



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS INITIATIVE

Toolkit for Families of Young Children

Tip Sheet #1: Challenging Beliefs that Influence Your Family Perspective

1. **Examine your family belief system.** Take time to reflect upon and identify your individual views about family ideals, beliefs, and values. Consider spending some time alone, journaling, or talking with someone you trust and/or who you grew up with (like a sibling). Once you have a clear understanding of the beliefs that influence your family perspective, you will be better prepared to examine the impact it has on your familial relationships.
2. **Identify any unrealistic beliefs about your family perspective.** Unrealistic beliefs about your family perspective can cause problems over time. For example, if your belief is that your partner should remain at home while you work and your partner's belief is different, an understanding of each other's views is necessary to avoid conflict. Unrealistic expectations about family ideals, roles, and duties can result in disappointment and frustration for family members. It is important for family members to have an open mind and hold realistic but positive expectations about their relationships throughout one stage of development to the next.
3. **Identify any life circumstances that affect your family perspective.** Life's circumstances can leave you struggling with implementing family roles when your current household situation does not match your ideals (i.e., divorce, death of a caregiver). Our family belief system is so ingrained in us, yet we often don't consider the distress we feel when our family perspective does not align with our reality. Life is in a constant state of transition, and many situations are beyond our control. Being proactive in the things that are within your control and acknowledging your strengths in the process can help you make the transition into new roles and responsibilities smoother.
4. **Consider alternative interpretations of your beliefs.** Considering alternative interpretations about your beliefs helps you to evaluate them objectively. For example, one might hold a belief that family members should never disagree with each other. If you take time to consider how other people or family members may feel about that belief, you may be surprised by their views. Other strategies include talking with other families whom you look up to, reading books on family relationships, and talking with a family counselor to learn about normal levels of conflict in families.

Changing your beliefs, attitudes, and expectations about relationships takes time and effort. However, these changes are well worth the effort. Your relationships are more likely to thrive when you and your family adopt positive, accepting attitudes toward each other.