

# *Family Living*

## RELATIONSHIPS AND DECISIONS



FRANK D. COX

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# ***Family Living***

**RELATIONSHIPS AND DECISIONS**

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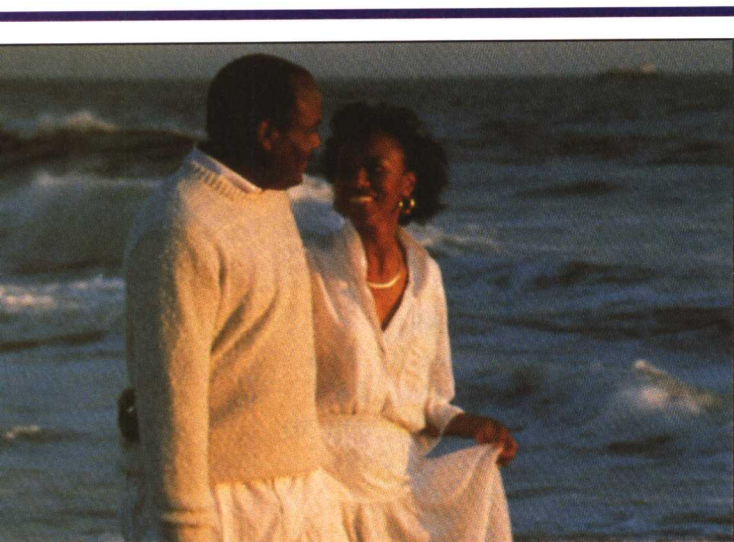
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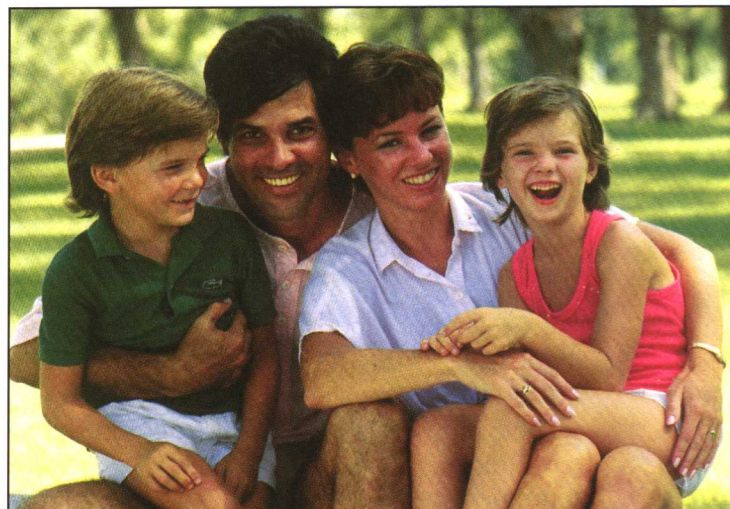
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# **Unit I**

## **Becoming a Person**

### **CHAPTERS**

- 1 - Relationships: Creating Strong and Healthy Families
- 2 - Making Decisions That Lead to a Fulfilling Life
- 3 - Personality Development
- 4 - Personality Development and Adolescence
- 5 - Young Adulthood: Making the Right Choices
- 6 - Living a Healthy Life
- 7 - Improving Communication



## Chapter 1

# Relationships: Creating Strong and Healthy Families



### As you read, think about:

- ♦ What are relationships?
- ♦ What are the characteristics of a strong family?
- ♦ Why is quality time important?
- ♦ How do strong families cope with crises?

### Vocabulary

- |                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| ♦ relationship     | ♦ autonomy               |
| ♦ family           | ♦ vicious circle         |
| ♦ bond             | ♦ respect                |
| ♦ socialization    | ♦ constructive criticism |
| ♦ conscience       |                          |
| ♦ family of origin |                          |





*A newborn colt is up and walking in an hour or two. You didn't walk until you were ten to fifteen months old. Without another more mature human to protect you, feed you, hold you, teach you and care for you during the long period that you were dependent, you wouldn't have survived. Think for a minute: how old must humans be before they can survive completely on their own: six, ten, fourteen years old? Humans form many kinds of relationships, one of which is called "family." In most cases, it is the family that shelters, protects, and nourishes children so that they can grow into adults. Without some kind of family, could you have survived infancy and childhood? Even as an adult, what kind of life would you lead if you were completely alone? Could you live without friends, without family, without human companionship? Everybody needs human relationships. The term **relationship** means connections—between parents and children, between other family members, between close friends, and between people in the workplace. In a relationship there is personal, meaningful, and lasting interaction between people.*

Each of us is born into a family of some kind. It may be the traditional American family of mom and dad, sister and brother, pet dog and cat, and home in the suburbs. It may be you and your divorced or widowed hard working mother or father. It may be you and your adopted brother or sister and your foster parents. In a few cases, it may even be an institution, such as a homeless children's shelter. There are many definitions of family. The U. S. Census Bureau defines **family** as a group of two or more persons who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption and who live together.

Regardless of how one is raised, we are all involved in relationships with other people. It is in human relationships that most people find happiness and fulfillment. Relationships provide us with friends, with love, perhaps with a family of our own. Relationships also provide us with meaningful life work. By this we mean that most work is done in the context of relationships.

### Did You Know?

Only about 26 percent of American families are traditional ones consisting of mom, dad and their own children under eighteen (Fig. 1-1).

Human relationships lead us to care about others. They help us to be productive and caring members of society.

Just how important are human relationships? Do they really help us to become successful adults? When the Nazi's bombed London during World War II, many children were taken from their families and moved to the countryside for safety. At the time it seemed like the right thing to do—protect the children from the bombs. Yet, those children actually had more problems when



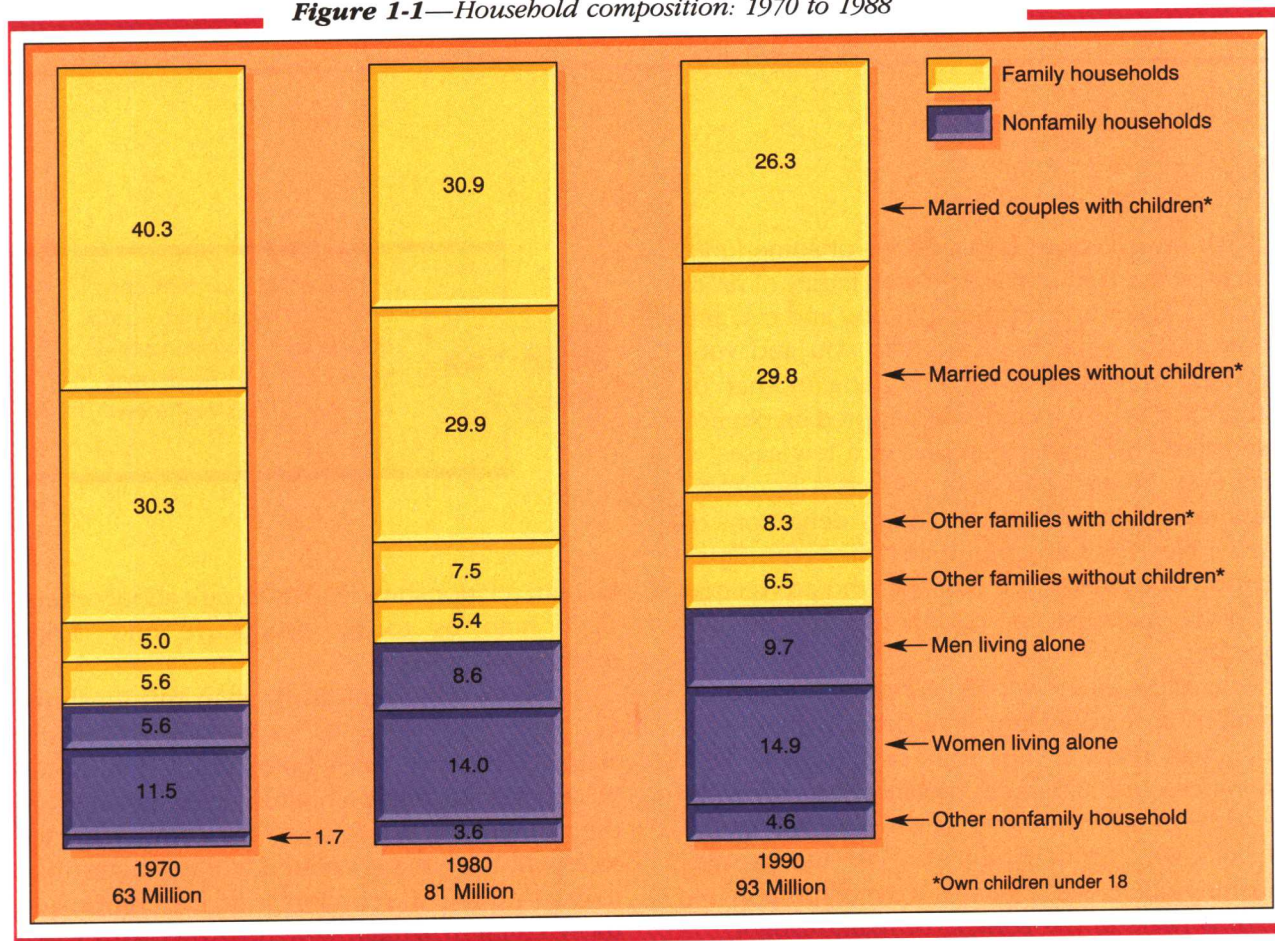
they grew up than did the children who stayed in London and faced nightly bombings. The relationship with the families was what made the difference. The London children were in greater physical danger, but they felt psychologically safe with their families.

People who can make healthy, lasting relationships learn to **bond** with others. This means that they have learned to identify with others, to feel involved with them, to care deeply about them, to feel supported, loved and valued by them. By bonding with others as we grow into adulthood, we come to feel a meaningful part of the world

around us. In a word, we become socialized. **Socialization** is the process of teaching children society's rules, and customs. Socialized persons have a **conscience**, the voice inside that makes you feel guilty when you do something wrong and good when you do something right. In large part one's ability to bond and have a conscience occurs during childhood and comes out of contact with caring adults.

Bonding with other people is essential to the creation of the mature adult who trusts and cares about others. More than that, bonding leads a person to care about and trust others. This is the

**Figure 1-1**—Household composition: 1970 to 1988





### Did You Know?

Earlier in this century infants in orphanages sometimes became listless, lost their appetites, and died for no apparent reason. This happened in even the best run, most caring orphanages. Finally it was discovered that they died from lack of human contact. One adult cared for up to a dozen infants. There was no time to hold them or talk to them. The babies were fed from bottleholders attached to their cribs. When the caregivers began holding and talking to each infant as they fed them, the babies stopped dying.

glue that holds society together. Without societal trust, the society becomes oppressive of its members as we find in the dictatorships that exist around the world. Dictators do not trust the people to make decisions. Thus, dictators do not allow a free press or any criticism of their government. They do not allow free elections and have large security forces that control and repress

### Did You Know?

Have you read or seen the movie *Lord of the Flies*? In this story a dozen shipwrecked young boys try to form a society on a desert island. Because they have no adults with whom to bond, they fail to become socialized, and they end up destroying everything they try to create.

the population. To be able to build trusting, caring, loving relationships is the basis upon which all lives, families, and societies will grow and thrive. Without such relationships all people's lives will suffer, families will be difficult to maintain and societies will fail to function in ways that allow their members freedom.

### Becoming You

#### What Do You Think?

1. Which relationships in your life have most influenced your personality? Why?
2. Which adult in your life are you most like and why?
3. Which adult in your life do you most want to be like? Why?
4. Are you best at developing relationships with people your own age? People older than you? People younger than you? Why?
5. What personal characteristics do you feel are most important to a good relationship?
6. With which person in your life do you have the best relationship? Why?

## Creating Strong Families: Why Ideals?

As you can see, it is very important to learn what makes a relationship successful. It is both essential and exciting because successful relationships are important to social, psychological and emotional survival.

- ♦ Can you create lasting relationships that are more than "just OK?"
- ♦ Can you create relationships that are comfortable, yet challenging at the same time?
- ♦ Will you be able to raise children who care about themselves and their community?





*Happy Birthday! Tradition helps make a strong family.*

The best answers to these questions are ideals that are worth seeking even if few of us can always attain them in every one of our relationships and within our families.

Why discuss ideals? you may ask. Won't we all fall short of the ideal? Yes, of course we will. But ideals can be goals. Goals give us direction in life. Goals motivate us.

We must have an ideal vision of what we want ourselves to be, our relationships to be, our families to be, our children to be, our society to be, our world to be if we are to improve them. It is the ability to imagine the ideal that allows people to change and improve. Without this vision of what could be, there would be little if any change, certainly no improvement in the human state. If we were simply born without the ability to learn and change, then nothing could improve. No vision of the ideal would be necessary to survive.

We study close relationships by examining the qualities of ideal families for it is in our family where we first learn about relationships. The

family in which we grow up is called our **family of origin**. By studying the ideal family, we will hopefully be able to answer the question, "Can I learn to build a strong and successful family for myself?"

### Did You Know?

In the United States, 94.7 percent of women and 95.4 percent of men over age sixty-five are now, or have been married.

## What Makes a Strong Family?

Much has been written about what is wrong with the family but little has been written about what is right in the successful family. We don't learn how to do something by looking only at how it shouldn't be done. We learn most effectively by studying a positive model thereby learning how to do something correctly. Some families appear to endure even in the face of great adversity. We need to discover why this is true. By discovering just what the strengths of these families are, all of us can be helped to better cope with the problems that arise in every family's, in every person's life.

Family strength, in its full and true meaning, grows out of strong marriages.

What makes a family strong? Successful families have six characteristics in common.

1. **COMMITMENT:** The most important quality of these strong families is a high degree of commitment. Members of strong families are deeply committed to one another. They promote one another's welfare. They work to make one another happy.