



**ASSIST-U YOUR EAP 800.750.5595**

### **FAMILY – STRENGTH FOR HARD TIMES**

During hard times, family can pull together for support or pull apart causing even greater pain and hurt. The acronym FAMILY can remind us of ways to build stronger relationships to help survive hard times.

- Forgive** Forgiveness is not condoning wrong behavior or even forgetting what happened. To the contrary, it is acknowledging the hurt and then making a conscious decision to let go of the hurt and painful recalls so that they will not continue to hurt us anymore. The goal is to set oneself free. Forgiveness is a decision, an action. Feeling may come much later. It does not need to involve the other person.
- Appreciation** Appreciation communicates trust and confidence in a relationship. It helps build the receiver's self-esteem and encourages desired behaviors. To affirm others, try to:
- Recognize efforts – “You may not feel that you have reached your goal yet, but I can see that you're really working hard on it.”
  - Recognize improvements – “You may not feel that you have reached your goal yet, but look how far you have come.”
  - Recognize assets, contributions, and strengths – “I really appreciate your help because it makes my job much easier.” “I really enjoyed being with you today.” “You are really good at that.”
- Memory** Creating memorable moments is an antidote to boredom, negative memories and creates positive memories in our long-term memory bank. Memorable moments can be simple. Playing card or board games, taking a walk, packing sandwiches to eat at a park, or candlelight dinners at home with different family members rotating as waiters/waitresses can be an inexpensive fun times.
- “I” Statements** When we're stressed, upset, or hurt, we either shut down or attack. Using blaming “You” statements can adversely affect relationships. The receiver is likely to feel accused, blamed, and criticized. The expected response would be a counterattack with another “You” statement. “I” statements are more effective because they avoid blaming and allow your message a greater probability of being heard. Example: “I feel afraid when our expenses go up because I worry about our finances.” Instead of, “Your spending is out of hand.” Communicating “I love you” is vital to a strong relationship. Your loved-ones need to hear and experience your love frequently. Saying “I love you” reminds you that you do love them and reaffirms your commitment to act lovingly. The more you say it, the more you'll believe and follow up with loving actions and feelings.
- Listen** Taking time to listen communicates love and understanding. Learn to paraphrase the other person's words to communicate thought empathy. By “stepping into the other person's shoes” and describe how he/she may be feeling communicate feeling empathy.
- Yielding** Practice assertiveness but do not insist on your rights all the time. Successful conflict management is not about being right or wrong, winning, or losing an argument. Try brainstorming creative ways to resolve a conflict or negotiate for a workable compromise.

If you would like to discuss any of these skills or any special issue, Assist-U EAP counselors are available to help. Please call 800-750-5595.