

- ◆ How healthy is your home life?
- ◆ Did you know that your private life directly affects your public life?
- ◆ Are your children living in a healthy and happy home?
- ◆ Take the quiz on page four to find out!



A Healthy Mind Begins at Home

Despite the amount of time we spend in our cars, at the office and in school, home is the starting and ending point of our days. Home may be where our family lives, where our pet is waiting, or where we find solace in relaxing with our favorite music or a good book. Home may be where we rest our bodies and minds, recovering from the stress and anxiety of long work or school days. For some, particularly children, home may represent safety and security. For others, home may mean an opportunity to regroup and prepare for the rest of life.

Home may also be a *nightmare*. In a household where abuse, mental illness, anger or neglect resides, home means pain and sadness. When this happens, the foundation crumbles and people look for their needs elsewhere. Kids begin to see school as a haven and adults turn to their workplace and colleagues for emotional support.

Sadly, when we can't find what we need in our home, we compensate by committing ourselves to our work or some other outside influence. We may seek solace in a bar, a mall or even an extramarital affair, hoping to

recover what we're missing.

Is your home a haven or a harrowing experience for those who reside there? Do your children seek comfort and security or do they wish they were anywhere else? In this issue, we'll look at what makes a healthy minded home. What we do in our homes affects the rest of our lives and everyone around us. The secrets we hide, the sadness we bear or the pain we inflict upon others won't stay in the home for long. As well, a healthy home life gives us the strength and courage to go into the world with confidence and a positive mindset. If you know that your home is unhealthy, if there is suffering and pain, or just undo tension and anxiety, call us today! Let us help you create a healthier home. Call your Employee Assistance Program today at

1-800-899-3926

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Characteristics of a Healthy Home



A healthy home life doesn't happen by accident. If you examine the lives of people who cherish their homes and families, you'll find some common characteristics.



People communicate well in a healthy home. No matter how challenging life gets, they discuss important issues and concerns in a respectful and purposeful manner. Their goal is to work together to communicate rather than attack. Strong communication skills can be learned. If you feel that you and your family could use some lessons, contact your Employee Assistance Program.



People realize that they are part of something bigger and contribute accordingly. In a healthy home, a mother doesn't have a child and consider the job completed. An older sibling realizes responsibility for a younger one. A husband shares the struggles of daily life with his wife. All of these people understand that they are better off together than alone, and act accordingly.



People support each other emotionally, even when it doesn't seem reasonable. We all have times when we over-react or feel emotionally off balance. In a healthy home, the members understand that supporting each other emotionally through compassion, sympathy and celebration, keeps the overall home healthier. Ignoring emotional needs causes a home to be tense and communication breaks down. Trust weakens as people feel emotionally neglected.



Physical needs are met.

Sufficient food, clothing, and other essentials are available. Even in families where money is tight, the essentials bring comfort. When physical health breaks down due to lack of food, poor hygiene, etc., the mind is not far behind. Serious feelings of insecurity result and people often spend a lifetime recovering emotionally from such neglect. Often, this type of situation is the result of a parent having a substance abuse problem. Money is directed at the substance rather than the physical needs of the family.



Happiness is evident. We can't all be happy every moment and it's unreasonable to expect such a

scenario. But some homes have little or no happiness. It is replaced with anger, anxiety and even fear. Happiness stealers can be anything from substance abuse to financial struggles to ill disciplined children. If you don't find happiness often in your home, examine those things that prevent your household from being happy.



Problems are honestly solved.

Households where difficult issues are left unresolved or "shoved under the rug" leave a continual sense of uneasiness. Who knows when the issue might raise its ugly head again? This characteristic is directly related to communication. It takes real diligence to deal with problems in the home. To do so honestly means each person takes responsibility for his/her part in the problem. Most often, each family member's role changes with each situation. Every member needs to learn to solve, support and take responsibility depending on the problem itself.

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What You Take With You

To Work...

For adults, the effects of an unhealthy private life eventually spill over into our public lives. We see it so often in the world of politicians and movie stars. The only difference for us is that it's not splashed all over the television and tabloids. However, it does become apparent to colleagues and friends soon enough.

If your marriage is struggling, it will distract you throughout each day. For example, you leave home having argued with your spouse or maybe not speaking at all. Even if you are able to consciously shove that relationship aside, it's a temporary move. One argument isn't a crisis. You can let it go until you get home to work it out. But regular battles, emotional manipulation, verbal and/or physical abuse over time will change your life. You'll respond to other people differently. Your tolerance threshold may be lowered considerably. Anger, frustration, depression and anxiety become more common. Job performance and other relationships suffer as you struggle with what's going on at home.

Other home-based situations that can result in loss of effectiveness and daily unhappiness include:

- ◇ Problems with children: discipline, academics, etc.
- ◇ Financial struggles
- ◇ Health concerns
- ◇ Extended family crises: parents, grandparents, siblings, etc.
- ◇ Spiritual issues: questions of faith and religion.

Staying focused on life at home is essential to overall mental health. There will always be struggles on the homefront, but dealing with them in a constructive and positive way can prevent them from becoming overwhelming. The importance of creating a home life that comforting and stabilizing cannot be overstated.

We live in a chaotic world, changing every day. It is essential that we have a place to go home to; where we can relax, be ourselves and be refreshed for what tomorrow may bring.

To School...

For children, a happy and healthy home is vital for proper mental growth. In many families, much of the children's time is spent in school, in after-school programs and at extra-curricular activities, such as sports. With such active children, a place to unwind and rest becomes even more essential. All children need a sense of security as well as a source of comfort and love.

To begin with, children need the basic essentials: healthy food, hygiene and rest. When life becomes so hectic that our children are living on fast food and missing sleep, their private and public lives show the strain. Privately, discipline issues arise often from whining, disobedience and/or hyperactivity. As there may be less time to deal with these situations, problems grow. Publicly, the inability to focus may cause academic difficulties and behavioral issues. Relationships with peers and authority figures weaken.

Next, children require nurturing and a sense of security. Neglect, sadly, is a common form of abuse in our society. Parents who would not even think of physically harming their children, abandon them to grow without guidance and love. It is not necessarily purposeful on the parents' part. Adults get busy, but children need to be heard. They need conversation, physical attention and training. If you don't train and love your children, they'll seek it elsewhere, and often in the worst of places. Children seek out people whom they perceive will care about them. Their young minds and hearts are not the best judges of character. It's vital that parents be the most influential people in their children's lives.

Finally, children are seriously affected by the other relationship dynamics in the home. All of the problems affecting adults also affect the children. Communicate with your children, show them how to deal with problems in a healthy way. Work at getting along with your spouse, maintaining healthy family relations and providing the essentials, so that your children will see home as a place they want to be.



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Healthy Home Quiz

If you have to answer "no" or "unsure" to any of the following questions, please contact your Employee Assistance Program. We can help!

1. Do you look forward to returning home most days? If not, why?

2. Does your family communicate well?

3. Is there appropriate physical affection demonstrated between family members?

4. Are emotions balanced for the most part when communicating, disagreeing, problem solving, etc.?

5. Do you have the physical essentials to meet your family's needs (food, housing, etc.)?

6. Is your family bound together spiritually through common beliefs and/or religion?

Note: this is one of the most common issues that causes family disputes in households today.

7. Do you feel like you can be yourself at home? If not, what prevents you from feeling that way?

Let us help with any family issues or needs. We're here 24 hours a day, 7 days a week just for you!

Contact your Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-899-3926.

Publishing Information

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