

DOES FAMILY KNOW BEST?

UNDERSTANDING FAMILY VALUES AND MESSAGES

- ✓ 1. To help learners identify the values learned from family.
- ✓ 2. To help learners understand that family is an important source of values during childhood and adolescence, but that these can also be adapted and changed as they get older.

🕒 40 - 50 mins

★ Family Messages Worksheet (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 Remind learners that values are those qualities, principles, and beliefs that we feel strongly about.

Clarify that each person's **values** are important and meaningful. Different people have different values

The family is an important and powerful source of messages about values. People learn their family's values from an early age through messages that are spoken, and those that are communicated in other ways.

Values passed down from your family can differ from your own. Families are made up of a group of individuals, each of whom has learned ideas and behaviours, just as you have and will continue to do. It's important to critically think about the values that the family gives you, as well as the values you get from other sources, for example the media, school, friends, your religion.

- 2 Distribute the **Family Messages** Worksheet to learners. Ask learners to take 5 to 10 minutes to complete the worksheet by writing down their family's messages (feelings or statements) on each topic. If there is no message that they have received, or if it has not been discussed, they should note that down.

- 3 Divide learners into small groups. Ask each group to pick two topics to discuss for 10 minutes. Each learner will share in the small group their family's messages about the two topics.

- 4 After 10 minutes, ask each group to present on their two topics.

- 5 Lead a class discussion with the following questions:

- a. Were you aware of your family's values on these topics?
- b. Are there values in your family that are clear even though no one speaks openly about them? Which ones? How are they communicated to you?
- c. Do the men and **women** in your family give you different messages, **norms** and standards? On what topics?
- d. Do these apply differently for the men and women in your family?
- e. Can you disagree with your family's norms and values? What happens if you transgress these norms and values?
- f. Which of your family messages would you communicate to others, and which would you not? Why?



TEACHER TIPS

General

Inform the class that 'family' does not have to be biological, and it doesn't have to be a set group of people. They should think about the people they grew up with and those who helped to raise them.

Discussing family **values** can be difficult for some, and learners should not be forced to contribute if they do not want to or if they seem uncomfortable.

Emphasise that values differ from individual to individual and from family to family, and that so long as no one advocates harm to themselves or others there is no right answer.

Everyone does not have to agree with each other so long as they are respectful. Emphasise that listening to different points of views is important to help you think critically about your own views, develop your own values and make better decisions. Encourage learners to listen and try to understand each other without judgment.

Explain that standing up for one's values is important but it is not the same as forcing others to listen to you or judging others, and it should never harm others.

It is important for teachers to remain non-judgemental. If a learner expresses an opinion that is prejudiced or harmful, such as a **homophobic** view, ask how that view might make others feel, how it may affect others, or how it may hurt others. Emphasise that the most important values are ones that promote caring, empathy, and freedom for individuals so long as no harm is done. So for example, they may think that all **women** must have children, but they should be able to understand that even though they want to have children themselves, and that it may be a major factor in choosing a partner, other people may have other ideas, and that women who choose not to have children are not impacting them in any way.

Learners may ask about your own values, experiences, family and upbringing. It is okay to share these where they contribute to learning. However, where the issues are highly controversial you should avoid this. You are an important figure for learners and your views will shape the discussion, and possibly their own views. If asked for your opinion on a contentious issue, or asked to take a side in a debate you could say something like: "It is more important right now that you listen to your peers' opinions in order to make up your own mind", or, "My opinions have already been reflected by the class, so you already have all the possible viewpoints. That is what is important".

Making the Link with Gender & Violence

The family plays an important role in the development of the self and of one's behaviour. The family will send messages about which values are most important, including values about what expectations they have about gender roles. It is important for learners to understand what values they learnt from their family, and how these values affect their attitudes towards gender and gender roles. This discussion relates to the ways in which gender is **socially constructed**, and how **violence** can be used to enforce certain **values** and conformity to gender expectations.

Assessment Ideas

- 1 Learners could be asked to interview a parent or another adult family member about the messages they were taught by his/her family. Learners could also be asked to write a response in which they discuss the ways in which their family has influenced their values.
- 2 Write a short piece about how their own values on gender and gender norms differ from their parents/family, and why this is so. Relate to how norms and values change over time.



FAMILY MESSAGES WORKSHEET

“HOW DOES YOUR FAMILY FEEL ABOUT...”

Write down the messages your family has given you on each of the following:

TOPIC	FAMILY MESSAGE
DOING WELL AT SCHOOL	
TASKS WHICH ARE MEANT FOR GIRLS/ BOYS	
HAVING A BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND	
ALCOHOL	
DRUGS	
BEING RESPECTED BY OTHERS	
TEENAGE PREGNANCY	
BEING AGGRESSIVE IN ARGUMENTS/ CONFLICTS	
HAVING CHILDREN	
DISCUSSING FAMILY ISSUES	

FAMILY MESSAGES WORKSHEET

“HOW DOES YOUR FAMILY FEEL ABOUT...”

Write down the messages your family has given you on each of the following:

TOPIC	FAMILY MESSAGE
ASKING FOR HELP FROM THOSE OUTSIDE THE FAMILY	
CONDOMS/BIRTH CONTROL	
SEX BEFORE MARRIAGE	
WOMEN WORKING OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE	
FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEN AND BOYS	
DATING OR RELATIONSHIPS	
SAFETY WHEN GOING OUT	
FRIENDS AND FRIENDSHIPS	
WHAT YOU WATCH ON TV/VIDEOS/MOVIES/ INTERNET	
PUBLIC IMAGE, AND HOW YOU PRESENT YOURSELF	

FAMILY MESSAGES WORKSHEET

“HOW DOES YOUR FAMILY FEEL ABOUT...”

Write down the messages your family has given you on each of the following:

TOPIC	FAMILY MESSAGE
BEAUTY	
SOCIAL STANDING AND WHAT OTHER'S THINK OF YOU	
GOOD JOBS	
CHILDCARE RESPONSIBILITIES	
COOKING	