



F is for FAMILIES

This resource has been designed by Lyn French, A Space Director, to be used with the emotional learning cards from the set entitled '**A-Z of Emotions**'. Purchase the cards online at www.inivacreativelearning.org

Introduction

The word 'family' has the same root as 'familiar'. As we know, families are made up of people who are the most familiar to us. We all start life as part of a family, whatever form our family takes. All families are different and every family has their own 'do's' and 'don'ts'.

This worksheet can be used as a starting point for talking about and exploring the subject of families. Questions are included to which you can give general answers or examples from your own life. As well, once you've completed this worksheet, you might want to look at the **A to Z of Emotions** cards to see which feelings described you think come up in family life.

To begin with, it's a good idea to get a sense of who is in your family by answering the following questions. You might want to make a picture or a family map to create a visual image of you and your family.

Who lives at home? Who else is in your family who doesn't live with you? What about grandparents - are they part of your family? Aunts, uncles, cousins? Does your family have friends who are just like family members? You can include them in your picture too. And pets - do you have a pet which is important to you? Pets can be included as they can seem like part of the family.

The forms families take

It used to be common to think of families as being made up of mothers, fathers and children. But there are many different forms families can take. **What are they?**

Families can be two parents and a child or children. However they can also be a child or children living with one birth parent or a relative. Some families have same sex parents or foster or adoptive parents instead of, or as well as, birth parents. There is no one family type that is 'better than' another - families are all different. **Describe what 'family' means to you.**

Family Relationships

It can help to talk about our family relationships. Sometimes, talking about family feels disloyal. We might imagine that we're speaking of things that should be kept private.



However, if we talk about family with someone whom we're close to and can trust, then it can bring us closer. We might also choose to talk about family with someone who can listen carefully and help us to make sense of our experiences. **How does talking about family feel for you?**

All families go through good and bad times. It's important to think about all of our feelings and to try to understand them. **What is your best memory of family life? What is your most upsetting memory?**

We may feel closest to one or more family members. Sometimes this changes over time. **Who are you closest to? Has this always been the same?**

Sometimes families change. For example, one parent may move out and still visit or may move far away. A sister or brother might live somewhere else. Or a family member might die. **What feelings might we have if someone from our family is no longer living with us?**

Families can be SUPPORTIVE / CARING / LOVING. **How do family members show their love and care for each other?**

All families have ups and downs. At times family life can be CONFUSING / UPSETTING / LONELY/ full of ANGER. **When might someone feel confused about their family? Upset? Lonely? What might family members get angry about?**

Some families do things together. **What do you think would be nicest to do with your family?**

The way we talk to each other in families can change or vary. Things can go well and everyone might get on. Then big or little arguments can break out or misunderstandings occur. People's feelings could get hurt. **What do families commonly get into arguments about?**

We all need to learn to communicate respectfully in families. This isn't always very easy because we know our family members very well and they know us too. We can easily 'push each other's buttons'. **What does this mean?**

Some family members might be easier to talk to than others. Or perhaps people don't talk to each other very much at all. Every family is different.

- **How does communication work in your family - is everyone quite talkative or the opposite? Can you share how you really feel?**
- **Are there times when you hurt each other's feelings when you try to talk?**
- **When things get heated, are you usually able to listen to each other and try to understand each other's point of view?**

In some families, there are different expectations the children depending on whether they are the first born or the middle child or the baby of the family. Gender might make a difference too - some families have different expectations of girls or boys. **Where are you in the birth order? Whatever your age, do your parents have expectations of you?**



Whether you're aware of it or not, families often give different members different roles. Sometimes this is linked to gender. A common example used to be that mothers had the caretaking role, making meals and looking after smaller children and fathers went out to work. Now parental roles are mixed and matched. **What roles do the adults take in your family?**

Children can be given roles too. The oldest, for example, might have more responsibilities. There are other roles too. For instance, one child may be seen as the smart one, another the sporty one, and yet another as the one who is the funniest. **Do you feel pressure to behave in a certain way? Do you ever wish you have a different role in your family or get treated differently?**

Family Stories

Some families have a long history with family stories which are considered very important and might still have a role in guiding everyday behaviour. This can be a support to families or the opposite - it might feel like a burden. For example, perhaps someone in your family's past was a great success and there is pressure in the family for all children to succeed. Or perhaps grandparents and parents had no opportunity to finish their education and worked very hard to make sure their children had this chance. Children in these kinds of families may feel they'll only be loved if they achieve very well at school and then go on to university and get a high paying job.

- **Tell a family story from your family's past that makes you proud and one that feels like a burden.**
- **Is there a past family member who everyone still talks about? If so, describe this person and why they're remembered.**
- **What are the expectations placed on children in your family?**

Family secrets

Families can have secrets too. Here are some common experiences that families may feel they have to keep hidden: *A family member has had, or currently has mental health problems, spent time in prison, drug or alcohol problems or committed suicide.*

None of these circumstances should be a cause for shame. It is now known that when people have these kind of troubles, it's because they're hurting inside. Perhaps they have never felt loved or they have only been mistreated or they are very sensitive and no one has been respectful of this. Once we know someone's real story, we feel compassion and understand them better. **What does compassion mean to you?**

Family love

All of us have a basic human need to feel loved and recognised for who we are. It's natural to want to feel this way all the time but this is unrealistic. There will be times when we don't feel as loved or as loveable. Perhaps it's when we've made bad choices or we're told off or we imagine we're a disappointment. It's important to hold in mind our positive experiences and remember when we've felt most loved. Some of us find what's called a 'family of choice'. This can be good



friends or anyone we're close to outside of the family who gives us the kind of love and understanding we need. As we go through life, we learn that we can have a family of origin *and* a family of choice. Family is about building good relationships with others whether or not we are biologically related.

A to Z of Emotions

We have an emotional connection to everyone in our family. This means that family members are bound to trigger our feelings. Look at the common feelings handout and see if you can give your own examples of when people might feel this way. As well, you might find it useful to look through the **A to Z of Emotions** and give examples of when the feelings featured come up in families.



A- Z of Emotions

Here are some examples of family members - who is in your family and who you are closest to? Most distant from?

MOTHER	FATHER
STEP-MOTHER	STEP-FATHER
SISTER(S)	BROTHER(S)
STEP-SISTER(S)	STEP-BROTHER(S)



HALF-SISTER(S)	HALF-BROTHER(S)
GRANDMOTHER	GRANDFATHER
AUNT(S)	UNCLE(S)
COUSIN(S)	CLOSE FAMILY FRIENDS

Feelings stirred up in Families

Some of the common feelings we can all have in families are listed below. Give examples of when people might feel these ways:

Feeling ACCEPTED	Feeling UNWANTED
Feeling UNDERSTOOD	Feeling ANGRY
Feeling VALUED	Feeling SAD



Feeling LOVED	Feeling LONELY
Feeling COMFORTED	Feeling HURT
Feeling SECURE	Feeling UNSAFE
Feeling ADMIRED	Feeling JEALOUS

Feelings stirred up in Families

Some of the common feelings we can all have in families are listed below. Give examples of when people might feel these ways:

Feeling SUPPORTED	Feeling CONFUSED
Feeling CARED FOR	Feeling LEFT OUT



Feeling LOOKED UP TO	Feeling UNFAIRLY TREATED
Feeling SAFE	Feeling WORRIED
Feeling LISTENED TO	Feeling UNHEARD
Feeling APPRECIATED	Feeling MISUNDERSTOOD