

The Family

Unit 2 Contents

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Population and Family Life

Unit 2 : The Family

Unit Introduction

In the previous unit we discussed about population. In this unit you will study about an unit of population, namely, the family. The importance of the family is in the physical, social and emotional security that it provides to its members. Security has its effect on the well being of the individual member and on the well being of the society. The family would always remain the most important social unit fostering good values and responsible living. The objectives of the family are best met when its members are healthy in physical, mental and social aspects. The important contributing factors that contribute to these aspects include the size and income of the family. In the previous unit on population, the student was made aware of the relationship between the population and the social, economic and political development of a nation. A limited family size will help control the population and make resources available for the existing people. Similarly, over population, apart from economic and political problems has negative impact on the social and emotional well being of future generations of the family. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen the family if we are to contribute, in whatever ways we can, to nation building. A unique feature of Asian communities has been the bond of the family. However, the bonds are now gradually weakening and young people are opting for nuclear family norm. Living together in a joint family system and sharing of family values, customs and knowledge is slowly becoming a past practice. One argument is that the new trend of nuclear family or one unit family is likely to deprive the youth of the beneficial aspects of growing up in an joint or extended family system and is likely to change the Asian family norms. In this unit we shall discuss the concept of a family, and the role of a family in a society.

Learning outcomes for this unit

The purpose of this unit is to :

- discuss the concept of family
- learn about the tasks performed by different members of a family
- identify the role and responsibility as a member of the family and society
- become familiar with as to how the youth should prepare themselves for marriage and parenthood.

Concept of family

In the earlier unit you have learnt about the definition of family and the types of family. In this unit an effort will be made to make you familiar with the concept of family life education. In some countries of the Asia region family life education has been included as a part of popular education. Family Life education is a process through which individuals acquire knowledge of the basics of normal living and functioning as a family unit. This is vital for helping them grow and lead healthy lives and to function as responsible members of the family, and therefore society. Family life education includes a study of self-awareness, understanding of others, of sexuality, marriage and parenthood. The knowledge gained and skills developed will contribute to the individual's ability to cope with social changes and with relationships in society as a citizen, spouse or parent. Family life education, thus aims to:

- equip the youth with a better understanding of the physical and emotional changes associated with growing up.
- help them in establishing and maintaining personal relationships with family, friends and society at large.
- provide them with knowledge and skills to ensure successful marriage, child bearing, parenting and other aspects of family development.

Adolescence is a period of changes and choices. Tremendous physical changes are accompanied by emotional upheavals as the adolescent tries to break free of the secure complacency of childhood, yet is not confident enough to step into adulthood. There are a lot of questions unanswered, fears and anxieties unresolved. Family life education attempts to answer these questions and prepare the youth to make good independent decisions about their lives.

Definition of family

The family is the basic unit of any society. It refers to a group of individuals who are related by blood, marriage or adoption. These individuals are interacting and inter-dependant having common human bond and goals, sharing resources and living space. The concept of family starts with the partners in marriage as they begin a new future life. Their plan includes bearing children, a house of their own and a regular income for sustenance. With the birth of a child the family starts functioning. The ties of blood, love and care of a family can build generations together into supportive and nurturing unit which provides security and care to its members. The ties change over time, maturing, strengthening and sometimes weakening with external influence and rapid urbanisation. The family also acts as a transmission belt by which the society's culture is kept alive.

Family systems

- **Matriarchal** - In this system, the family line is through the oldest female member of the family. Daughters inherit the ancestral property. The head of the family is the mother whose consent is sought for important family matters.
- **Patriarchal** - It is more common than the matriarchal system. The family line is through the oldest male member of the family. Sons get the major share of the property.

Types of family

Families are categorised into :

- **Nuclear family**

When the husband, wife and children live together on their own depending on no one but themselves, they form a nuclear family. Nuclear families are on the rise due to urbanisation. These families have moved away from larger family structures in smaller towns to bigger cities for better opportunities to earn more money.

- **Joint family**

When the nuclear family lives with grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, it is a joint family. The joint family system is on a gradual decline in many Asian countries due to urbanisation and modernisation. Western influence with its emphasis on individualism has corroded many traditional values such as respect for elders, joint decision making and community mindedness.

- **Extended family**

In an extended family, members may live separately or in the same house, in the same city or another city, yet maintain strong ties between themselves. The Asian region has a rich tradition of extended family where mutual support is guaranteed. This a modified version of joint family.

● Single parent family

When one marital partner brings up the children because of the loss of the other partner through death, divorce or separation, it is called a single parent family. Sometimes, due to teenage pregnancy, an unmarried girl may have to bring up her child all by herself.

Apart from these types, families can also be classified on the basis of the relationship that individual members share. A family may be biological in which the members are related through blood, or social contract in which its members may not be related through blood ties. For e.g., a family which has foster children. Such families may still be bound together not by ties of blood but by ties of love and affection.



Activity 2.1

Reflect on the type of family you belong to. Now list on a piece of paper the advantages and disadvantages of such a family.

List three most likely advantages of living in a joint family and a nuclear family.

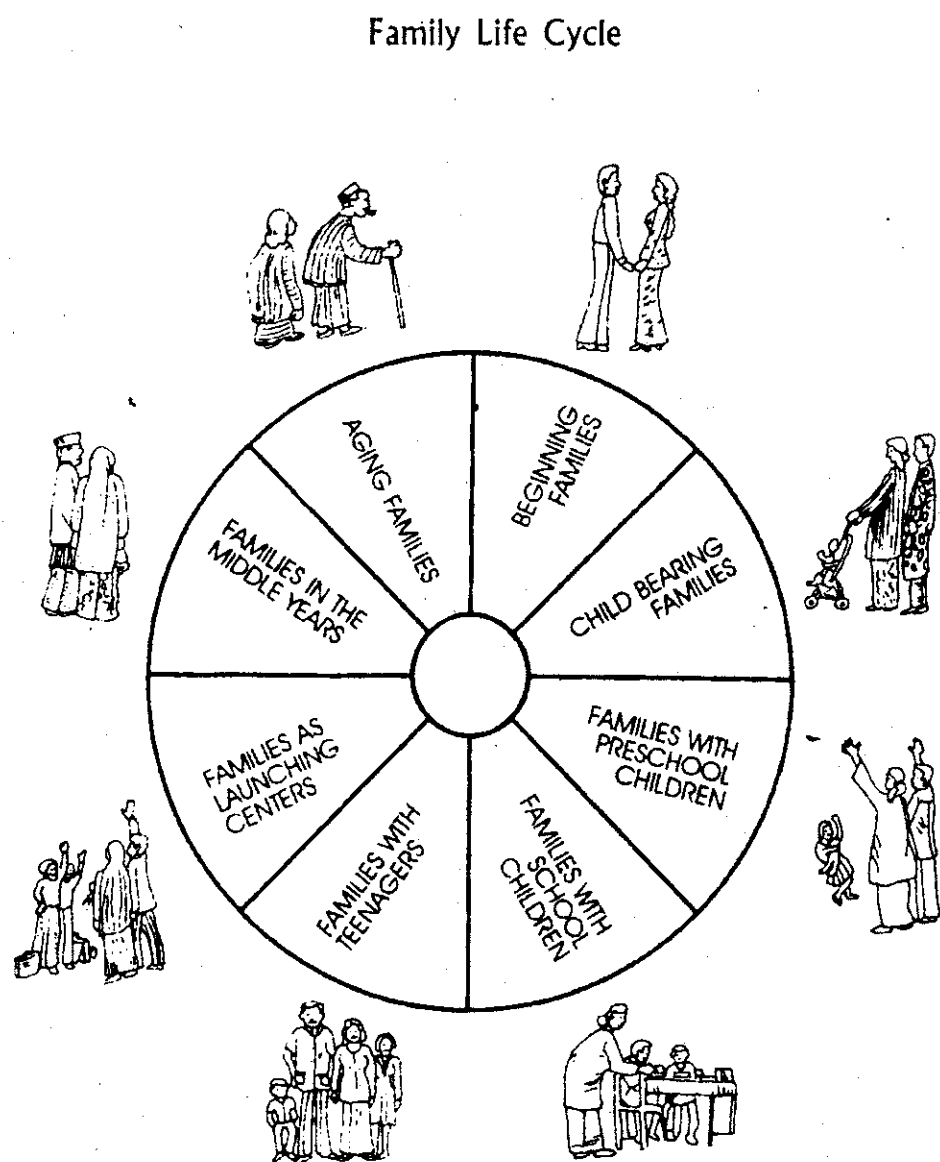
Joint Family

Nuclear Family

Functions of a family

Family refers to the functional kinship unit. In its minimal or nuclear form, the family consists of mother, father and offspring. In broader usage, it may refer to the extended family which may include grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and adopted children etc. all operating as a recognised social unit.

Fig. 2.2 Family Life Cycle



Source: UNESCO PROAP Family Life Education, Bangkok 1998

Family in some form or other is a universal institution and is the basic unit of the society. The marriage rituals signify coming of age of two young persons who decide to come together to love and cherish, and take on the responsibilities of being a contributing member of the society. The marriage is social sanction to the young people to choose a life partner to fulfil each others personal needs which are a taboo in Asian societies before marriage. In return the society expects from its new members to perpetuate the cultural values through their own actions and by inculcating these values in their children. Thus the family as a basic unit of society fulfils the following functions adequately for the society to survive.

- **Marriage**

To establish responsible, social, emotional and sexual relationship with marriage partner.

- **Reproduction**

The survival of the species depends on the ability of couples to reproduce. The family as a link between the past and the future has the responsibility in bearing and rearing children. However, giving birth to a child requires proper planning and unless the couple has acquired proper emotional, social and economic environment for the child they should refrain from having children.

- **Physical maintenance**

Basic needs of members have to be provided if the family is to function properly. Basic needs include food, shelter and clothing which are provided by the parents. In patriarchal families it is the responsibility of husband to be the economic provider. In joint family system it is the oldest male who pools the resources and then distributes them amongst its family members. In more modern setting, both the spouses work for attaining a higher standard of life.

- **Emotional support**

Along with the fulfilment of physiological needs, a family also meets the need for love and belonging. A child brought up with love and acceptance grows up to be an emotionally secure person who is able to become a responsible member of the larger society.

- **Social placement for the child**

At the time of birth the family provides us with an "ascribed" status e.g. caste, race, religion, physical build etc. As we grow up the family helps us find an "achieved" status, often one that is higher in the eyes of the society. The family facilitates this process through providing skills and knowledge (education), establishing and maintaining norms and behaviour.

- **Socialisation and social control**

The family helps in enforcing social control. A child is taught right from the moment of birth, behaviour that is acceptable to society. This is done through setting examples or through teaching. The behaviour learned from the family becomes the model for role/behaviour in the society. This way, culture is passed down from generation to generation. Failure on the part of the family to perform this function can have repercussions in future, for instance, the deviant behaviour of the youth which is a common problem of our society now.

Family relationships and roles

A role refers to the expected behaviour of an individual in any social interaction. A clear understanding of roles is very important in the family. In a traditional family set up, roles were pretty much defined. Today, roles have become interchangeable and diffused with the transition from joint to nuclear families, participation of women in career activities outside the home, influence of western culture, higher education and the need for economic improvement. The change in roles is responsible for corresponding norms of authority, status and decision making process.

A relationship is built over time and is dependant on role expectations. Faulty relationships can have devastating results on the development of children. Other than having negative effects on their behaviour, children may also have wrong impressions of their respective roles as parents later in life.

Factors affecting family relationship

- Communication - Very often misunderstandings arise from lack of communication.
- Conflicting expectations - Conflicting role expectations can cause disharmony in the family. For instance, a woman who looks to her husband for support in nurturing a baby will feel frustrated if the husband thinks that it is a woman's role and hence has nothing to do with caring for the baby.
- Personality - Different personalities within a family have different needs and expectations. When these are not met, relationships can be impaired.
- Culture - Some cultural values can lead to negative and rigid role expectations.
- Needs of individuals - Finally a family is defined by the needs of its members. Family relationships are ongoing because the differing needs of the members are realised within the family.

Roles of individual members of the family

- The marital role or the role of men and women as couples provides opportunities for companionship, security, physical relationship, reproduction and psychosocial support.
- Parents are basically responsible for the caring, guidance and rearing of the children. This role becomes more defined in nuclear families. In extended families, this role may be shared among the grandparents, uncles and aunts.
- Parents perform earning roles to support and care for their families.
- Children perform their roles as learners of values, skills and knowledge.
- In large poor income families the older children have added responsibilities of looking after the younger children or going out to work to add to the family income.
- Parents provide the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude and inculcate the right values in their children.



Activity 2.2

Make a list of ways you can improve your roles and responsibilities within your family and society.



Activity 2.3

Reflect on the changing roles of men and women within the family. Write down three examples.

Preparation for marriage and parenthood

Marriage is the emotional, physical and social union of two adults. Marriage varies in different societies depending on varying customs, rituals and traditional forms. In most of the countries of the world, whatever may be the type and style of marriage, it has to be registered according to the Marriage Registration act particularly for responsibilities to the new couple of becoming a full fledged member of the community and nation.

In most of the Commonwealth countries of the Asian region, marriages are arranged by parents. However, this is not the rule as in many societies young people choose their own partners. In an arranged marriage, consideration is taken of the family rather than person. It is developing a relationship with a new family which has similar religious, socio-cultural and economic background. A love marriage on the other hand, is a self-arranged marriage between the partners. Love marriages are getting popular in urban areas and cities of the developing world where there are enough opportunities for the young people to meet socially. Whatever be the type of marriage, the essential elements in a marriage are trust, loyalty, mutual adjustment and life long commitment.

Points to be considered before marriage

● Suitable age for marriage

The marital partners must have intellectual, emotional and physical maturity which is essential for a successful marriage. In countries like India, child marriage was very common in some rural areas. Changing attitude, break up of the joint family system, increased knowledge about the ill effects of child marriages and the social factors have slowly changed the custom of marrying young. However, adolescent girls are still married young in low income families in Asia leading to reproductive health problems of the women. In most countries, the official age of marriage of the male is 21 years and the girls is 18 years. However, in middle class urban societies the marriages are delayed so that the young people complete their education and develop an economic base before getting marriage.

● Choosing a partner

With the increase in the incidence of love marriage in urban areas, selection of the marital partner falls in one's own hands. This requires not only physical and sexual maturity, but also more importantly, intellectual and emotional maturity.

In many Asian regions parents play a major role in selecting a marital partner for their child. In this case the marriage is not merely a relationship between two persons but a relationship between two families. Parents feel that they know the needs of their children as they have seen them growing. Matching horoscopes of the respective boy and girl is a common form of selection in some communities.

● Characteristics of a partner

Whether be the way of selecting a mate, there must be a free and healthy communication between the parents and youngsters so that both are involved in the decision making process. Certain factors and characteristics of personality need to be identified, explored and understood in selecting a life long partner besides looks and economic and social status. These are :

1. Health
2. Hobbies
3. Moral and ethical values
4. Addictions
5. Education/skills
6. Economics and social compatibility
7. His/her attitude towards family life
8. His/her circle of friends
9. Personality traits such as dominant, selfish, considerate
10. Interest in homemaking and household activities
11. Attitude toward working women and sharing duties at home
12. Ideas of parenting

The above factors have to be taken into account by the young people before they step into marital life as most often conflicts within a marriage occur due to discordance in attitudes, behaviour and radical difference in family backgrounds.

● Conflicts in marriage

Marriage is a relationship between two different persons of equal status who are interdependent for marital harmony. They will have to play an equal role in solving their problems and resolving their marital conflicts. This requires understanding of each other's needs, desires and expectations. This can only happen when both of them are mature enough. Certain situations and factors which can lead to unavoidable conflicts are :

1. Dissimilar family background
2. Unhappy sexual relationship
3. Unrealistic expectations
4. Violence
5. Loss of trust
6. Addiction
7. Financial matters
8. Marriage of convenience
9. Lack of emotional maturity

Conflicts can be easily resolved if the married couple make a conscious effort to find time to talk to each other, develop trust and loving relationship and are able to accept each other's behaviour and opinion. Conflicts generally arise when role expectations are not met. When a partner's behaviour and opinion does not conform to the other's expectations it can lead to resentment. Many a time instead of tackling the conflict immediately, there is a tendency to put it off until much later when it expresses itself in inappropriate behaviours like anger and violence. A conscious and sincere effort should be made to resolve the conflict before it is too late to mend. Here communication plays a major role. Communication is the exchange of thoughts and feelings in such a way that greater understanding and acceptance is developed which helps minimise difference.



Activity 2.4

You are going to choose a partner for marriage. What qualities will you look for according to priorities ?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Foundation of a happy life

A family stays together and it is an ongoing unit through the satisfaction of its needs. According to Maslow human needs can be presented in the form of a pyramid. The lower level needs have to be met before the higher needs are considered. The first two needs at the bottom of the pyramid are bare minimum for survival and unless these are met no finer feelings like love or affection seem to bother.

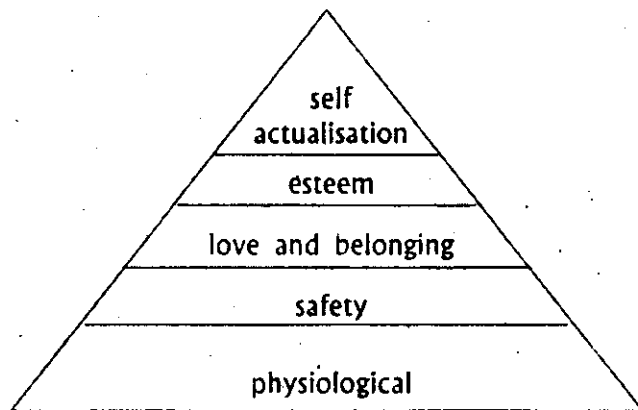


Fig. 2.2 : Maslow's pyramid of human needs

Apart from providing fulfilment to physical needs such as food, shelter, sex and security from danger or fear, a family must meet the needs for acceptance love and sense of belonging to each member, so that the family remains united. These needs can be met by family members through giving and receiving love, showing respect for each other and building an environment to nurture every one's potential. The need for esteem i.e., a desire to be recognised by one's peers is also natural. Once one has acquired some knowledge and skills, it is followed by desire to give one's best in whatever area or profession one belongs to.

Basic elements of a happy family

A happy family needs the following elements :

- Loving and caring relationship
- Accommodating each others weakness
- Spend time together
- Commitment to family and community norms
- Respect for each other and respect for elders
- Meeting economic needs
- Health
- Spiritual needs
- Responsible
- Communicative

The ability to communicate underlies most of the above elements that go to make happy family.

Communication in a family

Communication is a process in which information is sent from a source to a receiver. It is the exchange of ideas, thoughts and feelings through talking, listening, seeing, touching, reading and writing. Communication is a two way channel. If you want to be heard, learn to listen. Communication results in healthier relationship. Effective communication is the true hallmark of a happy family. Communication plays an important role in overcoming problems and resolving conflicts within the family. Sharing thoughts, feelings and expectations helps to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses which facilitate a better understanding and acceptance of one another.

To be a good communicator one has to be a good listener. Listening involves being patient and sincere, making the other person know that he is being heard. When one listens, one has to do so in a non-judgmental way by putting aside one's beliefs and values particularly if they form a prejudice or a block to one's hearing. Being non-judgmental is an essential skill in good communication. There should be respect for the other person and his/her opinion. A warm and caring attitude is also important for effective communication.



Activity 2.5

Can you think of a recent conflict in your own family? Record your perception of the precipitating causes of the conflict and suggest ways to resolve the conflict successfully.



Self-help questions 2.1

Define family

List of different types of families.

What are the functions of family ?

Parenting : facts to remember

Parenthood begins from the day a child is conceived in the mother's womb. From that moment onward it becomes the responsibility of both the prospective mother and the father to rear the child until it becomes self-reliant. Child development has six stages:

- i Prenatal : From conception to birth. It takes approximately nine months time.
- ii Neo-natal : New born or physical birth.
- iii Infancy : Birth to 2 years or emotional birth.
- iv Early Childhood : 2-5 years, known as social birth, in the pre-school age of social adjustment in and around home.
- v Late Childhood : 5-12 years, or pre-adolescence.
- vi Adolescence : 12-18 years, a period of identity crisis and transition to adulthood.

Prenatal child development

During this period an expectant mother needs adequate nutritious food regular visits to doctor and a positively emotionally supporting home to have a healthy and approximately 7 pound weight baby. The pregnant mother should gain 2 pounds in the first ten weeks, 8 pounds from the 10th to 20th week, 15 pounds by 30th week and 25 pounds by forth weeks (full term) to avoid underweight babies. Thus expectant mother needs good diet, clean environment and a supportive husband to go through the various stages of child bearing. The emotional support is necessary to overcome the fear of child bearing.

Child birth and breast feeding

The average labour for the first child birth is about 6-12 hours. This in fact is a period of preparation for the woman's body to fact the event it has never experienced. In subsequent births this period average 4-7 hours. As labour progresses intermittently, the cervix begins to dilate and soon short contractions are felt at brief intervals, before the baby is born. Sometimes it may be necessary to have an episiotomy (small incision through the perineum) near vagina to allow the baby emerge without pain.

In midwife attended child birth, trained midwives widen the birth canal by massaging the perineal area. When a women cannot deliver normally through the vagina due to uterine inertia or the baby's condition, the baby is extracted by an operation by cutting through the abdomen. This is called caesarean.

After birth, babies need proper nutrition stimulation and protection against infection. Breast feeding meets all these vital needs and gives the child the best start in life. In addition to nutrition, it gives emotional security by establishing a bonding between mother and child. Breast milk is also rich in anti-infective substances and provides the baby with the best protection against diarrhoea infections and food allergies. However it is also necessary that the mother eats adequate nutritious diet so that they vitamin content in breast milk is high.

Development of a Child

The physical, mental and social development of the baby happen simultaneously. In fact all aspects of growth are interrelated. Problem in one area has its impact on all the other areas. The following are some general features of growth. However, these episodes are different for each child and will appear earlier or later depending on the inheritance and environment of each child.

At Birth	:	The baby sucks, swallows. The movements are purposeless. At birth child starts breathing and gives a cry when fresh air fills his lungs. The baby is satisfied if it is properly cared for.
1st Month	:	Follows moving lights, reacts to noises and loss. of support
2nd Month	:	Smiles, utters cooing sounds.
3rd Month	:	Gains head control. Recognises and openly prefers the mother. May stop crying as the mother approaches.
4th Month	:	Gains hand control. Grasps objects. Holds its head up for a long time. Laughs.
5th Month	:	Can roll over an abdomen and back. Can sit steadily when supported.
6th Month	:	Sits up or tries to sit up by himself/herself. Cries on provocation e.g. removal of a toy from the child's hand.
7th Month	:	Plays with feet to mouth.
8th Month	:	Uses thumb and index fingers.
9th Month	:	Grasps, tried to stand, but falls frequently.
10 Month	:	Crawls. Starts to utter a few words - ma-ma, da-da, etc.
11th Month	:	Pulls up to a standing position for a short period.
One Year	:	Walks with a little support. Enjoys simple tricks and games.

- 14 to 16th Month : During this period most children learn to walk. In case a child does not walk between 20 to 24 month, the doctor must be consulted.
- 15 to 18th Month : Climbs stairs, uses spoon. Imitates, like to play with toys. Can speak a few definite words.
- 2nd Year : Points to eye, nose and mouth. Desire to feed himself/herself. Often says no-no to every-thing.
- 3rd Year : Feeds himself/herself. Does not wet bed. Likes to be with other children. Begins to enjoy group play. Begins to enjoy group play. Arranges toys. Likes to dress. Much laughter with play.
- 4th Year : Repeats digits - one, two, three, etc.
- 5th Year : Repeats sentences, loves home, fears the dark and ghosts, wants to assume responsibility.

Immunity

Immunisation protects the child against several dangerous diseases. A child who is not immunised is more likely to catch children diseases and get disabled or may die. All primary immunisation should be completed in the 1st year of the child's life.

Table 2.1: Immunisation schedule for children

Age	Vaccine	Diseases to be immunised against
Birth	BCG, Polio	Tuberculosis, Polio
6 weeks	DPT, Polio	Diphtheria, Whooping Cough, Tetanus, Polio
10 weeks	DPT, Polio	Diphtheria, Whooping Cough, Tetanus, Polio
14 weeks	DPT, Polio	Diphtheria, Whooping Cough, Tetanus, Polio
9 months	Measles	Measles
1½ years	DPT, Polio	Diphtheria, Whooping Cough, Tetanus, Polio
5 years	DT	Diphtheria, Tetanus

Parents have a vital role in personality development of the child. They are the child's first teacher, guide and friends. Therefore parents as well as teachers should always keep in mind the following facts:

"If child lives with criticism
she/he learns to condemn;

"If child lives with hostility
she/he learns to fight;

"If child lives with shame
she/he learns to be guilty;

"If child lives with encouragement
she/he learns to be confident;

"If child lives with praise
she/he learns to appreciate;

"If child lives with fairness
she/he learns to be just;

"If child lives with security
she/he learns to have faith;

"If child lives with approval
she/he learns to like herself/himself;

"If child lives with acceptance and friendship
she/he learns to find love in the world."

Ten important criteria for health, parenting

- The health of both women and children can be significantly improved by spacing births at least two years apart, by avoiding pregnancies before the age of 18, and after 35 and by limiting the total number of pregnancies to one or two.
- To reduce the dangers of children bearing, all pregnant women should go to a health worker for pre-natal care and all births should be assisted by a trained person.
- For the first few months of a baby's life, breast milk alone is the best possible food. Infants need other types of food as well in addition to breast milk, when they are four to six months old.
- Children under three years have special feeding needs. They need to feed five or six times a day and their food should be especially enriched by adding mashed vegetables and small amount of fats or oils.

- Diarrhoea can kill by draining too much liquid from child's body. The liquid lost each time when the child passes watery stool must be replaced by giving child plenty of right liquids to drink - breast milk, home-based fluids such as rice water, buttermilk, etc. The best remedy for diarrhoea is ORT - the oral rehydration therapy. In this therapy, a pinch of salt and a teaspoonful of sugar is added to a glass of water and given repeatedly to the child suffering from diarrhoea. If the illness is more serious than usual, the child needs help from a health worker. A child with diarrhoea also needs food to make a good recovery.
- As mentioned earlier immunisation protects the child against several diseases which can cause poor growth, disability, and death. All immunisations should be completed in the first year of the child's life and a booster given at one and a half years. Every woman of child-bearing age should be immunised against tetanus.
- Most coughs and cold will get better on their own. But if a child with a cough is breathing much more rapidly than normal, then the child is seriously ill and it is essential to go to a health centre quickly. A child with cough or cold should be helped to eat and to drink plenty of liquids.
- Many illnesses are caused because germs that enter through the mouth. This can be prevented by using latrine; by washing hands with soap and water after using the latrine and before handling food; by keeping food and water clean; and by drinking boiled water if it is not safe to drink directly from the tap.
- Illness holds back a child's growth. After an illness, a child needs additional nutrients every day for a few days to make up the growth lost.
- Children from birth to three years should be weighed regularly every month for the first year and at least alternate month thereafter. If there is no gain in weight for two months, something is wrong and the parents need to consult a doctor.



Self-help questions 2.2

What are the main principles of healthy parenting ?

Unit summary

In this unit we have discussed the family as an institution and each member in this institution has a definite role to play. The individuals in a family are interdependent on each other and interact with each other. Different systems of family and types of families as well as the functions of a family are discussed. The roles and responsibilities of members of a family vary depending on the type of the family, its economic status as well as the size of the family.

Even as the transition from adolescence to adulthood occurs, the youth should prepare themselves for the marriage and the subsequent parenthood. The choice of a partner depends on many factors such as the suitability of age, mutually agreeable characteristics and compatibility based on commonalities. Causes of conflicts in a marriage and the will to resolve them by consensus and dialogue are highlighted.

Stages in the development of a child are listed. The behaviour of a normal child and the developmental characteristics it exhibits during the first three years of its growth are tabulated.