“My family is under a lot of stress. How can we communicate better?”

There are guidelines you can follow to lessen the stress.

If you have a family, then you have experienced some level of family stress. It happens to all of us. Although not all stress is bad, the difficulties associated with family stress can be challenging to resolve. The key lies in how we handle it.

How are the family’s communication skills?

When we become stressed, we often yell and lash out. It is important to be aware of the tone you use when talking to others. Hold family meetings to encourage open communication, and follow these guidelines.

- Be specific and to the point.
- Stay focused.
- Have all the facts.
- Be honest.
- Be respectful and do not interrupt.
- Be open to other points of view.
- Take constructive criticism.
- Do not give advice, just listen.

Does the family have positive coping skills?

- Build a positive, optimistic culture with your family.
- Provide outlets and activities to open up and relieve stress together.
- Strengthen the family by spending time together. Spend one-on-one time with each member of the family so everyone feels recognized.
- Eat healthy foods and keep physically active. Exercise relieves stress.
- Use laughter to reduce stress and lift moods.
- Learn to set realistic and attainable expectations. Pressure on family members can lead to arguments, depression, anger and many other negative feelings. It is okay to say no sometimes.
- The family members should prioritize responsibilities, become organized, and know what is expected of them to avoid future issues.
- Give and encourage positive support.
- Seek out counseling if needed.

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