

MODULE

6

“let’s talk”

FAMILIES—ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



LEARNING GOALS

During this module, participants will:

- Define the term “family” for themselves and discuss different types of families.
- Discuss challenges that may arise within family systems and how to prevent such challenges from becoming crisis situations.
- Highlight and practice effective communication skills to deal with family members and family problems.

DEFINE THE ISSUE

Each year, family dynamics rank high on the list of issues identified by those who contact the National Runaway Safeline. This includes anything from problems with parents, guardians, or siblings to conflicts with family rules. The roles we play in our family dynamic can be complicated further when living outside of our nuclear family, either with other relatives, friends, in a group or foster home, or on our own.




In Module 6 we ask participants to explore the roles they play and how to be effective communicators in family situations, regardless of whether they define family as relatives, friends, or the community they are part of.

ICONS

For further details, see the Introduction Module.



MODULE ACTIVITIES

	ACTIVITY	TIME	METHODOLOGY
	A. Defining Family Roles and Responsibilities	15 minutes	Activity/Discussion
	B. Personal Roles and Responsibilities	10 minutes	Activity/Discussion
	C. Family Talk	10 minutes	Activity/Discussion
	D. Family Communication Tips	10 minutes	Discussion



Total time required: **45 minutes**

MATERIALS

- Poster paper or chalk/dry-erase board
- Markers or chalk
- Pens or pencils
- NRS prizes for “Personal Roles and Responsibilities Within the Family” Activity
- Small prizes for participants
- “Family Matters” worksheet
- “Roles and Responsibilities” worksheet
- “Family . . . T.A.L.K.” handout
- “Family Communication Tips” handout



Anger, Stress, and Trauma Management + Stress Reduction



Consider showing the companion film *American Street Kid*.



Contact the NRS Prevention & Youth Engagement Specialist at **773-289-1723** or **prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org** for support and technical assistance.

ACTIVITY 6A

DEFINING FAMILY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



15 minutes

STATE “Family” means different things to different people. For some, it may mean the people you live with. For others, it may be the friends or loved ones you choose. A family member doesn’t necessarily have to be related biologically or legally to you. They could be anyone you consider to be close to you in meaningful ways; they could be step-siblings, step-parents, foster siblings, foster parents, extended family, friends, and mentors.

No two families are alike. They vary in size, in the way family members talk to each other, and in the types of tasks that each family member is responsible for.

Each person has a role within a family. There are different responsibilities that go hand-in-hand with certain family roles. For example, a parent or guardian may feel responsible for the financial well-being of the entire family, while a child may feel responsible for accomplishing certain tasks, like getting good grades or taking out the garbage.

We’ll spend the next few minutes thinking about our own families. Remember that your family consists of those people who are closest to you and who may live where you consider your home to be.

HAND OUT “Family Matters” worksheets.

ASK Would you please draw an aerial view picture of what you consider home?

STATE Pretend someone peeled back the roof of the structure you consider “home.” Draw the rooms and people that make up what you consider home. Think about the responsibilities of each person you include under your roof. If you’re more comfortable using words than pictures, that’s fine.

ALLOW 2-3 minutes for participants to draw.

STATE As you draw or write, think about the following points:

- Who makes up your family?
- Where is everyone located and why?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of each family member?
- Who is present and who is not? If someone is not present, where are they?
- Who are the people who would be there to cheer for you when you do something you’re proud of?
- Is this a typical day for your family?

ALLOW participants time to consider the points.

ASK Who would like to share what they are thinking?

DISCUSS differences and similarities in thoughts.

ASK Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS responses.

STATE As you can see, each of our homes looks very different. They are different sizes, they have different people in them, and each person has different roles and responsibilities. Responsibilities can be related to chores that are necessary to keep the household running, or they may be in the form of support and guidance.

FAMILY MATTERS

Directions: Pretend someone peeled back the roof of the structure you consider “home.” Draw the rooms and people who make up what you consider home. Think about the responsibilities of each person you include under your roof.

ACTIVITY 6B

PERSONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



10 minutes



Facilitator should allow physical space for participants to move around during this activity.

STATE

As members of our families, we each have certain roles and important responsibilities related to these roles.

HAND OUT

“Roles and Responsibilities” worksheets.

ASK

What are the different roles you play within your family? What are the responsibilities associated with these roles? Take a minute or so to list at least five of the responsibilities you perform in a typical week. Keep the list to yourself.

ALLOW

one minute for participants to complete their worksheets.

STATE

Now that you’ve created your lists, you are going to share with a partner the responsibilities you listed on your “Roles and Responsibilities” worksheet.

The catch is you will have to act out everything on your list within one minute. This means no speaking, no noises, and no writing. It’s just like charades. When your partner has guessed the correct responsibility, move quickly to the next item. If you can get your partner to guess at least five items on your list within one minute, you will get to choose a prize!

DIVIDE

participants into pairs.

STATE

Ready? Set? GO!

MONITOR

the time and inform the groups when to switch actors. When everyone has had a chance to act out their responsibilities, gather the group together again.



It may be helpful to have an additional facilitator or assistant to help monitor groups and answer any questions.

ACTIVITY 6B CONTINUED

STATE Congratulations on your great acting. Now let's discuss a few questions about the activities.

- What are some of your partner's responsibilities?
- What responsibilities do you and your partner have in common?
Which responsibilities are different?
- What were your reactions to learning about your partner's responsibilities?

In this activity, you've had a chance to recognize things you are responsible for in a typical week. This game emphasized how much you contribute to your "family" and "home." You've also learned about the responsibilities of others and how their responsibilities may be similar to or different from your own.

ASK Why is it important to have responsibilities within your family?

What would happen if no one had responsibilities?

DISCUSS responses.

DISTRIBUTE Prizes to participants

ASK Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS responses.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Directions: List at least five of the responsibilities that you perform within a typical week. Make sure no one else sees your list.

1

2

3

4

5

ACTIVITY 6C

FAMILY T.A.L.K.



10 minutes

STATE Talking with a family member about an important issue can be difficult. If you're prepared and know how to communicate effectively, you will be able to get your point across clearly and successfully.

An open and honest discussion can correct many misunderstandings among family members.

HAND OUT "Family . . . T.A.L.K." handouts.

READ the handout:

TIMING

Choose an appropriate time to talk with your family. If the family member you need to talk with has a busy lifestyle, then it might be easier for you to set a meeting time in advance. This way, you can ensure attention can be focused on the issue.

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Clearly tell your family member how you feel and what you want or need by being honest and direct. Think carefully about your relationship and pay attention to your family member's response. Depending on the specific family member, you might have to address issues differently. Remember to use "I" statements, take deep breaths, keep a reasonable tone, and actively listen to your family member.

ASK Does anyone know what an "I" statement is?

ALLOW responses. If no one provides the right definition, use the one below.

STATE An "I" statement is a way of expressing your feelings and reactions about someone's behavior without pointing blame at the person. When a person uses an "I" statement, they first describe how they are feeling, thus "owning" their feeling or reaction.

ASK How might another person feel or react if you were upset with them and first pointed out what they did wrong?

ALLOW responses. Examples may include becoming angry or defensive.

WRITE the following formula on poster paper or a chalk/dry-erase board.

STATE The formula for an “I” statement is as follows:

“I feel _____ (fill in an emotion) when you _____ (behavior). What I need is _____ (action you would like the other person to take or change).”

ASK Who can give me an example of an “I” statement?

ALLOW responses.

STATE An “I” statement might still be difficult for someone to hear. It sometimes helps to take a deep breath, speak as calmly as possible, and emphasize how you feel and what you would like to see change, rather than on what the other person is doing “wrong.”

ASK Are there any questions?

ALLOW responses.

CONTINUE reading the “Family . . . T.A.L.K.” handout.

STATE **LOCATION**

Choose a quiet place where you and your family member can avoid interruption or being overheard by others.

KNOW WHAT TO SAY

Before talking with your family member, think about what you want to say by sorting out your own feelings about the issue. You might find that making a list or writing a letter of your thoughts and feelings can help you focus.

Now let’s put what we’ve learned to use.

SELECT a scenario from the following list.

READ aloud the scenario you selected.

SCENARIO 1:

Imagine that you and a family member had an argument about your responsibilities at home.

You are 16 years old and you feel like you have no social life because your mom pours on the responsibilities at home. When you get home from a full day of school, she goes to work, so you must watch your three younger siblings, clean up their messes, help them with their homework, and then make dinner for them. You’re also responsible for getting them to bed. After that, you have your own homework to do. Last time you and your mom tried to talk about this, a huge argument broke out. You really wish you had more time to yourself.

SCENARIO 2:

You are 15 and recently made the varsity soccer team. You like spending time with the other players, but your parents aren't thrilled with you hanging out with older members of the team who are 17 and 18 year olds. And, to be honest, they drink alcohol and throw big parties, but you feel like you can still be friends with them and not do those things. You feel like your parents don't trust you, which is ridiculous because you've never done anything to lose their trust. Last time you all talked about this, your dad flipped out.

SCENARIO 3:

You are 15 and have been dating someone for a couple of months. You are head over heels for this person. Sometimes he gets really possessive and won't let you see your friends. Once he even hit you when he saw a text message on your phone from someone he didn't know. Your mom noticed the bruise and that you're hanging out with your friends less and less, and she has been asking all sorts of questions about your partner. You're not sure how she will react when you tell her about this person, especially that you're starting to feel scared of him. She might flip out that he hit you, but she also might be really supportive. You have no idea how to bring up the topic without her freaking out.

ASK Does anyone need to hear the scenario again?

REPEAT as necessary, reminding participants to put themselves in the situation.

ASK What would you say?

When would you say it?

Where would you say it?

REMIND participants to use the "Family . . . T.A.L.K." worksheet to help them answer the questions.

WRITE responses on a piece of poster paper or on a chalk/dry-erase board.

STATE I hope you all feel better prepared to practice effective communication with your family members.

Remember that when you need help communicating with your family members, you can call 1-800-RUNAWAY to talk to someone at the National Runaway Safeline. An NRS team member can even help mediate a discussion between you and your parents or guardian.

ASK Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS responses.

FAMILY . . .

T

TIMING

Choose an appropriate time to talk with your family. If the family member you need to talk with has a busy lifestyle, it might be easier for you to set a meeting time in advance. This way, each person's attention can be focused on the issue.

A

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Clearly tell your family member how you feel and what you want or need by being honest and direct. Think carefully about your relationship and pay attention to your family member's response. Depending on the specific family member, you might have to address issues differently. Remember to use "I" statements, take deep breaths, keep a reasonable tone, and actively listen to your family member.

L

LOCATION

Choose a quiet place where you and your family member can avoid interruption or being overheard by others.

K

KNOW WHAT TO SAY

Think about what you want to say by sorting out your own feelings about the issue before talking with your family member. You might find that making a list or writing a letter with your thoughts and feelings can help you focus.

ACTIVITY 6D

FAMILY COMMUNICATION TIPS



10 minutes

INTRODUCE family communication tips.

HAND OUT “Family Communication Tips” handouts.

STATE Let’s read the tips together. You can ask questions about each of them as we go through the list.

HAVE each participant read a tip. Your list includes comments to include about each tip.

1. Set aside time to talk.
 - Remember what the “T” in “T.A.L.K.” stands for (TIMING).
2. Don’t expect your family to read your mind.
 - Why is this important?
3. Be specific and realistic about your expectations and requests.
 - This is a good place to use an “I” statement.
4. Have patience! Good communication takes time and effort.
 - Consider the “K” in “T.A.L.K.” and spend time preparing what you want to communicate.
5. Brainstorm ideas before making a final decision.
 - Consider all of your options, including pros and cons of each.
6. Ask for input from family members.
 - It may be helpful to seek the assistance of a neutral family member.
7. Write things down; make a list of changes you want to see.
 - Finish the statement “What I need is . . .” Notice that this is part of an “I” statement.
8. Be willing to compromise.
 - Can someone give me an example of a compromise?
9. Do fun things together.
 - What are some fun things you all do with your “family”?
10. Use community resources when you need help.
 - What are some resources in this community?



If you are in a Safe Place community, you might want to mention it as a resource. You can access information about Safe Place at <http://www.nationalsafeplace.org>.

ASK Can you think of any other tips you might add?

DISCUSS responses.

ASK Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS responses.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION TIPS

1

Set aside time to talk.

2

Don't expect your family to read your mind.

3

Be specific and realistic about your expectations and requests.

4

Have patience! Good communication takes time and effort.

5

Brainstorm ideas before making a final decision.

6

Ask for input from family members.

7

Write things down; make a list of changes you want to see.

8

Be willing to compromise.

9

Do fun things together.

10

Use community resources when you need help.

ACTIVITY 6

SUMMARY

- STATE**
- “Family” can be people related to you, the people you live with, or friends you choose.
 - Families can be a source of support or stress. No two are alike.
 - Each person has a role within the family. There are different responsibilities that go hand-in-hand with certain family roles.
 - Everyone needs to have a role to feel part of the family.
 - Talking with a family member about an important issue can be difficult.
 - “I” statements are important when communicating about a difficult issue.
 - The acronym “T.A.L.K.” is a reminder to:
 - **T**ime the talk so it occurs when you are ready.
 - **A**ssertively communicate, stating your needs as well as acknowledging those of others.
 - **L**ocate the talk where you can speak freely.
 - **K**now in advance what you want to say.
 - There are many communication tips to help you talk with family members.

ASK What communication tip will help you most?

DISCUSS responses.

HANDOUTS AND WORKSHEETS

- A. Family Matters
- B. Roles and Responsibilities
- C. Family . . . T.A.L.K.
- D. Family Communication Tips

REFERENCES

- Harper, G. W., Bangi, A. K., Sanchez, B., Doll, M., & Pedraza, A. (2006). Improving the sexual health of Latina adolescents: A participatory empowerment approach. In J. Denner & B. Guzman (Eds.), *Latina adolescent girls: Strengths and strategies*. New York: NYU Press.
- Levy, Jeff, LCSW, CTRS. Household drawing technique. *Creative and expressive strategies with youth at risk and their families*. Workshop adapted from Ken Jacobson, LCSW, Jewish Children's Bureau. Live Oak: Chicago.
- National Runaway Switchboard. (2001). *Runaway prevention curriculum for classroom and community educators*. Chicago, IL: NRS.

RESOURCES

- The Children, Youth and Family Consortium's website is a bridge to a wide range of information and resources about children and families. It connects research, teaching, policy, and community practice (<https://extension.umn.edu/working-youth/children-youth-and-family-consortium>).
- The Child Welfare Information Gateway website (as a service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) connects child welfare and related professionals to comprehensive information and resources to protect and strengthen families (<http://www.childwelfare.gov/>).
- The National Clearinghouse on Homeless Youth & Families (NCHFY) is a free information service for, communities, organizations, and individuals interested in developing new and effective strategies for supporting young people and their families (<https://rhyclclearinghouse.acf.hhs.gov/>).
- The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence provides information and resources for those wanting to educate themselves about and help others with the issues related to domestic violence (<http://www.nrcdv.org/>).
- National Runaway Safeline (NRS) works to keep America's runaway, homeless and at-risk youth safe and off the streets. NRS operates the 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and 1800RUNAWAY.org online services, including live chat, email and forum. NRS provides youth and families in crisis with support and access to resources 24 hours a day, 365 days a year (<http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org>).
- Safe Place provides access to immediate help and supportive resources for all young people in crisis through a network of sites sustained by qualified agencies, trained volunteers, and businesses (<http://nationalsafeplace.org>).