

## Healthy Family Overview

Read each criteria and score it on a scale of zero to ten (0-10) depending on how well the adults who raised you performed the function.

Zero (0) means the family was not successful at performing this function from your birth to around age eighteen.

Ten (10) means the family was always or very successful at performing this function from your birth to around age eighteen.

Any number between 0 and 10 would indicate the degree to which the function was performed successfully. Answers might vary from a low score indicating *hardly ever* (1-3), to *sometimes* (4-6), to *most of the time* (7-9).

*A healthy family system is one that provides a child:*

\_\_\_ **Safety from extreme temperatures and temperaments.** Children are protected against harm due to heat, cold, inclement weather; loud noises, harsh words, accidents, yelling, fighting; rough touch, abuse; neglect; violence; angry, depressed, or preoccupied caregivers.

\_\_\_ **Nourishment.** Children have ample food and liquid for mental and physical development. The role of food is for sustenance, not reward or punishment. Meal times are dependable, pleasant, and interactive.

\_\_\_ **Attunement and response.** Children have a responsible adult consistently aware of the children's needs and responsive to those needs in a congruent fashion.

\_\_\_ **Tactile stimulation.** Children experience appropriate hugs, kisses, holding, stroking, caressing, soothing, playing, cuddling, snuggling.

\_\_\_ **Cognitive stimulation.** Children live in an environment rich with colors, shapes, variety of sounds, educational information, enjoyable interaction with kids and adults.

\_\_\_ **Sleep and rest.** Children lived in a setting where sleep and rest are easy, dependable, and conducive to mental and physical health.

\_\_\_ **Emotional stability.** Children have contented caregivers happily interacting with the children. Caregivers who also model emotional stability and maturity.

\_\_\_ **Routine and structure.** Child had caregivers who could be relied upon to provide food, care, stimulation, and protection with regularity. The child's needs were met before distress occurred from deprivation.

\_\_\_ **Affection and appreciation.** Children feel wanted and cherished; they experience visible evidence of love in caregivers' behaviors.

\_\_\_ **Financially stable.** Family has enough financial means to meet the basic needs of each individual and to prevent deprivation and embarrassment.

\_\_\_ **Flexibility.** Family can change and thrive with normal developmental transitions as well as life challenges.

\_\_\_ **Balance of freedom and responsibility.** Children are required to fulfill their commitments commensurate with their developmental age while at the same time being free to explore, make mistakes, and be creative.

\_\_\_ **Respect.** Adults model behavior deserving of respect and demonstrate respect for other family members. Honesty, integrity, dependability, high moral standards are common.

\_\_\_ **Love.** Adults in the family show love and caring for one another as well as for children.

\_\_\_ **Effective communication skills.** Adults talk and listen to children and each other with interest and esteem. Difficult subjects are allowed to be discussed. Children's questions and curiosities are managed with respect for their developmental ability to understand. Effective problem solving strategies are demonstrated by adults.

\_\_\_ **Help.** Adults in the family give permission for children to have needs and ask for help. Help is available. Adults seek help when they need it.

\_\_\_ **Privacy.** Adults and children have their privacy respected within the boundaries of safety.

\_\_\_ **Affirmation.** Children are seen as individuals with their unique talents and positive attributes recognized and supported.

\_\_\_ **Total score out of 180**

## Commentary and Scores

I have colleagues who don't believe there is such a thing as a healthy family. I'm not one of them. I do believe there are many, many families whose members would score very high on this simple survey. You may be in the fortunate group who scored **130 or above**, which could certainly describe an outstanding upbringing—if not perfect. You may have had a few very low scores but many high ones to offset the myriad of struggles that can happen in any family.

You could easily have a score **90-130**, which may reflect times in your childhood more difficult than others. Death, divorce, illness, job loss, moves, alcohol and drug abuse, physical/emotional abuse, loss of extended family support—any number of life challenges can lower your scores in an otherwise happy childhood.

If you have a score **below 90**, like I have, first of all, good for you for making it this far, and having the resilience to be reading this information! Reach around and give yourself a pat on the back or say a prayer of gratitude for the forces that got you this far with so many challenges and so little support. Many of us are driven by goal of creating a better life for ourselves and the family members for whom we are responsible.

I only list scores and commentary for your further thought. In no way does a short survey define your childhood or categorize your experience. The main purpose for the exercise is to give you a glimpse of relationship patterns that may or may not be a part of your system today.