

# Healthy Families

## SupportLinc Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Penn State Health



# Disclaimer

The general views, thoughts and opinions expressed in this presentation are expressly those of the presenter. The presentation is intended to provide general tips, advice and coping skills, and may not entirely pertain to your circumstance or you as an individual in a professional or clinical capacity. For specific advice on your unique situation, please reach out to a licensed financial or clinical professional for a confidential, one-on-one consult. CuraLinc Healthcare and the presenter are not held responsible or liable for any consequences or damages due to an individual taking action based on the information presented herein.

# Objectives

## This training is designed to help you:

- Define what “family” means
- Be aware of the dynamics of a healthy family system
- Understand what “intimacy” is
- Identify areas of success and areas of improvement

# What is a family?

According to the American Psychological Association, a family is:

*a kinship unit consisting of a group of individuals united by blood or by marital, adoptive, or other intimate ties. Although the family is the fundamental social unit of most human societies, its form and structure vary widely.*



# Contributing factors

- ✓ Genetics
- ✓ Legal
- ✓ Proximity
- ✓ Familiarity
- ✓ Commonalities
- ✓ Intimacy



# Example



Dear Miss Manners,

I have never been close to my extended family and usually only see them a couple times a year for holidays. On the other hand, I spend a lot of time with my partner's family and really enjoy that time together.

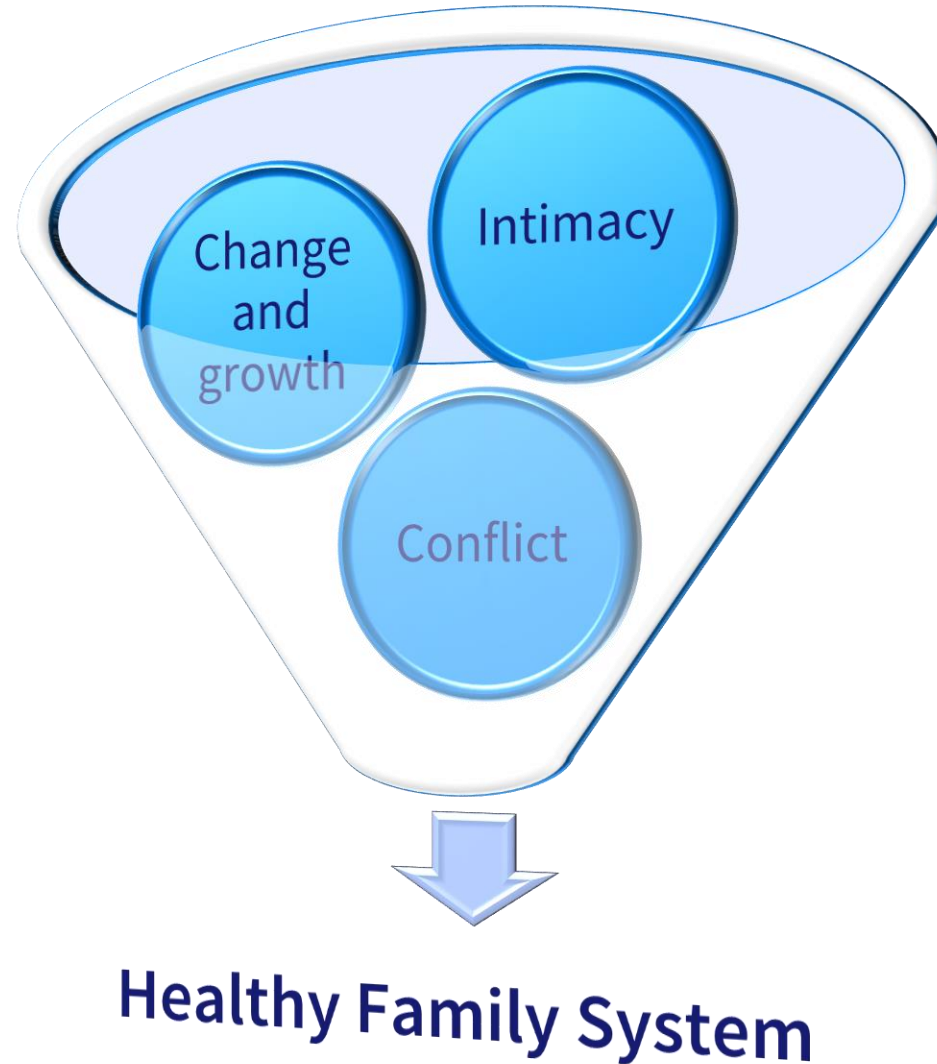
My aunt is upset that I post on social media about all the fun things I do with my partner's family. She says that it's inappropriate because they are not my "real" family and I'm being insensitive to the people who should really count most in my life.

What do you think?

Signed,

"Remind me what your name is again?"

# Components of a healthy family system



# Intimacy

**Intimacy is feeling safe to be vulnerable and being able to trust another person with that vulnerability.**

The level of healthy intimacy varies from person to person and from situation to situation.





# Change and growth



- ✓ Change is a normal part of life
- ✓ Lack of change leads to stagnation
- ✓ As we grow, healthy systems adapt to support that growth.
- ✓ “People are in our lives for a reason, a season, or a lifetime.”

# Healthy conflict

**Conflict: difference of opinion, perspective, idea and/or goal.**

Healthy conflict:

- Does not need to be emotionally painful
- Does not mean the relationship is failing
- Is rooted in respect
- Is solution focused



# Forgiveness and boundaries



- ✓ Some things are not okay.
- ✓ Accountability and responsibility apply to everyone.
- ✓ Intentions and outcomes are very different concepts.
- ✓ Disagreement and compassion can co-exist.
- ✓ Everyone's perspective is valid...to the person holding it.

# Barriers to healthy systems

- **Habit**
- **Trauma**
- **Communication issues**
- **Unhealthy or nonexistent boundaries**
- **Unresolved conflict**





## Time to share!

What is one thing that you do or have done in the past that has helped create healthy family interactions during times of change, stress or conflict?

Some examples:

- Setting aside time for family fun
- Counseling
- Creating a new family tradition
- Creating a habit of asking “How are you?”...and listening
- Going out for ice cream to celebrate making it through the week

# Healthy processes

- Be intentional, present and listen
- Allow appropriate expression of all emotions
- Engage in positive reinforcement
- Support structure and consistency
- Encourage connections outside the family system
- Model good self-care and healthy choices
- Counseling/mental health supports

# Signs of success



- ✓ Overall reduced levels of stress
- ✓ Greater sense of connection
- ✓ Enhanced feeling of psychological safety
- ✓ Increased number of problem-solving conversations
- ✓ More laughter

**As a result of today's  
presentation, what  
would you like to  
focus on for the next  
30 days?**





# Interactive toolkits

## Mindfulness

[www.mindfulness.tools](http://www.mindfulness.tools)

Practical tools and exercises for incorporating mindfulness into everyday life.

## Meditation

[www.meditate.tools](http://www.meditate.tools)

Easy-to-use collection of resources that includes guided meditations, tip sheets and more.

## Resiliency

[www.resiliency.tools](http://www.resiliency.tools)

Skill development resources to help you 'bounce back' from challenging situations.

## Sleep fitness

[www.sleepfitness.tools](http://www.sleepfitness.tools)

Information and resources to help you learn good sleep habits and achieve healthy sleep.

# What is SupportLinc?

The SupportLinc Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a health benefit, separate from your medical insurance, offered by your employer to help you manage life's daily challenges.

SupportLinc can refer you to professional counselors, services and resources that will help you and your eligible family members resolve a broad range of personal and work-related concerns.

# What services are included?

## Work-life benefits



### Legal consultation

Free in-person or telephonic consultation with a licensed attorney

No employment law



### Dependent care referrals

Expert referrals to child and adult/elder care providers, facilities and other resources



### Financial consultation

Expert guidance and consultation from financial professionals



### “Convenience” referrals

Guidance and referrals to a variety of daily living resources: home improvement, entertainment services, pet care, auto repair, wellness, travel, handymen, volunteer opportunities etc.



### Identity theft consultation

Free consultation with an identity theft recovery professionals

Tailored recovery action plan

# Getting started



**Call:** 1-888-881-LINC (5462)



**QR Code:**



**Visit:** [www.supportlinc.com](http://www.supportlinc.com)



**Log in or create account**  
(code: psh)

## SupportLinc

Support for everyday issues. Every day.

## Additional resources

Families come in all shapes and sizes, and no one definition fits everyone. Some families are large, with many members living together in one place. Other families are small, with only a few members sharing an address. Families can be made up of parents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents and even pets. Every family is unique, and that's what makes them so special. Each one has its own strengths and weaknesses, but together they make up the biggest force in our lives. We owe it to our families to give them the love and support they need to thrive. Building healthy family relationships is key to living a happy and fulfilling life.

Some ways to build healthy family relationships include:

**Communicate.** Communicating takes effort; it is not just about having a conversation. It is a key ingredient in building healthy family relationships, as it can help build trust and understanding. Focus on listening and understanding what your family member is trying to say. Carve out time to work on communication skills by putting away cellular phones and other devices at the dinner table so you can interact with one another.

**Spend time together.** Typically, healthy families have fun when they are together, smiling and laughing often. Whether their time is planned, or spontaneous, strong families enjoy being around one another. They also share one another's interests and passions.

**Know the value or fun and laughter.** All of us know that happiness can be the best medicine physically, psychologically and spiritually. Laughter and fun are guaranteed pathways to happiness. Plan time for your family to do shared activities that everyone enjoys: play games together, have a water balloon or snowball fight outdoors, tell bad jokes while decorating homemade cookies.

**Appreciate each other's differences.** Different people have different strengths and weaknesses, which can often be challenging to balance in a relationship. It's important not to try to force someone into being someone they're not or try to change them to fit into our idealized version of what you think a good family member should be. Instead, we should encourage our loved ones to use their special gifts and personalities in ways that benefit everyone involved.

**Have a foundation of respect.** Respecting one another is the cornerstone of a healthy family relationship. This means listening to each other and not taking things personally, even when disagreements arise. It also means communicating honestly and respectfully. For example, instead of speaking over or down to your partner, try to pause and really hear what they are saying. This will help you understand their perspective better and may lead to productive discussion. When families respect one another, it can create a sense of harmony and stability that is crucial for a happy and healthy home. Furthermore, showing respect for each other can help children learn to do the same. When parents model good behavior, children are more likely to emulate it.

**Set boundaries.** Boundaries set expectations for behavior and communicate what is and is not acceptable in the relationship. This can help protect both people in the relationship from feeling overwhelmed or unfairly judged and manage conflicts without turning into power struggles. Don't change your mind once you've set a boundary; stick to it even if it feels like a hardship at first. Breaking a boundary often results in resentment down the line, so make sure you don't put yourself in that position by being consistent from the beginning.

## Additional resources

**Apologize when wrong and learn to forgive.** When you make a mistake, it is important to apologize to your loved ones as soon as possible to repair any damage that you may have done. Also, ensure that your apology is genuine. Do not sugarcoat your words to make things seem less bad for yourself or the other person involved. Make it clear that you are sorry and take any steps necessary to rectify the situation. This will put your partner at ease and show them that you are serious about correcting this as quickly as possible. If someone else is in the wrong, forgiving someone can be difficult, but it is one of the most important things you can do for your relationship. It allows you to let go of the past and move on, creates space in the relationship for new and healthier communication, reduces resentment and builds trust between family members and creates a foundation for future positive relationships.

**Be supportive and build each other up.** What do you appreciate most about your spouse and children? What qualities does each person have that add beauty, sensitivity, care, laughter, honesty and energy to family life? Make a list and tell them in person. Better yet, ask each family member to write out a list and arrange a time to tell each other what is most appreciated. Take it one step further and ask each family member to compliment or show gratitude to each family member at least once a day. This can dramatically change the energy in a family from negative to positive.

**Problem solve as a group.** One of the greatest things about family is that you can lean on each other for advice and support. Plan family brainstorming sessions or family meetings to solve important dilemmas or plan your next weekend adventure. Share your joys with each other as well as your challenges.

**Encourage emotion.** Feelings are the way we express ourselves at our deepest levels. Feelings enable us to experience closeness and understand each another in meaningful ways. So, it only makes sense that healthy families create an open forum for feelings to be expressed and taken seriously. When a member of the family shows excitement, sadness, tenderness or even anger, invite them to talk about it. Remember there are no such things as “bad emotions” just the way that we negatively act on them at times. Probe gently, show empathy and validate the emotion, even if you don’t fully understand the circumstances surrounding the emotion. The facts aren’t as important as the emotion. You can make sense of the facts later. Focus in on the emotion; which is the heart of the message you should tune in to. A home where emotions are welcomed and encouraged is a safe and secure place for everyone.

For further resources, please go to your portal and use the search bar to type in “Healthy Relationships Flash Course” and “Effective Communication Flash Course.”

# Moving ahead



What did you get out of today's presentation?

Which concepts are working in your life and why?

Who can be a support for you to make change?

Which concepts are *not* working in your life and why?

What 3 ideas are going to be the most helpful for you?

How can you support someone else with change?

What can you do in the next 24 hours to apply these concepts?

What are your biggest barriers for change?