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### Develop your Family's Strengths

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For many people the New Year brings plans for a happier, healthier life. Some even make resolutions for self-improvement. Unfortunately, few of these promises result in permanent change. By this time of year, many people have already abandoned their goals and now feel frustrated and undisciplined.

Right now, stress, worry, and frustration abound. Focusing on personal shortcomings simply adds more distress. An infusion of encouragement is more welcome by most people than a discussion about improving their diet and exercise habits. Fortunately, it is possible to feel encouraged while also working to enhance your life. Now is a great time to try a new strategy for self-improvement: stop focusing on the challenges in your life and start concentrating on what works.

Instead of focusing on the areas you think need improvement, concentrate on the things you do well and enjoy. Making a conscious effort to develop your strengths can be rejuvenating. It alleviates stress by creating a sense of joy and satisfaction. It also revitalizes enthusiasm, creating energy that can assist you in successfully addressing goals which previously defied you.

Everyone has something they do well and enjoy. For adults it might be maintaining an organized home, cooking a delicious meal, or making your co-workers laugh. Children might be athletically inclined, creative storytellers, or gifted artists. Regardless of the skill, building upon your family members' strengths benefits the entire household.

For parents, choosing to focus on your strengths will help your life feel more gratifying. Doing what you enjoy, even for a few minutes, is pleasing. It could also open your eyes to new opportunities for using your skills. Perhaps you can use them to generate extra income. Developing your strengths will also benefit your children. Children are happiest when their parents are happy and relaxed. They will also learn to identify and appreciate their unique talents and abilities by watching you.

Children benefit greatly when they learn to develop their strengths. They gain resilience when their parents help them identify and enhance their talents. They also learn self-appreciation, which decreases their need for external validation. This is an important



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trait that will help them stand up against negative peer pressure. They also develop a positive self-image by seeing themselves as competent people. Furthermore, it fosters self-esteem by helping them gain confidence in themselves and their abilities. Parents can also use this approach to foster a healthy balance between self-confidence and humility in their children. You can teach your children how to feel good about their abilities without criticizing or making fun of other people who might not be as talented in that particular area.

Focusing on your strengths does not mean ignoring your family's challenges. It simply means periodically taking a break from concentrating on the things that need to be “fixed”, and allowing yourself to acknowledge the positive things that exist. During this time when most people have more than enough stress and frustration, focusing on your strengths will bring some needed happiness and peace of mind. There will be greater joy and contentment in your home if all members periodically focus on something that helps them feel good.

Take time to determine your strengths. Help your family members do the same. Then, spend a little time each week developing them. The added peace, joy, and satisfaction will help improve your health by decreasing stress and tension.

Be well.