profile. We are almost done with this section.

Please turn to the “Core and Adapted Style” and the “How Are You Having to Adapt?” sections of your report.

---

### Core and adapted style — How are you having to adapt?

**CORE=WHO YOU ARE AND YOUR STRENGTHS**

**ADAPTED=THE WAYS IN WHICH YOU ARE ADAPTING TO MAKE YOUR FAMILY WORK**

---

Refer to the Natural and Adapted Styles. These side-by-side comparisons give you a visual picture of the degree to which you are adapting your core style to best work with your parent. Adapting to the relational needs of your parent is crucial to maintain harmony and unity in your family, no matter how many differences exist.

If your core style is quite different than your parent's style (for example, you are a Driven Teen and your parent is an Accurate Parent), it is great because you bring different strengths to the family. However, since you naturally solve problems, show affection, communicate verbally and non-verbally differently, it is important that you understand how to best translate your needs and desires to your parent in his/her own language.

You may have to adjust or adapt your behaviors to help you connect in your family environment. The degree to which you adapt, and your willingness to shift, can create either peace or conflict and stress in your home.

If you feel the need to be someone totally different within your family unit than who you are in your "Core" style, it can cause increased frustrations and stress in you and your family.

The way you deal with problems, people, tasks, and pressure will affect every area of your life, especially your home. The main objective of this section is to have you assess how you blend your differences and celebrate each other's strengths as a family unit.

In your "How Are You Having to Adapt?" section, locate and list three statements that are the EASIEST adaptations to make in your family.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Locate and list the three statements that take the most energy for you—the adaptations that may be the HARDEST for you to make on a consistent basis at home.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Looking at your Core and Adapted Styles, in which area are you having to adapt the most? Does this indicate that you are adapting just to SURVIVE or keep the peace in your family? Or are your adaptations helping you SUCCEED and thrive in your family? List some thoughts and questions below and continue the conversation with your parent about this topic.

1. \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Turn to the Family Strengths section of your report and, working with your parent, identify your top 3 shared strengths and your top 3 goals to help you blend your differences.

SHARED STRENGTH

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

TOP FAMILY GOAL

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Take some time to reflect on your report with your parent. Pay special attention to your shared strengths and the goals you have set to blend your differences. Write down three specific things you appreciate most about your parent, and share them with him or her today. These can include specific character traits, talents, emotions, or values.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



FAMILY BUILDING IDEA:

Take a 3x5" card and write your top 3 motivators and your top 3 family goals on it. Keep the card on your wall or bathroom mirror. Every reminder to show kindness and seek understanding is a step toward unity and strength for your family.

# SESSION 2

## GREAT COMMUNICATION: LOVE, RESPECT, AND EMPATHY

The problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished.  
—George Bernard Shaw



In the last chapter, we looked at how each of you are uniquely wired.

You know by now that strong relationships take work to develop and maintain. The good news is that your efforts to understand and relate to your parent will pay off.

Effective communication is more than just words; many times, our actions communicate more poignantly. Values and commitment should be followed with action. Good communication includes many things:



- Talking
- Listening
- Freely expressing thoughts, opinions, and feelings
- Honestly and respectfully giving and receiving feedback
- Understanding and being understood
- Demonstrating selfless love
- Recognizing and receiving expressions of love and affection

Several factors significantly affect a family's ability to communicate and give and receive expressions of love. The three most important factors: personality, patterns, and past.

Personality is the basic hardwiring of everyone at his or her core. Patterns are the established skill set each has developed (or may possibly be lacking) that enables him/her to speak and listen effectively. The third factor is the past—the way each person is shaped by his or her early childhood.

We talked about personality in the last chapter. In this session of OXYGEN, we're going to look at how your patterns and your past contribute to your communication style—and how you can overcome both to enhance communication and trust in your family.

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## DEVELOPING EMPATHY

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If you do not know a great deal about how your parent was raised, now is a great time to learn. You may not always like how your parent behaves under stress or in a crisis. But, when you understand why he or she is reacting or behaving in a certain way, you can better communicate with him or her to find a solution. Many times, these reactions are directly related to how they were raised or saw their parents handle life and situations.

Note: To really understand someone's patterns and past, you need to step back from the urge to judge and criticize. Instead, learn to empathize.

We'll say it again, just for emphasis: "EMPATHIZE, not CRITICIZE!"

The difference between sympathy and empathy is this: sympathy=compassion for someone's situation; empathy=understanding and relating to someone's emotions and feelings—reaching inside yourself to feel what the other person is feeling. Relate their emotion to a time you, too, have experienced that same emotion and meet them there.

em·pa·thy

noun \em-pa-thē\

1: the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another without having the feelings, thoughts and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.

---

## EMPATHIZING WITH YOUR PARENT'S ROOTS AND UNDERSTANDING YOUR OWN

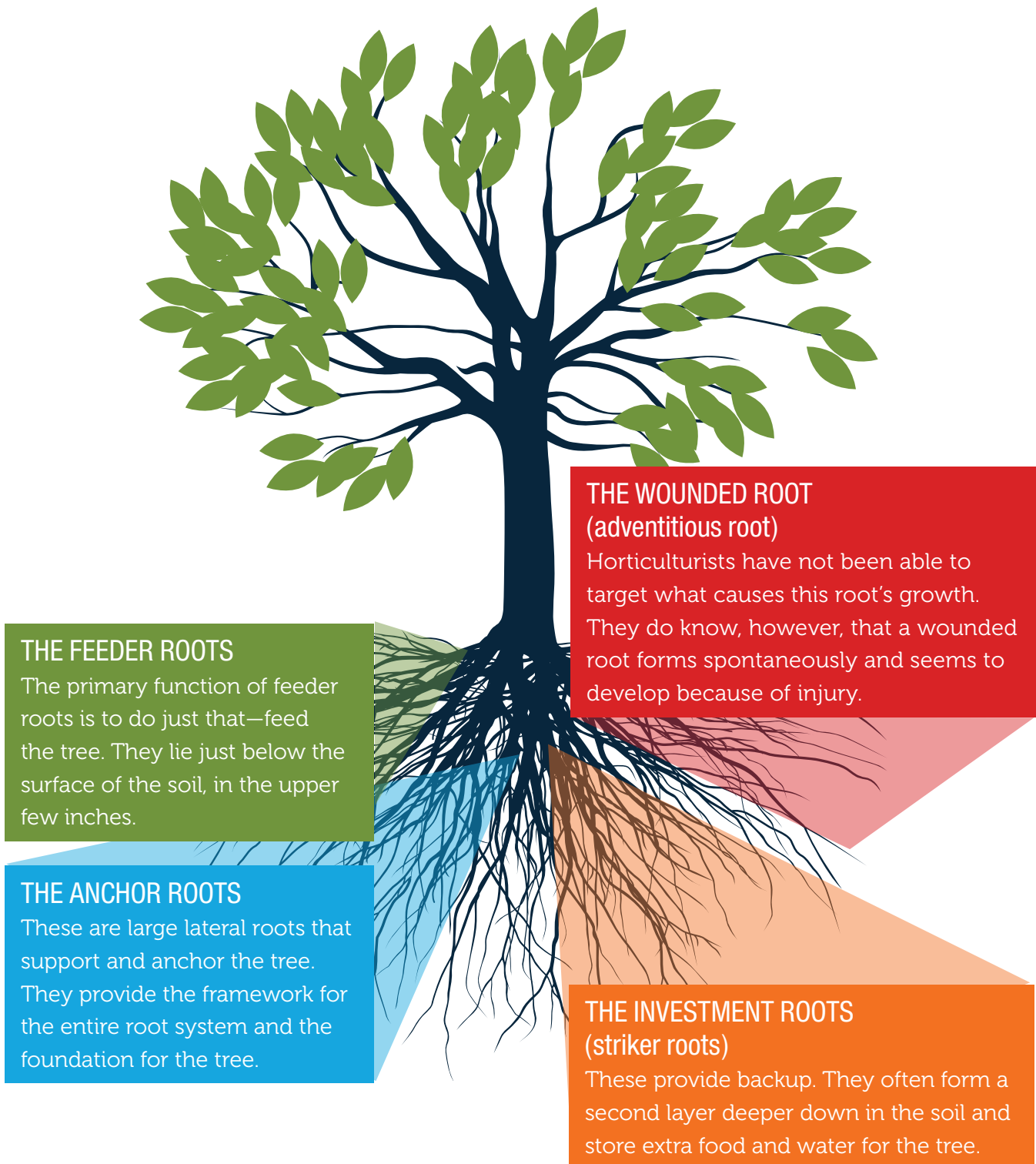
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Developing an understanding of someone's past—whether your own or that of your parent—is like studying the root system of a tree. By looking at a majestic tree, you can sense its history and strength. The truly amazing part, however, is the area you can't see: its root system.

A tree's roots transfer moisture, minerals, and oxygen, bringing life to the tree. Similarly, we are all impacted by our personal root system. Values, modes of communication, safety and security, and

love (or lack of love) in our childhood and developmental years all affect our current relationships.

So, in this section of *OXYGEN*, welcome to Horticulture 101! Let's take this analogy of a tree's root system and apply it to a family. There are many different kinds of tree roots, but for our purposes, we will look at four main types. These help us understand the way we were imprinted as children to receive and respond to love.



## THE ROOTS



The **Feeder Roots** in your family result from seeds you have sown into your relationship. These are the values and communication patterns/behaviors you have accumulated and incorporated into your life and relationships, based on such things as your personality, heart motivation, and ability to empathize. These give your relationship the oxygen it needs and are what continues to spur growth in your family.



The **Anchor Roots** in your family are how YOU came to be. These are your foundation and family of origin—your learned relationship patterns.

As we all know, past and patterns vary greatly for each person. Some people may have had a stable, loving childhood; others may have experienced a volatile environment where anger, lack of stability, and, for some, even abuse occurred. No matter what your upbringing, it is important to realize those experiences impacted your life and are impacting your family today. Every family has specific modes of operation and its own unique functions and dysfunctions. Understand that these roots do affect your family now.



**Investment Roots** are secondary roots that provide extra support and nutrients. For someone who did not have the easiest of childhoods, lots of change or a large degree of dysfunction in their family system, Investment Roots are crucial to the success. Taking time to work through past hurts and be present in the moment will help you be even more effective in your current relationships. The more we understand about where we have come from, the better perspective we have.



This brings us to the most amazing and exciting part of the tree root system: the **Wounded Root** (i.e., adventitious root). Horticulturists claim that these roots grow due to injury in the root system. We have all heard the old saying, “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger;” apparently trees feel the same way. They turn their injury into strength. This is also a key to creating the lasting relationship we want and deserve.



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## REFLECTING ON YOUR ROOTS

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So, you may ask, “My early childhood wasn’t easy...does that mean I can’t have a good family today or in the future?” Absolutely not! You can change old patterns and choose to grow new roots: Investment Roots. One way to increase your Investment Roots is to spend time looking at the patterns and experiences of your upbringing and the modes of communication used in your household. Spend some time thinking through your household communication. What type of communication makes you feel encouraged? What kind of communication is hard for you and makes you pull away or shut down? What is it that makes you feel this way?

You can bring about change and make new patterns in your family. The choices you make today will impact who you choose for a spouse as well as the kind of family you will have in the future. That is the reason you are here today. You have already started to grow, establish new roots by learning more about each other, and discover what is working and doesn’t work—good for you!

When you buy a new car, do you defer maintenance, not change its oil or wash it for 18 years and still expect it to look gleaming new and run like a champ? No chance. That thing would be worse for wear and probably stop running well much sooner than 18 years. So, why do we sometimes invest more in our car than we do our most valuable relationships? If we haven’t tuned up, shined the tires, and fixed what is broken, we will never get where we want to go. Identifying childhood wounds and generational behaviors is paramount to making new and fresh change in your family. Just because it was the “way it was done” doesn’t make it right or healthy. The definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

Just say NO to insanity.

---

## CONNECTING AND UNDERSTANDING

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Empathy allows us not just to feel, heard but to feel known. To know and be known—and fully accepted—is the deepest and truest sense of belonging. This is the root of true bonding and deep trust.

To truly understand and connect with someone, you must first learn how to listen. Most of us tend to be passive listeners, picking up only those things that have some direct bearing on “me” rather than listening to what the other person is actually saying. Stephen Covey, author of [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#), states that to be an effective communicator, “First seek to understand, and then to be understood.”

As poor listeners, we tend to interrupt, wait for openings to make a counter point, and think about what we will say when the other person finishes talking. (Does this sound familiar?) Listening with empathy is a learned skill, not something we develop automatically. Most of us tend to add our own agenda to what is said or change its meaning altogether. But when we do this, we are not offering the other

person the courtesy of truly listening to what he/she has to say. This goes back to the “it’s all about me” problem mentioned earlier. We all suffer from it. The key is learning to conquer it for the best interest of our parents, siblings, friends, and romantic partners, too.

It’s been said that the greatest impediment to good listening is our self-interest and self-protective mechanisms. So, here’s an exercise to help with that: instead of listening for openings to get your own point across, be willing to listen just to understand what your parent thinks, means, and feels—NOT to judge, rebut, advise, or contradict.

When you listen to your parent, make a choice to silence your critical voice and focus entirely on what your parent is trying to tell you. You may find yourself hearing things you never allowed yourself to hear before. Learn to identify with what your parent is feeling, even if it’s not your own experience. And, they should do the same for you. That’s part of good communication.

## STUCK?

Good communication flows from the Familylogue model. But if you’ve not communicated this way before, it may feel unnatural at first.

Here is an example of an effective Familylogue between Kate and Kevin:

Kevin “Hey, Mom, can we sit down and talk for a few minutes tonight?”

Kate “Sure; I actually have time right now. What’s up?”

Kevin “Well, I’ve been putting in a lot of time and effort at school and here at home. I’m getting good grades and keeping up my chores. But I feel like I only hear about what I’m not doing right.”

Kate “I think you are saying that you feel like I am taking you for granted and only noticing when you step out of line.”

Kevin “Yes, and it hurts to be told what I’m doing wrong without noticing what I’m doing right.”

Kate “I understand. I would feel that way, too. I’ll try to do better, and I appreciate that you’ve kept your room clean and walked the dog every day this week!”

Kevin “No problem. Somebody has to! So what’s going on with you?”

(NOW ITS KATE’S TURN TO SHARE)

Kate “Well, I’m heading into a busy phase with work. I’ve taken on a new project, and I’ll be traveling a bit more. I’m worried that I may not have enough time to help you with your Senior Project at school.”

Kevin “Okay, I’m glad you let me know. What I heard you say is that you’re worried about not being able to supervise my project. I’m glad that you want to help, but you know I can handle it on my own, right? Don’t you have confidence in me?”



Kate "Of course. I didn't mean it that way. I meant that I want to support you. Can we make a plan? Can we put your Senior Project deadlines on the family calendar so that I can stay in the loop? And I know you've got it handled, but if you run into a snag, your dad and I are here for you."

Kevin "Okay, well, thanks. Congratulations on your new project at work. And yes, I can write down the deadlines. I think I'm going to pick Global Currencies as my topic."

Kate "That's a great topic—sounds interesting! I can't wait to hear more about it once you get going. And it might come in handy for that trip abroad we've been planning."

## USING THE FAMILYLOGUE

The "Familylogue" technique enables you to share the meaning of what you heard and validate that you HEARD what the person speaking to you MEANT. There are three reasons you might want to have a Familylogue:

- You want to be listened to and understood.
- You are upset about something and want to discuss it with your parent. You want to discuss a topic you think might be "touchy."
- Ask your parent to have a Familylogue.

If your parent declines, set a time and reschedule; do not let more than 24 hours pass by if possible.

---

## STEP 1: MIRRORING (THE LISTENING LEVEL)

---

The person who raised the issue begins as the Speaker by stating the message as simply as possible. Speak in SHORT sentences so your parent can remember everything you said. Speak using "I" statements. Be as direct and concise as possible. The Listener's job is to LISTEN! The Listener will have an opportunity to be the Speaker later on. After a message is given, the Listener responds using a two-part mirroring process:

- a. "What I heard you say is..."
- b. "Was that correct?"

The Listener then asks, "Is there more?"

---

## STEP 2: VALIDATION (THE THOUGHT LEVEL)

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*Listener: Thank the Speaker for sharing and validate the Speaker through an appropriate statement.*

Validation is *NOT* an agreement. It is simply letting the Speaker know that what was just communicated was heard, understood, and has value.

### EXAMPLES OF VALIDATION

*I can understand how you would think that...*

*I see why that bothers you...*

*You made a very good point about...*

*I would probably be upset, too, if that had happened to me...*

---

## STEP 3: EMPATHY (THE FEELING LEVEL)

---

Listener: Express empathy to the Speaker (putting yourself in his/her shoes) by reflecting and personally relating to what the Speaker has expressed. Again, this is not an agreement, but rather, it allows the Speaker to feel related to.

### WAYS TO COMMUNICATE EMPATHY

*I can imagine you might be feeling/might have felt...*

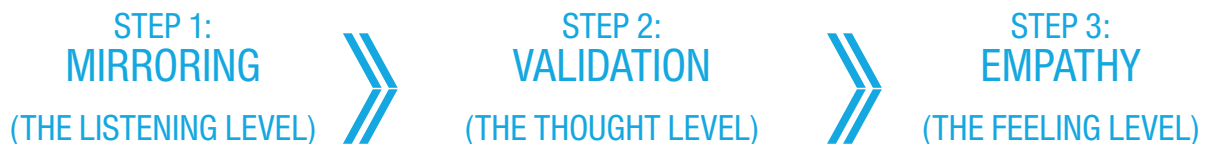
*When you experience that, I hear you saying you feel...*

*I understand you feel... It sounds as if you feel...*

*If I were in your shoes, I might feel...Do you feel like that?*

Make some guesses as to what the Speaker is or was feeling. Try to identify feelings in one word (e.g., angry, confused, sad, upset). If your guess entails more than one word, it is probably a thought, not a feeling. For example, "You feel you don't want to go with me", is a thought and not a feeling. Don't be overconfident in your empathy. One never knows for sure what another person is feeling! It's always wise (and humble and respectful) to check out your guesses by saying, "Is that what you are/were feeling?"

The goal is for the Listener to reflect and relate personally to the Speaker's message, thoughts, and feelings. When the Speaker's complete message is transmitted and understood, the process is reversed. The Listener has the opportunity to be the Speaker, and it is the Speaker's turn to be the Listener.



Never assume you know how the other person is feeling or what they are thinking. Ask for clarification if you find yourself mentally or verbally "filling in blanks." Important: Keep all deflecting modes of communication out of the equation. Guard against sarcasm, interruption, rolling eyes...the goal is to find mutual understanding. As you can see, Kate and Kevin took a

frustrating situation and made their communication come full circle by sharing, listening, and empathizing with each other.

In the end, a deeper issue was revealed. Kate didn't realize that Kevin felt underappreciated. Kevin didn't realize that his mother was stressed about work and her schedule. At the end of their conversation, they had both learned something important about the other person. This is the beauty of the Familylogue!

#### IMPORTANT TIPS FOR USING THE FAMILYLOGUE MODEL:

- Talk about yourself (your experiences, and your feelings) only.
- Use "I" rather than "you" statements (i.e., "I feel like I'm not important when you don't ask my opinion sometimes." rather than "You never ask my opinion.")
- If the Listener's response or body language is making you uncomfortable, speak up honestly about what you are seeing and how it makes you feel. For example, "I'm not feeling safe because your tone of voice sounds angry and defensive."
- If you start to feel angry, excuse yourself for a "time-out." Don't resort to name-calling or accusing. This is never acceptable in any communication. Learn to walk away and compose yourself if you feel those emotions rising in you. Use feeling words to help explain your experience. (See the Appendix for a list of feeling words you might use.) Time-out is not a walk out. It is taking a minute to get some water or go to the restroom. You circle back and don't defer reaching a solution. It is very important how you call a Time-out as well. Be aware of body language. A great way to say is, "I need some time to process, can we take a quick break?"

If you're the Listener, your job is to not speak and to open your heart and your ears! Don't defend yourself, argue, problem-solve, or explain. You don't have to agree. You just have to listen.

Here are some ways to help as you LISTEN and give space for healthy communication:

- **Watch your body language.** Lean in toward the speaker. Don't sigh, cross your arms, or roll your eyes. Be respectful in tone and appearance. Maintain eye contact with the Speaker and affirm his or her efforts to communicate with you by nodding and showing openness.
- **Focus on the Speaker's experiences and feelings, not yours.** If something comes to mind that you have a question about, write it down quickly. Do not interrupt and try to keep eye contact. It is important to make short statements for this reason. It helps the Listener to interpret what you are saying.
- **Don't be defensive.** When you're defensive, you don't listen well. Remember the Speaker is his or her own person with a right to his/her own opinions and feelings. Your sole job is to seek to understand what they are saying.

- **Let the Speaker know that his or her feelings are very important to you by translating back what they shared.** If you sense hesitancy, when it is your turn to repeat back. Say, "I want you to know what you think and feel are important to me."
- **Never interrupt.** This is a big one. Why is it that we treat our nearest and dearest in ways we would never dare treat our coach, teacher, or boss? Respect is letting them speak. Immediately interrupting communicates that what they are saying is not as important as what you have to say. It is devaluing and is disrespectful.

### **FINAL RESULT:**

**YOU WILL EXPERIENCE GREATER HEALING AND INCREASED TRUST AS A FAMILY.  
SEEK TO LISTEN! LEAN IN, INQUIRE, SEEK TO UNDERSTAND, TRANSLATE BACK,  
ENCOURAGE OPENNESS AND NEVER INTERRUPT.**

# BREAKOUT EXERCISE: Learn to Listen

In this exercise, write down 3 things you feel are barriers to communication in your family and 3 things you think are strengths in your family. Your parent(s) will do the same. Then you will take turns sharing your lists with each other.

But first, before you start creating your lists, you and your parent will want to answer questions about how to communicate effectively given your unique personalities.

Once you've completed the "Keys to Communication," use this information during the Familylogue.

## START HERE: KEYS TO COMMUNICATION

Please turn to the "Keys to Communication" section of your report. Identify and list four items that are most important for your parent to keep in mind when communicating with you.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_



*If a person has these five desires supported in his life, it brings joy and fulfillment. If these five motivations are not supported, or worse, criticized, that person will struggle to feel happy and fulfilled.*

What is the most important Key to Communication for your parent to apply on a consistent basis?

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From the answer above, take the Communication Key you selected and discuss a specific example of how your parent can apply this to your family. Stay positive and encouraging.

Are there other people in your life that may benefit from knowing this information about you? If so, list up to three people with whom you should share this information.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

Please turn to the "Communicating with Others" section of your report. Identify your parent's dominant core style (Efficient, Driven, Persuasive, Relational, Peacekeeping, Steady, Coordinator, or Accurate) – the highest point(s) on his or her graph. Write down his or her style here:

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From the explanation of your parent's core style in the previous section, what are the most beneficial suggestions for you to remember when interacting with him or her?

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Cite some possible situations in which you can apply these suggestions. Be specific and use your answers as "goals for daily communication."

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## NOW, SHARE YOUR LISTS.

When you share your list with your parent, you will demonstrate your commitment to communicate honestly and respectfully with him or her. Use all that you have learned about how he/she best receives communication.

You share first. Then listen to your parent(s) list. In giving feedback about each other's list, demonstrate your listening and empathy skills as well as your ability to "speak their language."

Make a list of three things you would like more of or less of when it comes to communication in your family. Always start by sharing the positives first.

MORE:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

LESS:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## ALTERNATIVE DISCUSSION

You may not want to start with the “hot spots” of your family. If you are experiencing high family conflict or strain, instead identify some strengths and use the Familylogue to talk about things that are going well. Make a list of three things that you value about your family or your parent. Use this to build your discussion. Start your statements with “I value ...” You can still practice speaking, listening, and empathizing with these affirmations.

## FAMILY DISCUSSION

Take turns sharing your wish list with each other.

## SPEAKER’S JOB

Speak for yourself (use “I” statements, i.e., “I wish...”). Describe how you would feel if your wish(es) came true.

## LISTENER’S JOB

Repeat/summarize what you heard.

Describe your parent’s wish by repeating it back to him or her, mentioning how your parent said he/ she would feel if the wish came true. After completing the Wish List Exercise, discuss the following questions:

How good were each of you at communicating honestly?

How good were each of you at listening patiently until the other was finished speaking?

In what ways did you each effectively demonstrate empathy?

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

Try this exercise at home, as often as needed. When it becomes more comfortable, you can use the Familylogue any time you want to discuss an issue that may cause stress in your family. It can be a “safe” way for you to have difficult conversations.

HERE ARE A FEW MORE POINTERS:

- When initiating a Familylogue, make a clear statement about your desire to talk about ONE TOPIC. For example, “I need to talk to you about the upcoming field trip.” Don’t hint (“Maybe we could talk this afternoon”) and don’t drop bombs (“Well, I am getting an F in chemistry.”)
- Be respectful of the other person’s time and interest. Ask, “When would be a good time for you to discuss this?”
- Learn to ask one another, “What do you need from me right now?” In the Empathy Phase, this is particularly helpful. Your parent will be encouraged knowing you understand, but going the extra mile might mean showing reassurance (“Everything will be okay”), forgiveness (“I forgive you”), or sometimes comfort (e.g., a hug).



## **NOT FEELING IT YET? NO WORRIES!**

If it doesn't feel like this exercise "worked" for you, don't worry! Good communication takes practice, practice, and more practice. Long-term, thriving families have spent a lifetime perfecting these skills, and they didn't learn it the first time, either!

There are resources available to help you learn the Familylogue. You can request this by logging into your online membership at [www.StrongerFamilies.com](http://www.StrongerFamilies.com). Stronger Families is here to help!



# ACTION PLAN

These exercises should be done individually first, then together. On your own, reflect on the following questions. Write your answers in the space provided below.

How do you handle conflict with your parent?

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What emotions do you express most regularly?

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What is your reaction in stressful times?

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How do you and your parent interact?

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Do you show affection?

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When you communicate, do you raise your voices, show anger or rage, withdraw?

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Now, share your responses with your parent, and read his or her responses relating to his or her own childhood. Chances are the relationship patterns your parent grew up with are showing up in your family as well. This may give you some insight into why your family communicates and navigates conflict the way it does.

Share your answers with your parent (together, don't just hand off your workbook and walk away). As you talk, you will have the opportunity to empathize with one another and look at ways to be the change you wish to see. Each of you can accept responsibility for your role in family communications, outcomes, and own ideas to bring about change in those areas.

# SESSION 3

## PUTTING OUT FIRES: COMMUNICATING THROUGH CONFLICT

*Conflict is like a fire: it can be contained or it can spread like wildfire. It has its benefits—and its dangers.*



Conflict can be a good and necessary component of a healthy family. It can help you work positively through differences to find solutions and thus create more trust. But, like fire, conflict out of control can destroy, wound, and change lives forever. Conflict without healing can destroy a family or a relationship in an incredibly short period of time.

Unfortunately, many families have let the fire of conflict consume their family.

They have allowed patterns and conditions to become so incredibly volatile that “fires”—explosions, even—break out almost every time they try to communicate. Once the spark is lit, it quickly gets out of hand because of still-burning embers from previous “fires,” ongoing hurts, and daily stressors.

These embers become more and more heated as levels of anger and frustration rise. Rather than speaking calmly and respectfully, parents can begin to accuse, criticize, or raise their voices. Instead of listening empathetically, teens may interrupt, belittle, and ignore.

The “fight or flight” response is triggered. Each person goes into a protection mode with little or no regard for the other. In this state of escalation, it’s not uncommon to say or do things we later regret. Moreover, it is nearly impossible to have a productive conversation that leads to a mutually satisfying resolution.

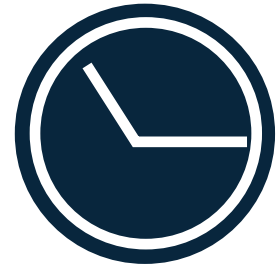
Do you remember the advice you received as a child about what to do if you are ever in a fire? You likely learned three important words: STOP, DROP, and ROLL. The same advice works for conflict!

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# STOP, DROP, ROLL: LEARN TO TAKE A TIME-OUT

---

A “time-out” is not just for little kids. We all need one once in a while. A time-out from a heated, out-of-control conversation provides an opportunity to cool down, identify your feelings and needs, and begin to think productively about how to approach the issues you and your parent are facing. You simply need to:



## RECOGNIZE:

Recognize your need for a time-out. Is your heart beating fast? Do you feel like you are about to say something you may regret? Are you breathing rapidly? Are you afraid of your parent’s intensity? Do you feel like you are emotionally getting out of control or closed off?

- Learn to recognize the signs that things have become too intense for you to have a productive interaction with your parent.
- What physical and emotional reactions indicate you need a time-out? Are there other behaviors that ring true for you that are not listed here?

## REQUEST:

Call a time-out for yourself by saying something like, “I’m just too angry to talk right now; I need to take a time-out. Please give me an hour to calm down and gather my thoughts.”

- Remember to call the time-out for yourself. It is seldom helpful to tell the other person, “You need a time-out!” Suggest a time when you think you’ll be ready to resume.
- If you feel it is your parent losing control, ask, “Do you feel we may need a time-out? I’m feeling that way.”

## RELAX:

Relax and calm down. Take some deep breaths. Go for a walk. Take a quick shower. Write in your journal. Pray or meditate.

- Do something that will help you relax and recover from the emotional intensity.
- What relaxes you or helps you work out your frustrations? What method(s) could you use to calm down?

## REMEMBER:

Remember what’s important. Try to identify what you were thinking and feeling that became so difficult to discuss. From where was the emotion coming?

- Use “I” statements. Tell your parent what you were thinking or feeling and what you need from him/her, “I am feeling overwhelmed by your reaction and need to take some time to process before talking about it.”
- Try to spend some time considering your parent’s point of view and what he or she is feeling and trying to communicate.
- Remember the two of you are a team. The only way your family will “win” is if you work toward a solution that both individuals can feel good about.

## RESUME:

Resume the conversation. Bring in the skills of the Familylogue you learned in the last session. These structured skills can help contain intensity as you attempt to resolve a conflict. Honor your commitment to return to the issue when you are ready to have a more productive conversation. There is always a temptation to push conflict under the carpet. If it is not dealt with or resolved, it will continue to be an issue in your family. Resolution and a commitment to work through issues bring healing and restoration.

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## PUTTING OUT FIRES (OR AVOIDING THEM ALTOGETHER)

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To repeat what we mentioned earlier, effective communication skills are learned. Some people learn them in the home as they grow up. These individuals were encouraged and trained by their parents to identify their feelings and communicate them at the appropriate moment.

Some people learn negative communication skills that must be unlearned before they can start applying productive ones. If this is the case for you, don't be discouraged. Be humble and willing to admit that you are stuck in some bad patterns and need to learn new ones. You can do it! You (and everyone around you, including your parent) will be glad you did. And you'll be establishing new, positive communication patterns for others to see, learn, and emulate. Setting a new pattern is within reach and possible.

If you never learned to identify and communicate your feelings at all, you may be encountering a challenge of another kind. If this is your situation, learning to communicate, much like learning the necessary skills to play a new sport, is important and crucial to your family. It might feel awkward and unnatural at first, but the more you practice, the more skilled you will become. Sometimes building your "feeling vocabulary" can significantly help in this process.

*You can use the Appendix entitled "Feelings Inventory" included in the back of this workbook as a guide.*

So, let's talk about negative communication patterns and behaviors.

These may need to be unlearned before you can move forward. There are mistakes you may be making, possibly without even being aware of it, especially if they were common communication patterns in your family. These are negative relational tactics that will sabotage communication and turn any spark into a flame—whether it is expressed externally or not. Learn to recognize these in yourself and commit to learning new (and more effective) ways to communicate.

### boiling • point

noun

1: the temperature at which the vapor pressure of a liquid is equal to the pressure of the atmosphere on the liquid.

2: the point beyond which one becomes angry, outraged, or agitated.

3: the point at which matters reach a crisis.

For the sake of analogy, we're going to say that every family has a "boiling point"—a relational place in which a negative conversation of issue escalates into overt conflict. For those that have a secure family with effective communication, the boiling point is extremely high. It takes a lot of heat to start the bubbling over. The occurrences of inflammatory fighting (resorting to either heavy-handed or passive-aggressive tactics as outlined on the next page) would be rare in a secure family. For families that are less secure and effective in their communication skills, the boiling point tends to start sooner, meaning that it doesn't take much to ignite a nasty fight.

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## THE FUEL BEHIND THE FIRE: ANGER

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Most families in crisis have a common element that fuels the fire behind conflict: ANGER.

In his book, [Make Anger Your Ally](#), Neil Clark Warren explains that there are four basic reasons we

*Setting a new pattern is  
within reach and possible.*



become angry: 1) Fear 2) Frustration 3) Hurt 4) Injustice.

It's no surprise that families who have not learned to communicate through these four stressors will experience a great deal of anger.

The first thing we need to do to extinguish anger from our families is to learn where the source is. Anger in and of itself is not a primary emotion. Anger is a secondary emotion that we default to because we are unable, or unwilling, to deal with the primary emotion. Primary emotions are generally things like the four issues mentioned before (and others).

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## CLEAN UP THE MESS AND START OVER

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Whether it's a simple kitchen fire, house fire—or even a full-blown raging forest fire—once the flames have been extinguished, it's time to clean up the mess, start over, and commit to never repeating the fire in the first place.

You can do the same. You can start over. You can commit to not doing the things that ignite fires in your family. Please complete the following activity with your parent:

### INSTRUCTIONS:

**Step 1:** Fill out the right column of the chart on page 50, using a check mark to indicate which igniter tactics you feel that you use.

**VERY IMPORTANT\*:** If you have 3 or less strength areas from your Family Checkup report, go directly to Step 7.

**Step 2:** Fold the page back along the dotted line so the right column and your answers are hidden.

**Step 3:** Hand the book to your parent so that he/she can indicate in your book which tactics they feel that you use.

**Step 4:** Take the book back from your parent and examine the results.

**Step 5:** Look at the igniter tactics that you BOTH recognize you do. These are the most obvious and are probably your PRIMARY igniter tactics. Now, look at the tactics your parent checked but you did not. These are your "blind spots." While they may be less obvious to you, they are just as real to your parent.

**Step 6:** Take some time to ask for clarification about tactics you don't understand.

**Step 7:** Finish the exercise by looking at the list that you and your parent have identified. In humility, say to your parent, "I'm sorry for..." Here are some helpful suggestions for Step 7:

- a) Be absolutely sincere in your apology.
- b) Address each item individually (rather than making a blanket statement for all).
- c) Use good eye contact when apologizing.



# COMMON CONFLICT IGNITERS

_____ by _____ (you) (parent)	Heavy-Handed Tactics	_____ by _____ (you) (you)
_____	Bringing up more than one issue at a time	_____
_____	Contempt	_____
_____	Bullying (exploding, intimidating)	_____
_____	Criticizing	_____
_____	Lying	_____
_____	Humiliating	_____
_____	Labeling	_____
_____	Mocking, mimicking	_____
_____	Mind-reading or "psychoanalyzing" your parent	_____
_____	Name calling	_____
_____	Ordering	_____
_____	Switching the subject	_____
_____	Counter accusations	_____
_____	Interrupting	_____
_____	Blaming (distracting)	_____
_____	Threatening	_____
_____	Taunting, ridiculing	_____
_____	Using "cold logic" to hide from emotional reality (Uncaring)	_____
	<b>Passive-Aggressive Tactics</b>	
_____	Complaining (whining)	_____
_____	Playing poor me (self-pity)	_____
_____	Playing the martyr	_____
_____	Playing the victim	_____
_____	Pretending your parent is being unreasonable	_____
_____	Stonewalling	_____
_____	Withholding	_____
_____	Denying	_____
_____	Disqualifying	_____
_____	Forgetting	_____
_____	Breaking promises	_____
_____	Playing confused	_____
_____	Exaggeration	_____
_____	Dragging your feet	_____
_____	Keeping score	_____
_____	Making excuses	_____

[FOLD]

**REMINDER:** Do not be vague by saying, "I am sorry for all four igniter tactics." Instead, be specific and think of examples where you admit to specific inflammatory behaviors. Example: "I am sorry for contradicting you in front of your friends." Each person needs to promise to stop this type of inflammatory fighting. End the exercise with an expression of appreciation or affection. You may say, "I'm sorry for talking back to you when you told me I couldn't go to that party. It was disrespectful and not okay."

\*If you are struggling a lot or having a great deal of difficulty in your family, completing this activity can do more harm than good. We strongly suggest that, unless your family is on solid footing and doing well overall, you complete only Steps 1 and 7.



*Anger is a secondary emotion that we default to because we are unable or unwilling to deal with the primary emotion we are feeling.*



# ACTION PLAN

Steps to resolving conflict<sup>2</sup>

The importance of this activity is to acknowledge that our parent is not the problem. Perhaps one of the most significant issues in family conflict and dissatisfaction is that we simply don't recognize our own contributions to the issues. We justify, ignore, avoid, or distract ourselves from taking responsibility for our own actions and negative behaviors. To deal with conflict and the deeper issues, an action plan for your family is needed.

Maybe Smokey Bear is the one who said it best:

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**ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT FOREST FIRES!**

---

All families have differences and disagreements. Happy families do not avoid disagreements; they resolve issues while remaining respectful of each other.

This Ten Step Model is a simple but effective way to resolve conflict while avoiding common and destructive patterns. Use this model with an ongoing issue in your family, as well as future issues when they arise.

**1. Set a time and place for discussion.**

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Define the problem. Be specific.**

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**3. List the ways you each contribute to the problem.**

Teen 1) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent 2) \_\_\_\_\_

4. List past attempts to resolve the issue that were not successful.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_

5. **Brainstorm**—Pool your new ideas and try to list 10 possible solutions to the problem. Do not judge or criticize any of the suggestions at this point.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

6. **Discuss and evaluate each of the brainstorm solutions.** (Be as objective as possible. Talk about how useful and appropriate each suggestion feels for resolving your issue.)

7. **Agree on one solution to try.**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. **Agree how you will each work toward this solution.** (Be as specific as possible.)

Teen 1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Set up another meeting to discuss your progress.

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Reward each other for progress. (If you notice your parent making a positive contribution toward the solution, praise his/her effort.)

# SESSION 4

## FORGIVENESS MATTERS

*“He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which they must pass; for every man has need to be forgiven.”*

*—Thomas Fuller, Historian and Clergyman*



William Blake once wrote, “It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend.” Why would he say that? It sounds a bit ridiculous. You’d think we would forgive the people we hold dearest in our lives more easily than those we don’t! Wouldn’t we...?

Sadly, the opposite is too often true. In most families, it is when the trust and expectation of safety are undercut by hurt, resentment, and disappointment that we feel the most vulnerable and wounded. For this reason, when a parent hurts us, it goes deep.

No one hurts us more than those we love the most. They hold value in our lives, and our love for them makes all the difference. The deeper the love, the more pain we feel when we are hurt and betrayed.

You’ve probably noticed by now that your parent is a human being. Yep, true flesh and blood. And, you’ve probably noticed that he/she is not perfect; there are some failings and flaws. No doubt you have disappointed or hurt each other over the years.

We all sometimes fail to treat one another respectfully. But what do you do when situations that require forgiveness present themselves? What does forgiveness in your family look like? In this chapter, you will learn about forgiveness and the importance of understanding how to give and receive it within your family. The most important thing to grasp is this: forgiveness is a choice!

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## FORGIVENESS IS A CHOICE

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As a child, you do not get to choose your parent. But you can make choices that will shape your family dynamics and your future relationships. One of the most crucial decisions in your family, one that will have lasting impact, is how you handle and deal with forgiveness.

As we all know, life in general, and family in particular, offers many opportunities to practice this principle. You can either choose to forgive, or you can choose not to forgive. If you choose the

latter, you have to do it knowing that unforgiveness has consequences. It results in bitterness, resentment, and lasting pain.

Is it really that simple? A choice? In many ways, yes. For families to become—and stay—a unified team, the “You vs. Me” mentality has to go. A team mentality must take over. That means saying and believing, “I choose to make unity with you more important than satisfying my own needs. When you mess up, I will forgive you. And I trust you will do the same for me.”

Imagine for a moment a championship football game. The clock shows two minutes, and the quarterback fires a perfect pass to his receiver. The receiver takes off toward the end zone. But then, as the crowd, team, and coaches watch in amazement, the player trips and falls, missing the touchdown by a few yards as time runs out.

What would the team’s response be? Would they throw him off the football field and tell him to never come back? Would they make him watch replays of his mistake all night and sit in righteous judgment over him? Would they tell him that he’d better not screw up again, and every game remind him of his failure? This kind of treatment would have grave effects on his morale and future confidence to play.

One of two things would happen if a team treated its players this way: the team would suffer in its performance, or the players would start to lose heart and passion for the game.

## So, what is forgiveness?

Before we go further, let’s talk about what forgiveness is NOT. Forgiveness is NOT:

- burying your emotions and not dealing with your disappointment or hurt
- giving someone permission to disrespect your needs or boundaries
- lying down and accepting unhealthy behavior or communication
- avoiding the situation and secretly holding in a bad emotion toward your parent
- about forgetting the offense

Forgiveness IS:

- a decision, NOT an emotion
- a choice to let go of negative emotions such as bitterness and revenge that affect your emotional health and personal peace
- not necessarily a one-time event; sometimes forgiveness can be a process
- not always granted based on being asked for it
- a choice to release your parent from any debt you feel he/she “owes” you because of the offense
- taking responsibility for your own actions (including your own response of bitterness and unforgiveness toward the one who hurt or betrayed you)
- about offering to someone else that which you would hope for in the same situation

In your family, you have the power to make sure your team wins! Your decision to choose, or not choose, forgiveness will make or break your team. Forgiveness is crucial to a healthy, long-lasting family.

In truth, forgiveness is really not about the other person and how he or she wronged you. Yes, it is recognizing the hurt and wound created, which of course, was brought about by that person. But ultimately, forgiveness is something only YOU can choose. You have the power. At the end of the day, a choice not to forgive will only hurt one person: YOU!

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## WHEN IS FORGIVENESS NEEDED (AND WHY DOES IT MATTER)?

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Forgiveness is needed when a hurt, offense, or betrayal is personal, deep, or judged to be unfair by the person who has been hurt. The offense is something you just can't forget or explain away easily. In fact, it's a hurt that—unless you make a conscious choice—will continue to influence your thoughts, actions, and reactions to that person.

Forgiveness in family is crucial. When we hurt someone, we then have to deal with the consequences of that choice. It is not always fair. But this is the beauty—and the hard part—that in a family we share our life together.

Sometimes, it gets messy. But there is one powerful component that can heal even the most wounded family: love.

Love is like glue, and forgiveness is a form of love; they are synonymous. Love covers over the wrong done to you even though, unfortunately, the pain may be something you didn't sign up for. The point is this: your family can be mended. Unity is something we strive for everyday in family.

Chances are that the times you have felt the most grateful, blessed, or loved were moments when you received something unexpected or without reason. This is the power of forgiveness: it is a gift to your parent no one else can give.

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## BENEFITS OF FORGIVENESS

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Need some more convincing? Forgiveness is important not only for your family, but also for your health.

Studies have shown that people who are quick to forgive are happier, healthier, and live longer. According to Dr. Katherine Piederman of the Mayo Clinic, choosing to forgive gives us:

- healthier relationships
- greater spiritual and psychological well-being
- less stress and hostility
- lower blood pressure



- fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety, and chronic pain
- lower risk of alcohol and substance abuse

Those who lack forgiveness are more likely to struggle emotionally, physically, and spiritually. These are just a few more reasons why forgiveness should be taken very seriously in our families.

Okay. So we know that forgiveness is a choice, what it is and what it isn't, and why it matters...but HOW do we forgive and find healing for our family?

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## HOW TO FORGIVE

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As we discussed before, forgiveness is a commitment to the process of change; it may not happen overnight. As with any relational tool, we need to learn to use and operate it. If you are used to hanging on to offenses and holding grudges, it will feel like you are letting the other person off the hook way too easily. But remember, when you forgive, you are letting YOU off the hook. By releasing the power of forgiveness into your family, you are saving yourself from an emotional, physical, and spiritual drain.

## HERE ARE SOME STEPS TO HELP YOU FIND YOUR WAY:

7 Steps to Forgiving When You Have Been Hurt:

1. Get in touch with the hurt, offense, or betrayal.
2. Acknowledge the facts and emotions of the situation—yours and the person who has hurt you
3. Separate the behavior from the person. Remember, everyone is human and makes mistakes—we all let each other down.
4. Begin to release the hurt.
5. Determine not to speak ill of him/her to others (or to him/her).
6. Surrender your “right” for payback or to hold the offense over his/her head.
7. Tell the person who hurt you of your decision to forgive, even if he/she has not asked for it.

It's not unusual to hear a teen say, “I don't want to be the first to say I'm sorry,” protesting, “How come Mom and Dad can't ever be wrong?” or “It's his turn to give in; I'm sick and tired of this,” or “Why should I have to take the first step?”

We all need to understand that “keeping score” actually detracts from your family.

The more you focus on changing your parent or, even worse, waiting for him/her to make the first move towards reconciliation, the harder the forgiveness process will be. Reconciliation is not “I have to;” rather, it is an attitude of “I get to.”

Giving up “I” and choosing “WE” is a sacrifice you might be scared to make. You may be scared to lose your individual voice or feel like you will be “backing down.” You may think you'll be

surrendering your rights. But the opposite is true. When we choose not to forgive, the negativity and bad emotion can turn us into someone we do not want to be.

Unforgiveness is like a cancer; it can go undetected for a while but often quickly spreads into every area of your life. Forgiveness is not just a gift you offer others; it is a gift you give yourself.

Many times, when we experience deep conflict in our family, the conflict comes down to one thing: selfishness. Putting our “rights” above those of others. A secure, strong family sees through the lens of WE instead of ME. When you do this, you will experience new freedom and strength in your family.

Just as understanding forgiveness and the steps to forgiveness are important, so is the process of asking for forgiveness. In this next section, we will look at a practical way to handle forgiveness when you are the offender. And, take heart, we have all been there.

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## ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS: THE POWER OF RECONCILIATION

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Reconciliation will bring about deeper trust, better communication, and, ultimately, more strength in your family. The steps to asking for forgiveness may take a while to soak in but, once learned, they are powerful tools. A family that can handle conflict, work through hurt, and come to resolution will be a lasting family.

Families and relationships are hard work. But it is difficult to find anything worth having that doesn't take investment and commitment. Family is no different. It may not be easy but, it is worth it!

**VERY IMPORTANT:** Do not forgive your parent and then hit them with a guilt pie next time conflict comes up. This is not forgiveness. No matter how big the foul up or how bad it made you feel, saying you forgive your parent means you LET IT GO! Do not hold past actions, words, and situations over your parent's head—this is bitterness, not forgiveness. When true forgiveness is extended in love, it is a decision to wipe the dirt away and start fresh.

The process of reconciliation is not “I *have* to;” rather, it is an attitude of “I *get* to.”



## GUARD AGAINST BEING LIKE THE FOOTBALL TEAM WE DISCUSSED.

Don't blame, disgrace, ostracize, or put down your parent for messing up. He/she probably feels bad enough. And in the end, it will not have the outcome you want. He or she can become discouraged, just like you.

## CHOOSE LOVE AND OFFER FORGIVENESS!

Realize that practice might require some pads and a few tackles here and there, but, in the long run, a winning season is what you are both working toward!

### SEVEN STEPS TO ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS:

(To get the most out of this exercise: sit face to face, bodies facing one another, and make full eye contact).

#### Step 1: Identify the Issue

The parent should confess SPECIFICALLY to what he/she did or said that caused the hurt, offense, or betrayal.

Do not use the word "if" (i.e., "I'm sorry if I hurt you). Name the transgression specifically (i.e., "I'm sorry I lost my temper at the mall," or "I'm sorry I was too busy to notice how upset you were.") Don't make excuses. This demonstrates you, as the offender, recognize the offense or hurt you have caused and are willing to accept responsibility for your actions.

#### Step 2: Recognize the Hurt

The parent should ask the teen, "How did my actions affect you or make you feel?"

The teen should honestly share the impact of the parent's actions on him/her. The parent at this point should only listen. Do not attempt to explain, justify, or interrupt. The teen might respond, *"I felt betrayed that you would embarrass me in front of my friends. It makes it hard for me to trust you in the future,"* or *"I was scared and mad at the same time when you didn't come home and I didn't know where you were. It made me feel alone. I needed your help."*

#### Step 3: Reiterate Your Sincerity

The parent should restate his/her apology for the offense, including asking forgiveness not only for the offense but for the effect it had.

*"I'm really sorry I embarrassed you. I lost my temper and that's wrong.. I'm sorry I made you feel (betrayed, deceived, scared, mad, alone, etc.) Please forgive me."*

#### Step 4: Ask for Feedback

Then the parent should ask, "How can I handle this situation differently next time?" or "What can I do to better communicate with you going forward? I do not want to make this same mistake again."

Part of asking and extending forgiveness is to create an action plan so that you do NOT repeat the offense. The parent should assure the teen of his/her intention NOT to engage in the behavior or attitude that caused the hurt or betrayal. Let the teen share from his/her heart. Again, don't interrupt, defend, or hurry the moment. Use the listening techniques we discussed earlier in the seminar and take the time to truly listen to your loved one and empathize with how he or she feels. Chances are you will both walk away feeling a greater sense of compassion and understanding toward each other.

*"I will call and let you know when I'm going to be home later than you're expecting me, especially now that I know how much it hurt you."*

### Step 5: Thank Them for Their Forgiveness

Keep it short and sweet, but let your parent know you see he or she is choosing to love you.

*"Thank you for forgiving me."*

### Step 6: Make Sure You Are in Tune with the Moment

Just because your parent asked for forgiveness, doesn't mean he/she has fully processed how you feel yet. An immediate expectation of affection or happy emotion is unrealistic and could thwart all the effort you just made.

Be patient and kind. Just because ice is put into a hot pan doesn't mean it evaporates immediately. Sometimes it needs some time. Be patient. If your parent seems thoughtful or reserved, give it more time.

### Step 7: Encourage Your Parent to Let Him/Herself Off the Hook!

Repentance is recognizing a wrong or bad behavior and choosing to go the other direction.

This is crucial to your own happiness and the success of your family. We all make mistakes. It's what we do with those mistakes that define our future success! Learn and move on.

**IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION:** The steps above regarding forgiveness apply to all families and are true no matter the intensity of the problem. However, there are certain situations facing some families that should be handled at a professional level. If you are facing a cycle of abuse, addiction, or extreme behaviors, it is best to walk through the healing process with trained clergy, chaplain, or professional counselor. These areas come from deeper issues within the individual which may need to be addressed apart from the family. Stronger Families is here to provide resources for help.



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## YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM GAME PLAN

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#1: List individuals you each would like to include in your support system (if they are willing and available). Start with a wide net and narrow it down from there. Perhaps mention why you think each person (or family) would be beneficial to your team. If you come across someone with whom your parent disagrees, move on to someone else. You both have to feel comfortable with the people in your support system.

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#2: With your parent, write a plan for the three next steps you will take toward creating a support team:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#3: List three things important for your support team to know about your family:

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#4: What step will you take this week to get plugged in or create a support system? By which date will you have your key people chosen? (Don't leave more than a week's time for this.)

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Important: If you can't think of anyone or can't agree on the same people, keep looking. There are options. What services are offered in your community that you could use to provide support for your relationship (i.e., church small groups, the Y, counselors, teen support groups, clergy)? Find these people and invite them into your story; give them permission to hold you accountable to your plan.

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## MAKE IT HAPPEN: YOUR FAMILY FOLLOW UP MEETINGS

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For the next eight weeks, schedule a weekly follow-up meeting with your parent. At this meeting, you will review one of the Action Plans from one of the OXYGEN sessions. Start the meeting by reading your Family Mission Statement.

During your meeting, take at least one action item and talk about how well you have completed it, determine if you need to revisit it, and re-apply the skills you have learned. Use the Familylogue discussion model to talk through these sections; this will help in a constructive manner.

Pick (and mutually agree upon) a time in the next week to start working on this step. Write the date right now below. Make this a parent/teen date.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

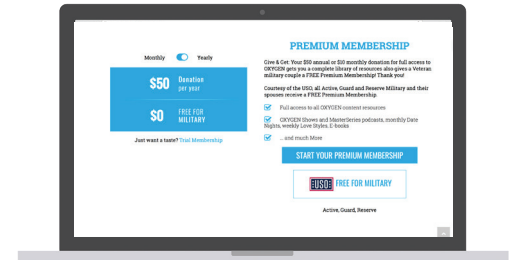
# RESOURCES

## RECEIVE YOUR FREE PREMIUM MEMBERSHIP AT STRONGERFAMILIES.COM

Let Stronger Families help you create a deeper, more joyful connection with a FREE Premium Membership.

Sign up at [strongerfamilies.com/oxygen-membership](https://strongerfamilies.com/oxygen-membership) and start receiving important relationship tools and resources.

- Podcasts with nationally acclaimed relationship experts
- Creative Date Night ideas
- Tips for improving romance and intimacy
- Much more!



## REGISTER FOR LIVE OXYGEN TRAINING EVENTS

If you're seeking to improve and strengthen your marriage relationship, this seminar is for you. Ready to transform it within 24 hours? These events are FREE to military members. Simply go to [strongerfamilies.com/events](https://strongerfamilies.com/events) for dates and locations.

Speakers address common relationship challenges, such as:

- Personality Differences
- Communication
- Conflict Resolution
- Intimacy
- Forgiveness

## CERTIFIED FACILITATOR TRAINING

Uniquely designed with your leadership needs in mind. We guarantee a strong partnership with you every step of the way.

- World class relationship curriculum
- 1-on-1 speaker training
- Customizable OXYGEN event options
- Accessible Delivery Team support





# APPENDIX

# FEELINGS INVENTORY

The following are words we use when we want to express a combination of emotional states and physical sensations. This list is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

There are two parts to this list: feelings we may have when our needs are being met and feelings we may have when our needs are not being met.

## FEELINGS WHEN YOUR NEEDS ARE SATISFIED

AFFECTIONATE	CONFIDENT	thankful	PEACEFUL
compassionate	empowered	touched	calm
friendly	open		clear headed
loving	proud	INSPIRED	comfortable
open hearted	safe	amazed	centered
sympathetic	secure	awed	content
tender		wonder	equanimous
warm	EXCITED		fulfilled
	amazed	JOYFUL	mellow
ENGAGED	animated	amused	quiet
absorbed	ardent	delighted	relaxed
alert	aroused	glad	relieved
curious	astonished	happy	satisfied
engrossed	dazzled	jubilant	serene
enchanted	eager	pleased	still
entranced	energetic	tickled	tranquil
fascinated	enthusiastic		trusting
interested	giddy	EXHILARATED	
intrigued	invigorated	blissful	REFRESHED
involved	lively	ecstatic	enlivened
spellbound	passionate	elated	rejuvenated
stimulated	surprised	enthralled	renewed
	vibrant	exuberant	rested
HOPEFUL		radiant	restored
expectant	GRATEFUL	rapturous	revived
encouraged	appreciative	thrilled	
optimistic	moved		

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Phone: +1.505.244.4041



## FEELINGS WHEN YOUR NEEDS ARE NOT SATISFIED

AFRAID  
apprehensive  
dread  
foreboding  
frightened  
mistrustful  
panicked  
petrified  
scared  
suspicious  
terrified  
wary  
worried

ANNOYED  
aggravated  
dismayed  
disgruntled  
displeased  
exasperated  
frustrated  
impatient  
irritated  
irked

ANGRY  
enraged  
furious  
incensed  
indignant  
irate  
livid  
outraged  
resentful

AVERSION  
animosity  
appalled  
contempt  
disgusted  
dislike  
hate  
horrified  
hostile  
repulsed

CONFUSED  
ambivalent  
baffled  
bewildered  
dazed  
hesitant  
lost  
mystified  
perplexed  
puzzled  
torn

DISCONNECTED  
alienated  
aloof  
apathetic  
bored  
cold  
detached  
distant  
distracted  
indifferent  
numb  
removed  
uninterested  
withdrawn

DISQUIET  
agitated  
alarmed  
discombobulated  
disconcerted  
disturbed  
perturbed  
rattled  
restless  
shocked  
startled  
surprised  
troubled  
turbulent  
turmoil  
uncomfortable  
uneasy  
unnerved

unsettled  
upset  
EMBARRASSED  
ashamed  
chagrined  
flustered  
guilty  
mortified  
self-conscious

FATIGUE  
beat  
burnt out  
depleted  
exhausted  
lethargic  
listless  
sleepy  
tired  
weary  
worn out

PAIN  
agony  
anguished  
bereaved  
devastated  
grief  
heartbroken  
hurt  
lonely  
miserable  
regretful  
remorseful

SAD  
depressed  
dejected  
despair  
despondent  
disappointed  
discouraged  
disheartened  
forlorn

gloomy  
heavy hearted  
hopeless  
melancholy  
unhappy  
wretched

TENSE  
anxious  
cranky  
distressed  
distraught  
edgy  
fidgety  
frazzled  
irritable  
jittery  
nervous  
overwhelmed  
restless  
stressed out

VULNERABLE  
fragile  
guarded  
helpless  
insecure  
leery  
reserved  
sensitive  
shaky

YEARNING  
envious  
jealous  
longing  
nostalgic  
pining  
wistful

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# ENDNOTES

*A breath of fresh air...*  
REFRESHING. INVIGORATING. LIFE-CHANGING.  
It's OXYGEN for your family.

You may not know what to expect from the event today. But you are about to learn more about who you are and discover how to better understand your parent(s). This is going to be fun!

You may feel misunderstood. You may not even understand what you are feeling sometimes. There are situations you are facing that no one gets unless they are in your shoes.

You are in such a fun stage of life. Each day you are trying to discover who you are. Your dreams, beliefs, values. Who do you want to be friends with? How do you want to show up in the world? You are navigating social media, the hallways at school, and trying to find your place. It can be hard. We imagine you even feel pretty lost at times. We get it. We've been there. And--good news--we are here to help.

Get ready to experience transformation through...

- understanding and building upon your unique style of relating to your parents
- new, more effective ways to communicate
- learning the power of forgiveness and how to forgive
- negotiating conflict and sharing your concerns
- creating a relationship game plan and support system with your family

*As you go through this seminar and learn how to better understand your parent(s), you will also improve communication with them through this season of your life. But, even more importantly, we are excited that you will discover new skills to better understand and express yourself.*



Noel Meador serves as the Executive Director of Stronger Families in Seattle, Washington. Noel has a Masters in Education and is co-author and creator of the OXYGEN Seminar. Noel also hosts the national podcast, *The Oxygen Show*, which highlights top relationship experts with informative interviews. Karissa Meador, a writer and speaker, is the co-author of the OXYGEN Seminar, which has been presented in 28 states and 5 countries. Noel and Karissa have four children: three boys and a daughter. They are passionate about seeing relationships transformed through tools and techniques that empower families.