

5. Handling Difficult Situations

Overcoming Obstacles



Families may choose one activity under this topic to count as one of the 10 activities needed for the BSA Family Award.

Purpose: To help family members learn to handle difficult situations, identify sources of problems and difficulties, and learn ways to manage them.

Note to parents: Children are not exempt from real problems or worries. They should be taught and reassured that problems can be identified, faced, and dealt with when family members support one another.

Suggested Activities

1. Do the role-play described below (or one of your own) to teach everyone the concept of overcoming obstacles. Describe the situation, assign each person a role, and have the family pretend the situation is real.

Situation: Sam comes home from his Little League ball game. He throws his mitt across the room and says, "I'm never going to go again. I can't play. The coach just makes me sit on the bench. I hate him. He never lets me play."

Roles: Sam, Sam's mother, and Sam's brother or sister

Role-play: Pretend you are these people. What can you say and do to help Sam?

Role-playing may be done with most situations facing your children, such as going to the doctor, apologizing to a friend, or asking a teacher for help with math. Practicing how they will act, or what they will say, in a situation before it happens helps children learn to overcome obstacles.

2. As a family, brainstorm activities that people can do to relieve stress. Examples might be taking a long walk, playing a game, taking a relaxing bath, talking, listening to music, or jumping rope. Help each family member discover what works best for him/her.
3. Plan a special time for each child, when the child can spend time alone with a parent. Often, being alone together helps a child to open up and talk about problems.
4. If there is a problem, or even a happy event that you feel would cause your family stress, plan a "family talk" to share family feelings about the situation.

5. Recognize and help your children see the skills they have in coping with their problems. Identify and talk about their skills when you see them demonstrated.

6. Read and discuss the following story, "David's Fear."

David was afraid of being lost. He had listened to people talk about being lost in a store and not being able to find the person they came with. He had heard about kidnappers, and he was afraid that something like that would happen to him. He knew that his friends were not afraid, and he was sure people would think he was a baby if he told them.

Discussion: What kind of problem does David have? If you were David, what would you do? Encourage your family to share ideas.

7. On slips of paper, write 10 difficulties or problems that relate to your family, one per slip. Examples might include going to the dentist, fighting with a friend, losing a toy, or not passing spelling tests. Place the slips in a bowl. Each family member draws one slip and reads it. Ask: "What might be the cause of this problem? What can we do about the problem?" Discuss.
8. As a family, read aloud a book about overcoming obstacles. Suggestions:
 - *The Magic Tapestry*, Demi, Henry Holt, 1994. In this Chinese folktale, the youngest son must overcome frightening obstacles to win back his mother's heavenly tapestry.
 - *Everyday Heroes at Home*, Jill C. Wheeler, Abdo Publishing, 1996. Tells the stories of youth who had to overcome such serious problems as broken homes, abuse, and prejudice to succeed in life.
 - *The Great Quillow*, James Thurber, Stephen Kellogg (illustrator), Harcourt Brace, 1994. A clever toymaker defeats a ferocious giant and saves his town from destruction.
 - *Afraid (Thoughts and Feelings)*, Susan Riley, David M. Budd (photographer), Child's World, 1999. Enumerates fears common to children, such as fear of the dark, heights, doctors, storms, and doing things for the first time, such as going to school.

Adjusting to a Move



Families may choose one activity under this topic to count as one of the 10 activities needed for the BSA Family Award.

Purposes: To acquaint families with ways to cope with moving to a new location and adjusting to new surroundings, and to help families welcome new neighbors.

Suggested Activities

1. On state and/or city maps, pinpoint the location of the new home. Trace the route from the old home to the new home. Note any special features near the new home, such as mountains, lakes, parks, or historic sites.
2. Discuss the situations that will stay the same when the move is made. For example, the home furnishings will probably be the same. Discuss the things that will change. Learn all you can about the new location before you get there. Discuss the length of the trip to the new home, and how the family and furniture will be transported there.
3. Make good-bye cards to give to special friends, containing your new address and phone number. Add a picture if you have one.
4. Have current friends write their addresses and phone numbers in a special book.
5. Make the first few nights of the move a fun adventure. Some families may be in a motel; others might be camping, or staying with friends or relatives. Consider having a picnic lunch or dinner on the floor. Camp out in sleeping bags. Sit around a candle or lamp and tell stories or sing songs as if you were gathered around a campfire.
6. Have family members help choose the setup at the new location. Where would they like their bed in the new room? Changes can be made later after everyone feels settled.
7. Have each family member pack a fun kit for themselves with items they will want first at the new location, such as favorite toys, books, or games.
8. As a family, attend your new place of worship.
9. As a family, take a walk around the new neighborhood to learn what is there. Meet a few of the neighbors; don't wait for them to come to you.
10. At the new home, discuss how each family member is feeling about his or her new place. Does anyone feel unaccepted? Why? How can the family help support this person?
11. If the move involves a new job, take the family to the new workplace(s) so they can see where family members will work.
12. Make a telephone list with standard emergency numbers plus your new work numbers, new school numbers, new neighbors, and people who can help.
13. Make a list of things your family can do to make a new person feel welcome in your neighborhood. Do two things from the list.
14. Do something to help a neighbor on moving day. You could take them a snack or offer them a place to rest and relax for a while.
15. Invite newcomers to join your family in an activity. Go to the movies, on a picnic, etc.
16. Have a party for newcomers and some of your friends. Stay with the new people as much as possible to ensure they meet and get to know others.
17. Give your new neighbors phone numbers of your favorite pizza delivery service, dry cleaner, babysitter, hardware store, etc.
18. List how family members can keep in touch with old friends, such as letters, e-mail, phone calls, or shared vacations. Pen pals are fun for children who can read and write. Another family member can help a young child write a letter.
19. As a family, read aloud a book about moving.
Suggestions:
 - *Franklin's Bad Day*, Paulette Bourgeois, Brenda Clark (illustrator), Scholastic, 1996. Also available in Spanish: *Franklin Tiene Un Mal Día*, Turtleback, 1997. When Franklin's best friend moves away, it makes him feel sad.
 - *A New House*, Deborah Manley, Julie Simpson (illustrator), Raintree Children's Books, 1979. Simple text and illustrations describe the building of a house and the experience of moving into a new neighborhood.

Coping With Long-Term Illness



Families may choose one activity under this topic to count as one of the 10 activities needed for the BSA Family Award.

Purposes: To help families face the challenges of a long-term illness with greater understanding and unity, and to understand the challenges of other families who have a member with a long-term illness.

Note to parents: Making adjustments is difficult when a family member's health and well-being are drastically changed. Family members must remember to be sensitive to each other's needs while showing compassion and understanding for the person who is not well.

Suggested Activities

1. Have family members remember a time when they were ill and someone took care of them. Talk about what they disliked about being ill. What did they want to happen that did not happen? What would have made them feel more comfortable while they were ill?
 2. Discuss a situation that took place in your family in the past when someone with a long-term illness needed your help. It might have been a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or close family friend. How did the patient and family members cope with the illness?
 3. Make a simple handmade gift to brighten the home or hospital room of a person with a long-term illness. Gift ideas might include a card, paper flowers, or pictures.
 4. As a family, speak with your religious leader(s) or other members of your faith about ways to help the patient and family members cope with a long-term illness.
 5. Talk about what it would be like for a grandparent to move in with the family because of an illness or declining health. Look at the situation from both the grandparent's and family members' points of view. List things the family could do to make the transition easier.
 6. If someone in your family has a long-term illness, discuss changes that may occur in your family.
- Talk about the illness and what can happen. How long might the illness last? Will the illness get worse? What does terminal illness mean? What won't the patient be able to do anymore? How will the illness change the family's regular activities? Who will be doing what? Discuss the emotional needs of the caregivers as well as the patient.
7. List hobbies that a person might be able to do while ill. Together as a family, make a small craft or hobby box for someone who is ill.
 8. Visit a store where special equipment, such as wheelchairs and shower chairs, is sold or rented. Find out what other aids are available and how they work.
 9. Visit a nursing home as a family service project. You might want to make something to take and share, or a book that you could read to a patient.
 10. Select a family that is coping with an ill family member. Do something to help. You could rake leaves, shovel snow, care for the lawn, clean the house, or watch the children. Plan "time off" or a "day off" for different members of the family to have their own free time when they do not have to be the caregiver.
 11. As a family, prepare and freeze several home-cooked meals. Give them to a family coping with a long-term illness.
 12. As a family, read aloud a book about someone coping with illness. Suggestions:
 - *The Memory Box*, Mary Bahr, David Cunningham (illustrator), Albert Whitman, 1995; Econo-Clad Books 1999. When Grandpa realizes he has Alzheimer's disease, he starts a memory box with his grandson.
 - *There's a Little Bit of Me in Jamey*, Diana M. Amadeo, Judith Friedman, Albert Whitman, 1995. Brian, whose younger brother Jamey has leukemia, feels frightened, confused, and neglected by his parents, but he finds some comfort when he donates bone marrow to his brother.

Loss of Loved Ones



Families may choose one activity under this topic to count as one of the 10 activities needed for the BSA Family Award.

Purpose: To help each family member cope with the pain and confusion of the death of a family member or loved one, and to understand that each person does not deal with grief in the same way.

Note to parents: As parents, it is our instinct to shield our children from pain and unpleasant feelings. Most parents don't talk about death with their children until they are forced to. When you are dealing with your own grief, it makes talking to your children about death more difficult. Talk to your children before you are confronted with the death of a family member or friend. This gives family members more time to reflect on the family's traditions and beliefs regarding death.

Suggested Activities

1. Discuss your religious beliefs and the cultural traditions of your family in regard to death. What happens to the person who died? What ceremonies or rituals will be conducted? What customs does your family follow when there has been a death of a family member or friend?
2. Discuss the feelings you might have when a loved one dies. Fear, anger, denial, and sadness are all part of the grief process. How or when people die may affect how you feel. The person might have been very sick for a long time before dying. You might feel better that he or she is not suffering any longer, but you still hurt because you miss that person. Talk about how you might have different feelings when a death is sudden. The age of the person who has died also might affect how you feel.
3. Plant a tree or perennial flower in memory of a deceased loved one.
4. Look through old family photos. Look for pictures of relatives who have died and talk about them. How did they die? How old were they? How were they related to you? What do you remember about them?
5. Think of when you might be able to help support friends and neighbors who have had a death in the family. Make a list of things you could do for them.
6. Visit a greeting card shop. Together read some sympathy cards. Which ones do you like best? Why?
7. If a friend or loved one has passed away, send a card to the grieving family. You could make a card, or choose a card, for everyone in the family to sign.
8. Talk about how feeling sad sometimes affects you in other ways, too. You might feel tired and might not be able to think as clearly. It might be hard to make decisions. Make a list of people or groups that can help a family with grief counseling.
9. Talk about pets you might have had over the years. Discuss how they died and how you felt. If you recently had a pet die, possibly have a special family prayer for the pet.
10. Learn about Memorial Day. As a family, do an activity to commemorate Memorial Day.
11. Visit a cemetery. If you live in an area that has an older cemetery, you might be able to find traditional raised headstones. Many newer cemeteries have markers or headstones that are flat to the ground so it is easier to maintain the grass. Look at the dates on some of the stones. How old was the person who died? Talk about the differences between interment in a mausoleum, burial in a casket, and cremation.
12. As a family, read aloud a book in which one of the characters dies. Suggestions:
 - *Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs*, Tomie de Paola, Putnam, 1997; reissue due April 2000. A small boy enjoys his relationship with his grandmother and his great-grandmother, but he learns to face their inevitable deaths.
 - *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney*, Judith Viorst, Erik Blegvad (illustrator), Simon and Schuster, 1975; Aladdin Paperbacks 1976. In an attempt to overcome his grief, a boy tries to think of the 10 best things about his dead cat.
 - *When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death*, Laurie Krasny Brown, Marc Tolon Brown (illustrator), Little, Brown, 1996; paperback edition 1998. Dinosaur characters explain the feelings people may have when a loved one dies, and ways to honor the memory of someone who has died.

Family Computer Use

Online Family: Your Guide to Fun and Discovery in Cyberspace. Preston Gralla, John Wiley and Sons, 1998. This user-friendly guide is a great resource for finding the best family-related sites on the Internet.

Family Values

A Call to Character: A Family Treasury of Stories, Plays, Proverbs, and Fables to Guide the Development of Values for You and Your Children. Colin Greer and Herbert Kohl, Harper Collins Publishers, Inc, 1995.

Life's Greatest Lesson, Or 20 Things I Want My Kid to Remember. Dr. Hal Urban, Great Lesson Press, 1992.

Loving Is Natural, Parenting Is Not: Creating a Value-Centered Family. Dr. Gil Gockley and Tonya Tihansky Gockley, Coleman Press, 1997.

Parents Do Make a Difference: How to Raise Kids with Solid Character, Strong Minds, and Caring Hearts. Dr. Michele Borba, Josséy-Bass Inc., 1999.

Parents, Kids and Character: 21 Strategies to Help Your Children Develop Good Character. Dr. Helen Leggette, Character Development Publishing, 1999.

Raising Good Children: From Birth Through the Teenage Years. Thomas Lickona, Bantam Books, 1983. Describes the stages of moral development from birth to adulthood and offers down-to-earth guidance for each stage.

Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World: Seven Building Blocks for Developing Capable Young People. Stephen Glenn and Jane Nelsen, Prima Publishing, 1989.

Teaching Your Children Values. Linda and Richard Eyre, Simon and Schuster, 1993. Help your child develop positive values such as honesty, self-reliance, and dependability through games and family activities.

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families. Stephen R. Covey, Western Publishing, 1997. Author shows how to use activities, meetings, and games to create a spirit of understanding and support within the family.

Your religious leaders may offer books, pamphlets, or classes to guide you in teaching values to your children.

Family Needs

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk. Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, Avon Books, 1999. Offers innovative ways to solve common communication problems between parents and their children.

Public libraries, bookstores, phone directories, and the Internet are helpful in finding information, pamphlets, agencies, and support groups to help you understand and deal with behavior problems, health issues, disabilities, or other challenges facing your family.

Family Traditions

Family Traditions: 289 Things to Do Again and Again. Caryl Waller Krueger, Abingdon Press, 1998. Lists specific suggestions for creating family traditions that emphasize love and cultivate values.

Fun Time, Family Time. Susan Perry, Avon Books, 1996. Contains more than 700 activities, adventures, recipes, and rituals to help make family time more meaningful.

Fun and Games for Family Gatherings: With a Focus on Reunions. Adrienne Anderson, Reunion Research, 1996. Filled with ideas for what to do when extended families get together.

Family Activities

Newspapers, phone directories, travel clubs, and your local chamber of commerce or visitor's bureau can provide information on museums, local attractions, historical sites, fairs, festivals, and other family-related activities and outings. Call museums and historic sites for dates of special family events they may sponsor.

Family Funbook. Joni Hilton, Running Press, 1998. More than 400 amazing and amusing activities for the entire family are grouped into four chapters, one for each season of the year.

365 TV-Free Activities You Can Do With Your Child. Steve and Ruth Bennett, Adams Publishing, 1996. A collection of easy-to-do games, indoor and outdoor activities, and projects for parents and children to do together.

Valerie and Walter's Best Books for Children: A Lively Opintionated Guide. Valerie Lewis and Walter Mayes, Avon Books, 1998. A convenient guide to children's literature, featuring in-depth reviews and cross-references by theme and interest.

Hey! Listen to This. Jim Trelease, Penguin USA, 1992. A collection of 48 read-aloud stories for parents to read to children.

FamilyFun Magazine, Disney Publishing. This monthly magazine offers articles, activities, crafts, recipes, and reviews to help families have more fun together. Visit its Web site at www.familyfun.com.