

Unit 5: Family Structure and Life Cycle

Essential Question: What can be done to strengthen the well-being of individuals and families across the life span?

Lesson Problem: What are the various structures of families? How do families change over the course of the life span?

National FCS Standards

(Refer to: <http://nasafacs.org/national-standards--competencies.html>)

Content: 6.0 Family

Comprehensive Standard: 6.1 Analyze the effects of family as a system on individuals and society.

Competency:

6.1.1 Analyze family as the basic unit of society.

6.1.5 Analyze the role of family in developing independence, interdependence, and commitment of family members.

6.1.6 Analyze the effects of change and transitions over the life course.

Content: 15.0 Parenting

Comprehensive Standard: 15.1 Analyze roles and responsibilities of parenting.

Competency: 15.1. Analyze parenting roles across the life span.

Kansas Family and Consumer Science Competencies

Course: Family Studies (22208/22218)

Benchmark: 5.2 Analyze roles and responsibilities of parenting.

Competency:

5.2.1 Examine parenting roles across the life span.

5.2.6 Compare and contrast consequences of parenting relationships to the individual, family, and society.

Benchmark: 5.3 Analyze the effects of family as a system on individuals and society.

Competency:

5.3.1 Analyze family as the basic unit of society.

5.3.2 Analyze the role family has on transmitting societal expectations.

Benchmark: 5.6 Examine personal needs and characteristics and their effects on interpersonal relationships.

Competency:

5.6.3 Analyze the effects of life span events and conditions on family relationships.

Course: Human Growth and Development (45004/45014)

Benchmark: 12.1 Analyze principles of human growth and development across the life span.

Competency:

12.1.1 Identify physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development across the life span.

12.1.2 Examine interrelationships among physical, emotional, social and intellectual aspects of human growth and development.

Benchmark: 12.2 Analyze conditions that influence human growth and development.

Competency:

12.2.1 Compare and contrast the effect of heredity and environment on human growth and development.

Benchmark: 12.3 Evaluate strategies that promote human growth and development across the life span.

12.3.1 Evaluate the role of nurturance on human growth and development.

Benchmark: 12.4 Analyze functions and expectations of various types of relationships.

12.4.1 Analyze processes for building and maintaining interpersonal relationships across the life span.

Benchmark: 12.5 Examine personal needs and characteristics and their effects on interpersonal relationships.

12.5.1 Investigate the effects of personal characteristics and needs on relationships through life.

12.5.2 Categorize the effects of life span events and conditions on relationships.

Basic Skills (red font/highlight): **Language Arts**, Math, Science, and **Social Studies**

21st Century Process Skills (red font/highlight):

- **Thinking & Problem Solving:** **Critical Thinking**, **Problem Solving (Flexibility)**, **Creativity** (Innovation)
- **Information Literacy and Communication Skills:** **Communication** (Media Literacy, Technology)
- **Leadership and Collaboration:** Leadership (Initiative), **Management (Productivity)**, **Goal Setting**, **Decision -Making**

Learning Objectives: The learner will:

- Describe family types.
- Analyze the benefits and challenges of family types.
- Understand what family means.
- Determine the impact of negative life events on family strength.
- Understand how resiliency impacts family strength.
- Describe the stages of the family life cycle.
- Evaluate the impact of each stage on the individual, family and society.

Vocabulary:

Family Types
Family Structure
Nuclear Family
Single-Parent Family
Blended Family
Extended Family
Adoptive Family
Foster Family
Resiliency
Family Life Cycle
Empty Nest
Sandwich Generation

(Add additional family types as appropriate.)

Instruction

Bell work: (5 minutes)

(Post or project on the board the following as students enter the classroom. Share they should be prepared to share their description with the class.)

What is the definition of family?

*Describe an ideal family. How do you know it's ideal?**

*(*Teacher Note: May need to define "ideal" before listing that question.)*

Introduction (anticipatory set):

Teacher: What does a family look like? (30 minutes)

(Pre-planning: Have a variety of photos of families representing the many kinds of relationships that exist. Relate to classroom text family types.)

- Show pictures of different types of families.
- Ask the class if they think they are families.

--Show several definitions of family. . (See <https://workfamily.sas.upenn.edu/glossary/f/family-definitions> © 2010 - 2013 All rights reserved ;

--Determine a class definition of family . *(Post for all to see or retain in a power point slide for referencing later.)*

--End by stating that all the photos are of families. This unit will be exploring why groups can look so different, but still form a working family.

Learning Process (with Activities)

Teacher: Understanding what "Family" means. (5 min)

A. Families come in many different shapes and sizes. Think about your own family for a minute; is every member of the family the same?

During the next couple of classes, we are going to discuss family systems. Family system refers to how a family works to meet the needs of all involved in a manner that does not work negatively against any of the other members. This includes how families are the same and go through life stages over the course of the years, and also how they are different. We know families have a lot of differences, but it is amazing how similar they can be.

Teacher: Family Life Cycle (50 minutes)

B.. We will begin our unit by discussing the family life cycle. Can you think of anything that goes through a cycle? *(Allow class to give examples. Samples: Caterpillar to Butterfly, Season changes)*

Social scientists have completed research and describe the basic pattern of family development through the cycles we are discussing.. As you may recall, development is the process of growth and change over time. As human beings we develop from young babies to adults. We follow a pattern to our human development. Families also follow a pattern to their growth and change. Not everyone transitions between each stage within the cycle in the same way. As families move through the cycle, the needs, wants and choices that family members make at each stage of development must be considered. Families are unique. Let's see what this means.

Looking at the families you know (or your own family), what do you think the stages are? *(Create a list of stages from student responses.)*

The family life cycle we will discuss more commonly follows this order: *(Refer to and/or list on board as determined by student response list.)*

- Coupling/Marriage
- Child bearing
 - School age
 - Adolescence
- Launching
- Empty nesting
- Retirement
- Aging

Activity #1: Family Life Cycle Pie Chart (10-15 minutes)

Directions:

1. Draw a large circle. This circle represents the family life cycle.
2. Divide the pie chart into sections, representing the amount of time a family spends in each (on average).
3. Allow 5-8 minutes.
4. Pair students and assign each a different stage of the family life cycle.
5. Ask them to define it, list three challenges and three joys, referring to the classroom text or reliable websites or electronic sources.
6. Upon completion, direct the teams to read the “What is a Family Life Cycle?” (Handout 5.1)
7. Allow them to adjust their answers and pie chart sections.

Activity #2: Family Life Cycle Infomercials: (45 minutes)

Directions:

1. Share they will remain with their partner from Activity #1 and still work with the same life cycle.
2. Share each team is to create an 3-5 minute infomercial about their assigned life cycle stage. (*An infomercial is a commercial, trying to sell something using only information.*)
3. The infomercial is to include the same information as in Activity #1, but arranged in a creative way.
4. The objective of the infomercial is to “sell” your life cycle as the best stage.
5. Allow 10 minutes for planning.
6. Begin with the first stage of the life cycle, transitioning until the last stage.
7. ASSIGNMENT: “What’s Your Opinion?” Interview (Handout 5.2) , assigning students to interview a family member.

Teacher: The Sandwich Generation (10 minutes)

C. What is the sandwich generation? (*Allow time for answers.*) Answer: *Adults who care for both their own children and their aged parents are sometimes called members of the “sandwich generation. Why do you think that name was coined for those family members? (Allow time for answers.)*

How many of your parents are of the sandwich generation? Can you think of examples of the activities or responsibilities your parents have with regard to each generation? (*List these on the board or as a power point slide.*)

The sandwich generation can be difficult as the same people are supporting both their children and aging parents at the same time.

Let’s think about something. How would this stage be impacted if there are no children? What would be the benefits? What would be the challenges? How would the family life cycle be impacted if there are no children? Again, families mean different things to different people.

Teacher: What does “Family” mean? (5 minutes)

D. Families are unique. They are made up of unique people. Each have their own individual goals and talents which make up the uniqueness of the family. They are influenced by the family members that came before.

In the front of the room, you will see a variety of clay pots. Some look perfect and some have had a harder go of things. Today, we will be using the analogy of comparing how these clay pots are like families.

*[Activity #3 Pre-planning: Collect a variety of clay pots—reddish color with a matte finish. They can be various sizes and colors and need to have a range of imperfections... one can be new, but most should have cracks, stains, chips or etc, but should be able to complete their function which is to have something planted in it (which means it needs to hold dirt and a plant). The pots will eventually be smashed so **do not** use ceramic pots—glossy painted and usually white base--which can cause injury due to the sharp shards which are a safety concern. You will also need permanent markers, safety glasses, heavy leather gloves—1 per family group, they can share, 2 brown grocery bags—1 set per pot, masking tape-1 roll per pot and hammers—1 per pot. Determine how many based upon the number of groups (3-4 students per group you will have in your class.)]*

Activity #3: Families Are Like Clay pots (90 minutes)

Directions:

1. Divide the class into “families” (3-4 students).
2. Have a variety of clay pots arranged in the room on a table or on the floor.
3. Ask each “family” to retrieve one clay pot to their table.
4. Direct each “family” to write their initials on the bottom in permanent marker.
5. Direct each “family” to obtain writing supplies.
6. Assign them to draw their clay pot and then describe it inside their drawing. *(Option: Students could do this activity using their ipads if a drawing app is available.)*
7. Ask students to share their descriptions, capturing their answers on the board or on a power point slide.

E. Let’s look at the symbolism of the clay pot and families. The clay pot has a function and that is to hold the soil that will sustain a living organism—the plant. The soil is what provides the nutrients and offers the foundation for the plant to thrive and grow, but it’s as strong as the clay pot it’s planted in.

How are your clay pots like families? Well, I’ll read a list of family characteristics and let’s see how many of these you have used to describe your clay pots in the activity you just completed:

- Are designed for the purpose of nurturing life and growth.
- Come in many sizes.
- Come in many styles.
- No two are exactly alike.
- Contain imperfections.
- Are strong, yet fragile.
- Can withstand tremendous pressure.
- Can tolerate all kinds of conditions.
- Is changed by the events that it experiences.
- Must be handled with care.

Teacher: Family Types (5 minutes)

F. Family units are found in a variety of forms called family types. The type of the family does not indicate how healthy the family is or how they function. Which family type a family fits within is determined by the physical makeup of the members in relationship to each of their roles and function in the family. The family structure is referring to the individuals who are part of the family. Is there a mother and children present? Is the father present? Are there other family members present? The family structure determines what family type they make up.

Activity #4: Family Type Foldable (15 minutes)

Directions:

- Direct students to get one sheet of writing paper. *(Option: Cut paper size sheets from grocery sacks... (there is significance in using the recycled brown paper or brown recycled paper if you can find it as it relates to the use of a brown grocery sack in Activity #7).*

- Assign students to fold the paper in thirds hot dog style (long way to form three long columns).
- Label each column as follows—(Column 1)Family Type, (Column 2) Definition, (Column 3) Pros/Cons
- Direct students to complete their foldable as the lecture continues.

G. Explain the different family types: *(Teacher Note: Add other family structures as appropriate for your classroom.)*

<i>Nuclear</i>	<i>A mother, father and one or more shared children.</i>
<i>Single-Parent</i>	<i>One parent and one or more children.</i>
<i>Extended</i>	<i>Includes all the relatives in a family such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.</i>
<i>Adoptive</i>	<i>A mother and father who are raising a child who are not the biological parents.</i>
<i>Childless</i>	<i>A husband and wife with no children.</i>
<i>Blended</i>	<i>Combined families which may include children from the present union with the children from previous relationships/ marriages.</i>
<i>Foster Family</i>	<i>A temporary family that takes care of a child for short or long periods of time until the children either return home or move into a more permanent and healthy environment.</i>

Activity #5: Class Debate (75 minutes plus overnight homework if assigned)

(Pre-planning: Prepare a deck of 14 cards (add cards if additional family types are added). Write one family type on two cards. Repeat for the remaining family types until a deck of 14 is created. Separating cards by family type, flip each over and write “pro” on one and “con” on the other. Repeat for all family types. The cards, when passed out, will determine who is working together (family type) and what side they are to support (pro or con) for the debate. Repeat as needed so that each student has a card to draw.)

Directions:

- Arrange all cards so that the family type side is up. Ask each class member to draw a card, directing them to find their matching family type partner(s). (They are not to turn it over yet.)
- Direct students to turn their card over to determine if they are “pro” (supporting this family type) or “con” (against this family type)
- Assign each student (or group of students if more than one is working together) to gather information to bring their “case” before the class. They should locate 3-5 points for their side. Refer them to classroom text or reputable on-line websites or electronic resources.
- NOTE: Tell the students this is not reflecting personal beliefs or opinions, but a way to review each family type.
- Allow 30 minutes (or until the next class period) to build locate their information.
- When class time arrives, instruct students to complete the last column on their Family Type Foldable sheet.
- Direct students to begin with a “pro” followed by a “con” point, repeating until all points are shared.
- Allow 5-7 minutes per family type *(add time if additional family types were added).*
- *(Optional: May collect Family Types Foldables for grading.)*

Activity #6: Family Traits (20 minutes plus more if discussion requires it.)

(Pre-planning: Have a poster sized diagram of a clay pot with a thriving plant in it posted in the room. Ensure it is a thriving plant. Prepare stacks of 5 sticky notes per student or just place on sticky notes on table.)

Directions:

- Ask individual students to obtain 2-5 sticky notes.
- Direct the students to think of all the things that families do together, need from each other, need to provide for each other, writing each item they can think of on individual sticky notes. Responses should be positive. *(Can use more than 5 per person, but a min of 2 should be expected.)*
- Ask students to think about how the clay pot and plant is like families.
- Share the following:
 - Clay pot offers the parameters of the family;
 - Soil is the foundation, offers the support needed;
 - Plant is the family type with the branches the individual members.
 - Leaves/flowers are how well each is able to grow and develop into the people they can be;
 - Air/Water/Food—Support for the health of the plant
- Direct students to think about how the items they have written would fit in this analogy.
- Ask students randomly to share what they have written and place it on the clay pot or plant where they think it fits.
- *(Retain the poster in the room, possibly by the clay pots. Refer to this later in the unit.)*

Sample answers:

- Spending time together.
- Provide mutual support.
- Accept differences.
- Worship together.
- Allow individual growth.
- Committed to each other.
- Ability to problem-solve.
- Effective communication.

Teacher: Negative Life Events (45 minutes, including activity)

H. Families are impacted by those around them and by life in general. Not all things are positive, in fact families will suffer from negative things that happen to them. This is normal. It's how the families respond that matters. Our clay pots will represent families once again. At this time, obtain your clay pot from before and sit with your family groups for this next activity.

Activity #7: Cracks in the Clay Pot (30 minutes)

(Teacher Note; Activity #7 and #8 must follow each other in the same class period)

Directions: *(This activity will be completed in their family groups.)*

- 1) Place one paper sack inside the other and then place the clay pot in it, folding the edge over and taping shut. Put on the safety glasses.
- 2) Assign the class to list 8-10 positive things a family can provide to it's members. Direct them to refer to previously shared information as they write their items on the bag. Use permanent marker.
- 3) Allow 5-8 minutes.
- 4) Next, share with the class, they are going to take the hammer, which represents all the things that can have a negative impact on families, and hit the clay pot to symbolize how the family is impacted when difficulties happen.
- 5) Taking turns, each member should place their hands in the leather gloves and hit the clay pot as each negative life event is shared. Their strength of hit can vary as life events impact families at different levels.
- 6) Say the following aloud, allowing a switch in family member (and gloves) between them:
 - Death.
 - Divorce.
 - Health Problems.
 - Addictions

- Financial Problems.
- Additions.
- Infidelity.
- Unwanted Pregnancy.
- Conflict.
- Abuse.
- Mental Illness.
- *(Allow class to add some of their own.)*

7) When completed, tear the bag open carefully so the bag holds the broken pieces.

Activity Reflection:

Share the broken pieces symbolize the impact these items can have on families. Some life events impact them in smaller ways and others have a much larger impact. It does not matter the family type, all families suffer from them. Sometimes, only a few big problems can break a family apart; other times, many small problems chip away at a family. It is impossible to predict which negative impact caused the final blow to our clay pot, just like one cannot predict when it might happen to families. BUT a family can be repaired. Let's see how that might occur.

Activity #8: Repairing Broken Families (30-45 minutes plus optional activities)

Directions:

1. Share they will now attempt to “rebuild” their families (clay pots).
2. Direct each family group to obtain the masking tape, cutting or tearing 10 strips about 6” long.
3. Direct them to write each of the following one individual masking tape strips that can help repair their clay pot (family..
 - Communication.
 - Good Decision-making.
 - Forgiveness.
 - Counseling.
 - Listening.
 - Treatment or medication.
 - Time.
 - *(Allow students to add 3 or more ideas of their own.)*
4. At this time, assign each group to use the masking tape strips to “put their families back together” using the masking tape, with the solutions.
5. Allow the group to see if that will be enough masking tape to rebuild the clay pot.
6. Discuss why some families need more help than others to rebuild their strength. Share that how families respond and recover from negative life events is showing their resiliency.
7. Allow additional time if needed for the clay pots to be “rebuilt”.
8. Discuss the similarities and differences between the clay pots.

Sample conclusions:

- They break apart much easier than they mend.
- It takes work to repair them.
- Each family is different.
- Some will have permanent scars.
- Some may never be whole again.
- Some will not be repaired, but replaced.
- They are not as strong as before the break.
- It is more likely they will break again.
- They can be put back together again.
- They will support life and growth.
- 9. **Assign** “Families and Clay Pots” (Worksheet 5.3)

[Additional Evaluation Activity: Planted Clay Pots

Conclude this activity with planting something in their repaired pots. Tell the students that they are responsible to care for them if they want their family/flower to grow. Provide soil, seeds, water,

sunlight, and possibly fertilizer. (If your school uses ipads, have your students use the Tools4Students app to create a graphic organizer for this assignment.)]

Optional Evaluation: (1 class period or homework assignment)

Student could be assigned a writing assignment to compile all they have learned about families, the family life cycle, family types and the impact of negative life events.

CONCLUSION: (15-20 minutes)

A. Assign “Family Types and Life Cycle” Graphic Organizer (Worksheet 5.4). Collect for evaluation.

B. Use the following debriefing questions at the conclusion of the unit.

Debriefing Questions:

Technical:

- What does family mean?
- What are the different family types?
- What are the stages of the family life cycle?

Interpretation:

- What is an ideal family?
- What is the difference between family structure and family type?
- How can a family be in more than one stage of the family life cycle at the same time?
- Which family life cycle stage causes the greatest adjustment for couples? Why?

Reflective:

- Why is a broken family worth repairing?
- How can negative life events be avoided?
- What can be done to be better prepared for the family you will create?

Assessments:

Family Types Foldable

Class participation and Teamwork

Family Life Cycle Pie Chart Completion

What is the Family Life Cycle?

What’s Your Opinion?

Families and Clay Pots Worksheet

Family Types and Life Cycle Graphic Organizer

Infomercials

Optional:

Reflection Paper—“What I learned about families through clay pot activities?”

Optional:

FCCLA STAR Event project to address this topic. This option requires active FCCLA affiliation if selected. (Refer to FCCLA Competitive Event Manual for complete rules and evaluation rubric. www.fcclainc.org.)

Teaching Resources:

- *2007 Parenting- Glencoe, Copyright © 2007 McGraw-Hill Education*
- *2009 Families Today- Glencoe, Copyright © 2009 McGraw-Hill Education.*
- *2000 The Developing Child- Glencoe, Copyright © 2000 McGraw-Hill Education.*
- *2004 Parents and Their Children-GW, Copyright © 2004 The Goodheart-Willcox Co., Inc. All rights reserved*
- *Serving Up 50 Lessons Over Easy, Nasco, Copyright © 2013 Nasco*

- http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/downloadFile.cgi?file=28936-2-36159-Family_relationships_teacher_info.pdf&filename=Family_relationships_teacher_info.pdf (Adapted from Family Matters by Smith, R.G. 1982)
- http://www.support4change.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=110:family-life-cycle&catid=60:family-dynamics&Itemid=151 Copyright © 2011. All Rights Reserved.
- http://glencoe.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/dl/free/0078806623/610162/Enrichment_Activities_CH3.pdf Copyright © by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved
- http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-01-30/local/36623770_1_sandwich-generation-adult-children-young-adults

Materials:

- Photos of families, various types and structures
- Sample foldable
- Computer/Internet/ipads – optional
- Clay pot(s), Paper Bag(s), Hammer(s), Safety Glasses, Leather Gloves
- Post it notes (5-10 per student, or one pad per table)
- Planted plant poster (large)
- Permanent Markers
- Masking Tape
- Scissors
- Paper Bag Sheets (Teacher must cut paper bags paper size)
- Family Type Deck of Cards (Teacher must develop)
- Optional—Seeds or plants, soil, fertilizer, water

Handouts/Worksheets/References:

- 5.1—What is a Family Life Cycle?
- 5.2—What’s Your Opinion?
- 5.3—Families and Clay Pots
- 5.4--Family Structures and Life Cycle Graphic Organizer

FCCLA Integration: (www.fcclainc.org *Affiliated chapter is required to use these materials.*)

Power of One- Family Ties © Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Inc. | www.fcclainc.org
http://www.fcclainc.org/assets/files/pdf/programs/powerofone/family_ties.pdf

National Program -Families First

- Families First- Family Scavenger Hunt © Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Inc. | www.fcclainc.org <http://www.fcclainc.org/avetra/program/families%20first/ffscavengerhunt.pdf>

STAR Event

- Illustrated Talk
- National Programs in Action (Families First)
- Applied Tech
- Focus on Children
- Community Service Project—Family related

Optional/Additional Learning Activities/Follow Up:

- Case studies on various family situations.
- Role Play various problems faced by each family structure.
- Review songs, looking for those which promote family support.
- View TV families and discuss their family type and family structure.

What is a Family Life Cycle?

An Introduction

The emotional and intellectual stages you pass through from childhood to your retirement years as a member of a family are called the family life cycle. In each stage, you face challenges in your family life that cause you to develop or gain new skills. Developing these skills helps you work through the changes that nearly every family goes through.

Not everyone passes through these stages smoothly. Situations such as severe illness, financial problems, or the death of a loved one can have an effect on how well you pass through the stages. Fortunately, if you miss skills in one stage, you can learn them in later stages.

The stages of the family life cycle are:

Independence:

- Coupling or marriage.
- Parenting babies through adolescents. During this stage there are several sub-stages:
 - Childbearing Family--From the birth of the first child until that child is 2 years old.
 - Family with Preschoolers--When the oldest child is between the ages of 2 and 6.
 - Family with School Children--When the oldest child is between the ages of 6 and 13
 - Parenting adolescents--When the oldest child is between the ages of 14 to 20
- Launching adult children.
- Empty Nest—All children are raised and moved out of the home.
- Retirement or senior years.

Why is it important to understand the family life cycle?

Mastering the skills and milestones of each stage allows you to successfully move from one stage of development to the next. If you don't master the skills, you may still move on to the next phase of the cycle, but you are more likely to have difficulty with relationships and future transitions. Family life cycle theory suggests that successful transitioning may also help to prevent disease and emotional or stress related disorders.

Whether you are a parent or child, brother or sister, bonded by blood or love, your experiences through the family life cycle will affect who you are and who you become. The more you understand about the challenges of each stage of the cycle, the more likely you are to successfully move on.

What can disrupt the normal cycle?

The stress of daily living or coping with a chronic medical condition or other crisis disrupts the normal family cycle. A crisis or ongoing stress can delay the transition to the next phase of life, or you may move on but without the necessary skills to succeed.

How can I improve my family life cycle?

Be assured, you can learn missed skills and improve your and your family's quality of life at any stage. Self-examination, education, and perhaps counseling are ways to improve yourself and your family life. These are also actions that can help you manage other issues such as going through a divorce or being a part of a nontraditional family structure.

Life Cycle Stages:

I. Independence Stage

Independence is the most critical stage of the family life cycle. As you enter young adulthood, you begin to separate emotionally from your family. During this stage, you strive to become fully able to support yourself emotionally, physically, socially, and financially. You begin to develop unique qualities and characteristics that define your individual identity. Intimacy is a vital skill to develop during your independent, young adult years. Intimacy is the ability to develop and maintain close relationships that can endure hard times and other challenges. In an intimate relationship, you learn about:

- Commitment.
- Commonality or similarity.
- Compatibility.
- Attachment.
- Dependence on another person who is not in your family.
- Shared emotion in a relationship.

You also learn who you are outside of your identity within your family. Your ability to develop an intimate relationship depends on how successful you were at developing your individual identity earlier in life.

Exploring interests and career goals is part of developing independence. To live successfully away from your family, you must develop financial and emotional independence. You also begin to be responsible for your own health in this stage, becoming responsible for your nutritional, physical, and medical needs. Developing healthy habits at this time—such as good nutrition, regular exercise, and safe sex practices—is important for lifelong good health and happiness.

You learn new aspects of independence throughout your lifetime. Even when you have moved on to another stage of life, such as coupling, you continue to learn independence within the context of that stage.

During the independence stage, you hope to:

- Learn to see yourself as a separate person in relation to your original family—parents, siblings, and extended family members.
- Develop intimate peer relationships outside the family.
- Establish yourself in your work or career.

Other important qualities you develop during this phase include:

- Trust
- Morals
- Initiative
- Guilt
- Work ethic
- Identity, or who you are in the world.

II. Coupling Stage

After you achieve independence, the next stage in the family life cycle is coupling. You explore your ability to commit to a new family and a new way of life. While being in a committed relationship with someone without the act of marriage does involve a process of adaptation and relationship building, marriage often requires unique skills.

When you join families through marriage, you form a new family system. Your family blueprint—your personal ideas, expectations, and values, shaped by the relationships and experiences with your original family—combines with your spouse's to form a new family blueprint. This requires reshaping your and your spouse's goals. In the most functional marriages, partners combine their beliefs and behaviors in a synergistic way. Synergy in the family life cycle is the ability to take two different points of view and create an option that neither person had considered. It differs from a compromise in that it is not giving up something; rather, it is using the energy from the two people to create a third, better option.

You may find that some of the ideas or expectations that you held in the past are not realistic at this stage. Some common areas of adjustment include:

- Finances
- Lifestyle
- Recreational activities or hobbies
- Relationships with in-laws
- Sexuality or sexual compatibility
- Friendships
- Putting another person's needs before your own

The ultimate goal at this stage is to achieve interdependence, which occurs when you are able to fully enter into a relationship with another person. Interdependence also requires that you share goals and that you are able to occasionally place the needs of another above

your own. However, before you can achieve interdependence, you must have first acquired a high degree of independence.

The relationship skills you learn in coupling serve as a foundation for other relationships, such as parent-child, teacher-student, or physician-patient.

Within a couple, you learn:

- Advanced interpersonal communication
- Problem-solving skills
- Common spiritual and emotional development goals
- How to form boundaries in relationships and
- When to place the needs or importance of the other person above your own.

Most research indicates that early on, a happy marriage is full of passion and sexual intimacy, which can become less important later in the marriage. A satisfying marriage at this stage includes a high amount of considerate or kind acts (such as doing something nice for the other person without being asked) and praise.

The life skills you learn in this stage are important in developing true interdependence and the ability to have a cooperative and healthy relationship. Some of the challenges of this stage include:

- Transitioning into the new family system.
- Including your spouse in your relationships with friends and family members.
- Being committed to making your marriage work.
- Putting the needs of another ahead of your own.

You and your spouse will have less stress if the transition into a new family system is smooth, and less stress often means better health.

Your specific goals for this stage of the family life cycle are:

- Forming a new family with your spouse.
- Realigning your relationships with your family of origin and your friends to now include your spouse.

II. Parenting: Babies through Adolescents

Making the decision to have a baby.

At some point in your marriage, you and your spouse will face the "baby decision," although some couples know going into a marriage that they do not want children. Parenting is one of the most challenging phases of the family life cycle. The decision to have children is one that affects your individual development, the identity of your family, and your marital relationship. Children are so time-consuming that skills not learned in previous stages will be difficult to pick up at this stage. Your ability to communicate well, maintain your relationships, and solve problems are often tested during this stage.

Introducing a child into your family is a major change in roles for you and your spouse. Each parent has three distinct and demanding roles: as an individual, a spouse, and a parent. As new parents, your individual identities shift along with how you relate to each other and to others. If you have not learned compromise and commitment in the previous stage, you may not possess the skills you need to transition well into this stage. Along with the joy that comes from having a child, you may feel a great deal of stress and fear about these changes. A woman might have concerns about being pregnant and going through childbirth. Fathers tend to keep their fears and stress to themselves, which can cause health problems. Discussing your emotional or physical concerns with your family physician, obstetrician, or counselor can help you deal with these and future challenges.

Parenting young children.

Adapting children into other relationships, including your marriage, is a key emotional process of this stage. You will take on the parenting role and transition from being a member of a couple to being a parent. While you are still evolving as individuals, you and your spouse are also becoming decision makers for your family. Continuing to express your individuality while working well together as a couple, results in a strong marriage.

Your child's healthy development depends on your ability to provide a safe, loving, and organized environment. Children benefit when their parents have a strong marriage. Caring for young children cuts into the amount of time you might otherwise spend alone or with your spouse. If there were skills you didn't learn in previous phases, such as compromise for the good of the family, your marriage may suffer. Divorce and extramarital affairs often occur during the raising of small children when the parents have not learned proper life skills. However, for those who have the proper tools, this can be a very rewarding, happy time, even with all of its challenges. Optimally, you develop as an individual and as a member of a couple and a family. Specific goals when young children join your family are:

- Adjusting your marital system to make space for children
- Taking on parenting roles
- Realigning your relationships with your extended family to include parenting and grandparenting roles.

Parenting adolescents.

Parenting teenagers can be a rough time for your family and can test your relationship skills. It's also a time for positive growth and creative exploration for your entire family. Families that function best during this period have strong, flexible marriages developed through good communication, problem solving, mutual caring, support, and trust.

Most teens experiment with different thoughts, beliefs, and styles, which can cause family conflict. Your strengths as an individual and as part of a couple are critical as you deal with the increasing challenges of rearing a teenager. Strive for a balanced atmosphere in which your teenager has a sense of support and emotional safety as well as opportunities to try new behaviors. An important skill at this stage is

flexibility as you encourage your child to become independent and creative. Establish boundaries for your teenager while at the same time encouraging exploration.

If you properly developed your individual identity in earlier stages of your life, you will be much more secure about the changes your child is going through. However, if you did not fully develop the needed skills at earlier stages of life, you may feel very threatened by your child's new developments. Flexibility in the roles each person plays in the family system is a valuable skill to develop at this stage. Responsibilities such as the demands of a job or caring for someone who is ill may require each person in the family to take on various, and sometimes changing, roles.

This is a time when one or more family members may feel some level of depression or other distress. It may also lead to physical complaints that have no physical cause (somatization disorders such as stomach upsets and some headaches) along with other stress-related disorders. Nurturing your marriage and your individual growth can sometimes be ignored at this stage. Toward the end of this phase, a parent's focus shifts from the maturing teen to career and marriage. Neglecting your personal development and your marriage can make this shift difficult.

You also may begin thinking about your role in caring for aging parents. Making your own health a priority in this phase is helpful as you enter the next stage of the family life cycle.

Specific goals during the stage of parenting adolescents include:

- Shifting parent-child relationships to allow the child to move in and out of the family system.
- Shifting focus back to your midlife marital and career issues.
- Beginning a shift toward concern for older generations in your extended family.

III. Empty Nest: Launching Adult Children.

The stage of launching adult children begins when your first child leaves home and ends with the "empty nest." When older children leave home, there are both positive and negative consequences. If your family has developed significant skills through the family life cycle, your children will be ready to leave home, ready to handle life's challenges.

Free from the everyday demands of parenting, you may choose to rekindle your own marriage and possibly your career goals. Developing adult relationships with your children is a key skill in this stage. You may be challenged to accept new members into your family through your children's marriages or relationships. You may focus on reprioritizing your life, forgiving those who have wronged you (maybe long ago), and assessing your beliefs about life.

If you have not moved through the phases with the appropriate tools and attitudes, you may not have taught your children needed skills to live well on their own. If you and your spouse have not transitioned together, you may no longer feel compatible with each other.

Remember, however, that you can still obtain missed skills. Self-examination, education, and counseling can enhance your life and help ensure a healthy transition to the next phase.

This is a time when your health and energy levels may decline. Some people are diagnosed with chronic illnesses. Symptoms of these diseases can limit normal activities and even long-enjoyed past times. Health issues related to midlife may begin to occur and can include:

- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Weight problems
- Arthritis
- Menopause
- Osteoporosis
- Heart disease (coronary artery disease)
- Depression
- Stress-related illnesses

You may also be caring for aging parents in this phase, which can be stressful and affect your own health. Specific goals to attain at this stage include:

- Refocusing on your marriage without children;
- Developing adult relationships with your grown children; and
- Realigning relationships to include in-laws and grandchildren when your children have begun their own families.

IV. Retirement or Senior Stage of Life

During the retirement phase of the family life cycle, many changes occur in your life. Welcoming new family members or seeing others leave your family is often a large part of this stage as your children marry or divorce or you become a grandparent.

This stage can be a great adventure where you are free from the responsibilities of raising your children and can simply enjoy the fruits of your life's work. Challenges you may face include being a support to other family members, even as you are still exploring your own interests and activities or focusing on maintaining your marriage. Many people are caring for elderly parents at this time. You may feel challenged by their emotional, financial, and physical needs while trying to help them retain their independence.

You may experience declining physical and mental abilities or changes in your financial or social status. Sometimes, you must deal with the death of other family members, including your spouse. The quality of your life at this stage depends on how well you adjusted to the changes in earlier stages. It often also depends on how well you have cared for your own health up to this point. Normal aging will affect your body, resulting in loss of bone density,

wrinkles, aches, and pains. The chances of having a mental or chronic physical illness does increase with age; however, aging does not mean you will automatically experience poor health.

Retirement can be a fulfilling and happy time. Becoming a grandparent can bring you great joy without the responsibility of raising a child. Those who are without adequate support systems or not well off financially, however, may have a more difficult time in this phase of life.

Specific goals to attain at this final stage of your family life cycle include:

- Maintaining your own interests and physical functioning, along with those of your spouse, as your body ages.
- Exploring new family and social roles.
- Providing emotional support for your adult children and extended family members.
- Making room in the family system for the wisdom and experience of older adults.
- Providing support for the older generation without over functioning for them.
- Dealing with the loss of a spouse, siblings, and other peers, and preparing for your own death.
- Reviewing your life and reflecting on all you have learned and experienced during your lifecycle.

Source: <http://health.yahoo.com/relationships-family/family-life-cycle/healthwise--ty6171.html>

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Worksheet 5.2

What's Your Opinion?

Directions: Ask your parent or guardian the following questions. Please explain what family types are and what the family life cycle is if needed.

1. What was your family type growing up?
2. Do you know about the family life cycle stages?
3. What stage are you experiencing now?
4. Which of the stages do you feel has been the hardest? Why?
5. Which of the stages did you enjoy the most and why?
6. Are you looking forward to the next stages and why?

Worksheet 5.3

Families and Clay Pots

1. My family structure consists of:

2. The definition of family is:

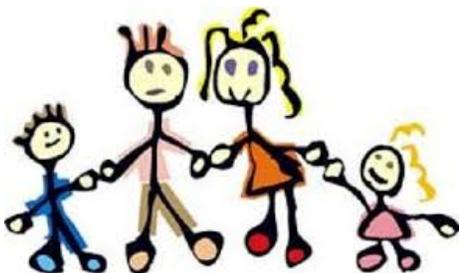
3. Describe how clay pots and families are similar.

4. List 4 problems that cause families to break. Identify one way to mend them.

1.	-	
2.		-
3.		-
4.		-

5. In what ways are the broken pieces like the problems families face?

6. After viewing the repaired pots, list 4 conclusions that can be made about mending families.



Family Structure and Life Cycle Graphic Organizer

List five main points of this unit. of each point.

Draw something that would help remind you

Write a 2-3 sentence unit summary.