



FAMILY WELLNESS ASSOCIATES

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Summary description of the FAMILY WELLNESS PROGRAM

Family Wellness is a quickly learned and easily adapted program, which has proven effective in a variety of communities, cultures, and languages. It is currently used for prevention and intervention in the areas of domestic violence, drug, alcohol, and child abuse. Some additional applications are for teen parents, for Stepfamilies, for Saturday school students, for families in gang neighborhoods, for teaching conflict resolution skills to youth and families, for family preservation programs, in chaplaincy programs, in hospital settings, as well as for parents who want to get back in charge of their children and their lives.

Some information about the course

The basic: "Survival Skills for Healthy Families" is a twelve hour Family Wellness program presented to large groups of families and individuals in a series of six two-hour sessions:

Parents in Healthy Families

Children in Healthy Families

Adult Relationships-Couples in Healthy Families

As Children Grow-Change in Healthy Families

Solving Family Problems

Sex, Drugs, and You-Passing on Your Values to Your Children

Each session is organized around practical guidelines for healthy family interactions, which are demonstrated and then practiced with the participants. There are over 1,500 trained instructors presenting this course to over 1,000,000 families in the past twenty one years. The course is a proven model for teaching skills, enhancing healthy family interactions, and investing family members in each other and their community.

Benefits

The Family Wellness Program has specific benefits for a variety of settings:

1. A Structure that provides focus and skills for counselors and agency personnel.
2. Effective Prevention: Stops problems before they start.
3. Provides supportive structure for families with the additional stresses of drugs and of violence in the community.
4. Packaged and easily implemented program for targeted populations.
5. Focus on management of children and stronger couple's relationships.
6. Meets legal and program requirements for court ordered abuse cases (spousal, child, and drug/alcohol abuse).
7. Gives parents skills and support for managing their children.
8. Provides a supportive program for family members to acquire skills for managing their lives and building health in their families.

9. Trains counselors, teachers, clergy, and support personnel who have the credibility in their particular community or setting to provide the skills on site.
10. Provides a framework and skills for interactive teaching through the use of role-play.
11. Gives counselors, clergy, agency staff, and school personnel the skills and practice to work effectively with difficult youth and family situations.
12. Additionally, local Law Enforcement benefit (as indicated in San Jose) from lower truancy and burglary in gang neighborhoods resulting from stronger families where kids are managed by their parents.

Family Wellness takes groups of individuals and families and gives them the skills, support, and practice to build on their existing healthy patterns and add new ways of living and working together. The course, which was developed in 1980, represents two interests:

***First:** Our belief that in order for families to reclaim their pivotal role in providing for the health of their members, they need new tools and supports to handle the challenges in our present society.*

***Second:** Our wish to translate the knowledge and skills of family therapy into a readily available and effective program to help families.*

History

Developed in 1980 by Virginia Scott and George Doub, the "Survival Skills" course originally was presented in various rural and urban settings using school and community sites throughout Santa Cruz and Santa Clara counties in California. One of the first series was presented in Spanish and English in Watsonville, Ca. Some of these first courses were targeted for teen parents in high schools, Spanish-speaking groups, and at-risk families in East San Jose.

Currently, the "Survival Skills" course is presented throughout the United States and in several other countries. Taiwan has a Family Wellness Center and has translated the interactive workbook; El Salvador has purchased Instructor manuals and workbooks; Puerto Rico, Canada, Hong Kong, France, England, Australia and Germany have done the same.

Applications

Family Wellness is being used by Native American, Latino, African American, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, Chinese, and Filipino communities.

Family Life Educators and social workers in the **Military** use Family Wellness to help families develop stability as well as to treat domestic violence and child abuse cases. **Social Services** use this model for **Family Preservation**, as well as **Child abuse prevention and intervention** for **Court ordered parenting**. **Schools** use Family Wellness to strengthen families to be better partners for the success of their children, to provide parents with skills to solve problems, and to meet **parental involvement** guidelines from various states.

Churches use the curriculum in family and youth ministries.

Family Wellness has also been used in **gang neighborhoods** to strengthen families and parent involvement with their children.

Law enforcement has paid for courses in conjunction with their TABS (Truancy Abatement, Burglary Suppression programs). When families attend the courses and parents are involved with their children, there is better school attendance and fewer burglaries.

Other **community agencies** use Family Wellness to get parents involved with the kids and mentors of like ages to prevent pregnancy among teenagers.

Some extensive use of the Family Wellness model, has occurred in the following populations/areas:

1. Clovis Unified in Fresno County, California has used the Survival Skills course and curriculum to provide parental involvement and skill building for each of its over twenty eight schools annually over the past five years. They present courses for pre-school families through high school students, and for alternative schools as well as Saturday schools. An additional curriculum for Wellness in the Classroom was developed to assist teachers and administrators. Clovis Unified trained supportive service personnel -hospital, probation, social services, and foster homes- in order to better serve their community. Over eight Hmong and six Vietnamese instructors are now trained.

2. The Native American community has made extensive use of the Family Wellness model for family strengthening, drug and alcohol abuse prevention and child abuse prevention. The Community Coalition for the Washoe Nation in Reno, Nevada has been using the curriculum over four years. The Indian Center in San Jose, California is using Survival Skills to support its families over the past seven years. The Navajo Nation of the Four Corners area has recently had training for professional and community leaders to use the course in a variety of settings.
3. The San Jose Police Department has been funding Family Wellness courses in its "High burglary" areas as part of its "Truancy abatement, burglary suppression" program for over 9 years. It is their belief that after attending a Wellness course, parents manage their children better. The City of San Jose has also invested in a "Jump Start" version of Family Wellness because it was found that direct gang intervention was not enough to change gang activities in neighborhoods. So courses are taught in these neighborhoods to strengthen the role of parents and their connection with their children.
4. The Santa Clara County Social Services Agency is currently using Family Wellness as its Family Education program in Spanish and English for its Family Preservation efforts. The Juvenile and Family Courts in Santa Clara County order families to Wellness Courses for abuse prevention and intervention.

Instructors

Because of our interest to support families throughout the community, a special emphasis has been placed on training instructors and presenting courses that respect the ethnicity and culture of the participants. Over the past fifteen years, we have trained over 1,500 instructors to present our model: Hispanic, Vietnamese, Hmong, Japanese, Lao, African-American, Native American, and Caucasian. Their most common professions are: teachers, principals, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, parents, probation officers, chaplains, clergy from more than ten different denominations, social workers, nurses, family life educators, and community leaders.

Teaching the Course

The particular effectiveness of the Survival Skills course in working with families of all income and educational levels and various cultures comes from nine key elements of the program:

1. Instructors chosen to fit the particular- community, language and experience needs--e.g. Hispanic, or single parent, or blended family.
2. Locations chosen that support families and provide on-going "teamwork" with parents such as schools or churches.
3. Family participation--all members from children through extended family and support systems are invited and attend the series. Because all family members contribute to the health and the working of a family, skills and concepts are taught allowing each member of the family to understand and use them.
4. Simple rules that capture basic theory and put it in words and concepts that make it memorable and usable for families and individuals.
5. Dramatic Role-Play of real family situations, problems, and ways of working through problems that make the content believable and applicable. Drama captures the attention and interest of most participants because it approaches their various learning modalities--visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, through its portrayal of real life.
6. Coaching of family members in their own real-life "stuck" places or problem areas. Participants are brought up front to play out their usual ways of handling a particular issue or problem, then given new options and coaching to help the options work. This reinforces new ways of behaving both for the individual and the audience, for example: how to get the behavior you want from a child without being abusive or using physical punishment; or how to switch from reinforcing arguing with a partner or child by demonstration of how to stick to one subject, say what you want, and build on what works.
7. Visual Aids that reinforce what is taught and give clear simple anchors for participants to learn the theory and skills.
8. Exercises that reinforce the content and skills with support and the "truths" that participants have to share with each other

9. Materials that reinforce the content and skills with activities, interactive exercises, and video and audiotapes that present the series with exercises for home use or with a facilitator

Resources

The Survival Skills Workbook is currently in English, Spanish, and Chinese, and is being prepared for a Southeast Asian translation. This interactive workbook has summaries of the theory and exercises that fit for various family members by age and role.

- **The six session Video Sets** for the Survival Series course provides reinforcement of the course or the opportunity for a community leader, clergy, or school leader to facilitate the series, using the tapes. Some schools and veterans' centers provide the tapes for checkout and home use.
- **An Instructors Manual** teaches the theory, presenting skills and a step by step presentation with objectives, theory and strategies or ways to present each session's content,
- **A Videotape on Coaching** for instructors and therapists that teaches and demonstrates coaching of participants to teach skills.
- **A laminated full size series of flip charts** in Spanish and English which capture the main theory and content for each session.
- **A set of overhead transparencies** the same as the Flip Charts, also available on disk/CD for PowerPoint.
- **Practical handouts for each session** for the participants in English or Spanish.
- **Special Adaptations of the curriculum for specific target groups**, i.e., Scripture based, Families of At Risk Youth, Families Impacted by Domestic Violence, Stepfamilies etc.
- **A published book, "Raising a Loving Family"**,

Evaluation

The Family Wellness Survival Skills course has been taught for over eighteen years. Subjective data was gathered at each presentation over the years and gives substance to the effectiveness of the course in the words of thousands of participants

In 1986 Paul Giblan conducted a meta-analysis of some 85 studies of pre-marital, marital and family enrichment programs to evaluate the empirical evidence from 3886 participants. His findings support all of the structure and skills taught by Family Wellness: behavioral rehearsal; coaching and role play; co-leadership; twelve hours in total length; communications skills including problem-solving techniques.

Some specific research includes:

1. The first study done by the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention project in Santa Cruz utilized a before and after and follow-up study which included the Moos Family Environment Scale. This study indicated through a six month follow-up phone evaluation that more than 70% of the participants (60 called) continued to experience improved communications skills; over 35% indicated reduced or eliminated drug use, 80% considered the family to be "closer"; and 25% felt that the family was solving problems better.
2. Several studies were conducted at the Alum Rock Counseling Center in the 1990's using the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES III, developed by Olson, Portner, and Lavee in 1985). Through a sampling of pre and post tests, it was concluded that families generally felt more connected, individuals reported feeling more flexible and less structured, and the educational workshop approach does seem to promote healthier functioning in all family types.
3. Natural Bridges School in Santa Cruz in 1987 contracted for a series at the school, specifically targeting families where the parents were not involved and the children were habitually truant and their behavior was causing problems for the staff. For this series, eight sessions were presented and the school staff met once a month for an hour to get specific skills and consultation for working with families. The principal of the school recruited over 100 parents for the series, saying, "I've got them here, now it's up to you to keep them." The group remained essentially intact, and the results were increased parental involvement at the school,

significantly improved student attendance, and a decrease in behavioral problems. Significantly supporting these results, for example, in 1990 the parent group contracted with Family Wellness Associates to present a series in the new multipurpose building that their group had been able to build, thanks to their development as a parents support group for the school.

We hope this gives you some idea of what our course provides and its variety of uses. We know that Family Wellness works in community and school settings. We are not able to teach our course by distance learning, but in addition to our pre-scheduled training sites, we will arrange training when 10 or more people in an area are interested. Please contact our office if you would like additional information about training or resources for families and instructors.

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