

Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

May 15, 2018

This week and next week we'll continue the general Mother's Day themes of marriage, family, and parenting.

This week, on the two pages that follow, I've listed the section titles from Dolores Curran's 1983 award-winning book, *Traits of a Healthy Family: Fifteen Traits Commonly Found in Healthy Families by Those Who Work with Them*. For most of us, I doubt that there will be many surprises.

Next week, we're going to look at a lengthy 2017 report from the U.S. Census Bureau about how much things have changed since 1983. Here's a teaser about what we'll examine next week:

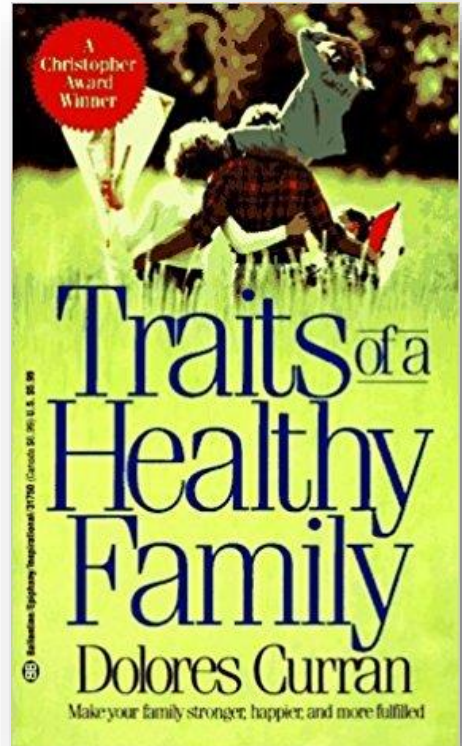
The young adults surveyed were asked about the importance of various life transitions. Here's what they identified as "extremely important" to them:

- Completed formal schooling—62%
- Employed full-time—52%
- Capable of supporting a family financially—50%
- Financially independent from parents—43%
- No longer living in parents' house—26%
- Getting married—12%

In other words, less than half of Americans aged 18-34 say marriage and family are essential to becoming an adult. *Less than half think they should be paying their own way in the world*. Being married and supporting a family—formerly the most distinctive marks of adulthood—are now considered quite optional by most American young adults. **According to this huge survey, the central focus of adulthood is to be free of any obligations to others** . . . as if you needed something else to keep you up at night.

Stay tuned.

Dave



The Changing Economics and Demographics of Young Adulthood: 1975-2016

Population Characteristics

Current Population Reports

By Jonathan Vespa

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Traits of a Healthy Family

From Dolores Curran, *Traits of a Healthy Family: Fifteen Traits Commonly Found in Healthy Families by Those Who Work with Them* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983).

Trait 1: The Healthy Family Communicates and Listens

1. The family exhibits an unusual relationship between the parents.
2. The family has control over television.
3. The family listens and responds.
4. The family recognizes nonverbal messages.
5. The family encourages individual feelings and independent thinking.
6. The family recognizes turn-off words and put-down phrases.
7. The family interrupts, but equally.
8. The family develops patterns of reconciliation.

Trait 2: The Healthy Family Affirms and Supports One Another

1. The parents have good self-esteem.
2. Everyone is expected to affirm and support.
3. The family realizes that support doesn't mean pressure.
4. The family's basic mood is positive.
5. The family supports its institutions, but not automatically.

Trait 3: The Healthy Family Teaches Respect for Others

1. The family respects individual differences within the family.
2. The family knows that self-respect means just that—respect for self.
3. The family accords respect to all groups, not just specifically approved ones.
4. The family respects individual decisions.
5. The family shows respect to those outside the family.
6. The family respects the property of others.

Trait 4: The Healthy Family Develops a Sense of Trust

1. The husband and wife trust each other deeply.
2. The children are gradually given more opportunity to earn trust.
3. Family members don't play the trust-trap game.
4. The family doesn't break trust for the amusement of others.
5. The family realizes that broken trust can be mended.
6. Parents as well as children are trustworthy.

Trait 5: The Healthy Family Has a Sense of Play and Humor.

1. The family pays heed to its need to play.
2. The family recognizes its stress level.
3. The family doesn't equate play with spending money.
4. The family uses humor positively.

Trait 6: The Healthy Family Exhibits a Sense of Shared Responsibility.

1. Parents understand the relationship between responsibility and self-esteem.
2. The family understands that responsibility means more than doing chores.
3. The family realizes that responsibility doesn't necessarily mean orderliness and perfection.
4. The family gears responsibility to capability.
5. Responsibility is paired with recognition.
6. The family expects members to live with the consequences of irresponsibility.

Trait 7: The Healthy Family Teaches a Sense of Right and Wrong.

1. Husband and wife share a consensus of important values.
2. The parents teach clear and specific guidelines about right and wrong.
3. Children are held responsible for their own moral behavior.
4. The family realizes that intent is crucial in judging behavior.
5. Parents help children to live morally.

Trait 8: The Healthy Family Has a Strong Sense of Family in Which Rituals and Traditions Abound.

1. The family treasures its legends and characters.
2. The family has a person and/or place that serves as “center.”
3. The family makes a conscious effort to gather as a people.
4. The family views itself as a link between the past and the future.
5. The family honors its elders and welcomes its babies.
6. The family cherishes its traditions and rituals.

Trait 9: The Healthy Family Has a Balance of Interaction among Members.

1. The family does not allow work and other activities to infringe routinely upon family time.
2. The family actively discourages the formation of coalitions and cliques within the family.

Trait 10: The Healthy Family Has a Shared Religious Core.

1. Faith in God plays a foundational role in daily family life.
2. A religious core strengthens the family support system.
3. The parents feel a strong responsibility for passing on the faith, but they do so in positive and meaningful ways.

Trait 11: The Healthy Family Respects the Privacy of One Another.

1. The family looks forward to the teen and separating years.
2. The family moves from a base of parental rules to one of mutually negotiated rules.
3. The family does not dole out respect according to age, sex, or any other criterion.
4. The family respects fads, friends, confidences, room privacy, and time to be alone.
5. The family lets go.

Trait 12: The Healthy Family Values Service to Others.

1. The family is basically empathetic and altruistic.
2. The family serves others in concrete ways.
3. The family seeks to simplify its life-style.
4. The family is generously hospitable.
5. The family keeps its volunteerism under control.

Trait 13: The Healthy Family Values Table Time and Conversation

- o Same as #1.

Trait 14: The Healthy Family Shares Leisure Time.

1. The family keeps its collective leisure time in balance.
2. The family prioritizes its activities.
3. The family prizes opportunities to spend time alone with individual members.
4. The family controls television usage.
5. The family plans how to use its time.

Trait 15: The Healthy Family Admits to and Seeks Help with Problems.

1. The family expects problems and considers them to be a normal part of family life.
2. The family develops problem-solving techniques.