

Family

Grades 4-6, lesson #2

Time Needed

30-90 minutes

Student Learning Objectives

To be able to...

1. Describe the benefits of healthy family relationships.
2. Define sexual orientation and gender identity
3. Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to promote healthy relationships.
4. Recognize that there are different kinds of families.
5. Name something they value about each member of their family.

Agenda

1. Explain purpose of the lesson.
2. Define family.
3. OPTIONAL: Show the documentary video *That's a Family* and discuss it.
4. Diagram families.
5. Use brainstorm to identify purpose and importance of families.
6. Use contrasting role-plays to identify “good listening behaviors” and to highlight their importance.
7. Use case study to point out that speaker and listener both benefit from good communication.
8. Answer “Anonymous Question Box” questions about family.
9. Summarize the lesson.

This lesson was most recently edited November 2021.

Elementary FLASH Grades 4-6

Materials Needed

Classroom Materials:

- *Communication Roleplay Script* – for teacher and student role-player
- OPTIONAL: Documentary film *That's a Family*

That's a Family can be streamed for free through many public library websites. Check to see if your public library subscribes to Kanopy, a free streaming service.

Purchase a DVD or pay to stream the video from New Day Films. Download a free discussion guide. <https://www.newday.com/film/thats-family>

Student Materials: (for each student)

- One sheet of white or manila construction paper per student
- Several crayons or colored pencils per student

FLASH Key Concepts

Everyone has a sexual orientation and a gender identity.

Kids' families are made up of people who are of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Activity

1. Explain that this lesson will help students understand the purpose of families and how they contribute to their own families.

2. Define family.

A family is two or more people who love and take care of each other. Usually they are related and/or live together. Families come in all shapes, sizes and descriptions.

3. Discuss identity and how it relates to family

People's families are made up of people who all have their own personal identities. People's identities might include their gender, their race, their nationality, their sexual orientation, their ability or disability, their family identity (sister, uncle, etc.), their religious identity if they have one, or others. It's important for family members to help each other feel proud of their identities. This film shows people with many different identities, including individuals of different sexual orientations. Let's talk about some different sexual orientations and gender identities before we watch the film.

A person's sexual orientation is based on who they are attracted to and fall in love with. Usually, we say that a man who is attracted to women, or a woman who is attracted to men is straight. The word lesbian usually describes a woman who is attracted to women, and gay usually describes a man who is attracted to men. Bisexual is a word that usually describe a person who is attracted to more than one gender. Someone might also identify as queer, which is a broad term that can include anyone who isn't straight.

Gender identity refers to whether a person feels like a boy, a girl, both, neither or somewhere in between. A person knows their gender identity because of how they feel, not because of their body parts. Some gender identities include boy, girl, trans, and non-binary. You can't know what a person's gender identity is by looking at them, or by how they dress. When a person's gender identity is different from what the doctor said when they were born, that person might say they are transgender, or just trans. When a person's gender identity is the same as what the doctor said when they were born, that's called being cisgender.

Every person has a sexual orientation and a gender identity, and kids' families are made up of people who are of all different sexual orientations and gender identities.

As you watch the film, notice how people take care of each other in their families and help each other feel proud of their identities

4. **OPTIONAL:** Show the 35-minute documentary film *That's a Family* and discuss it.

The film tells the stories, in their own words, of children in families with parents of different races, religions and abilities; divorced and married parents; couple and single parents; gay, lesbian, and straight parents; adoptive parents, birth parents and grandparents as guardians. Each child discusses the configuration of their family, what's special about their family, what's challenging about their family, and what they want other children to understand about families like theirs. It comes with an excellent teaching guide that can be downloaded for free. <https://www.newday.com/film/thats-family>

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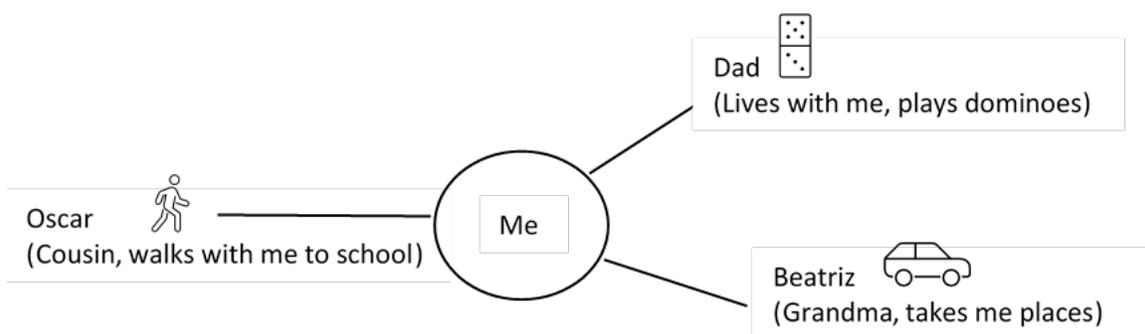
- The film portrays children and families that are happy and highly functional at the time. Acknowledge that most families also experience challenging times.
- The film also does not introduce every configuration of family. With students, point out types of families that were not portrayed (foster families, group homes, couples without children, families with lots of kids, families with someone who is trans or nonbinary, extended families living together, etc.)
- Invite people to comment on the ways their own families are similar to and different from the families in the film, thinking about, for instance, the ways they have fun together, the ways they change over time, the ways that different family members take care of one another.

5. Diagram families.

Have each student draw a small circle in the center of a sheet of construction paper. They should write the word “me” inside the circle. You can do the same on the blackboard, diagramming your own family or a fictional family. From the circle, draw one spoke for each member of the family. At the outside end of the spoke, write the person's name or nickname and draw a little picture of something special about that person (e.g., a soccer ball for someone who loves soccer, a smiling mouth for someone with a wonderful laugh, etc.)

Be sure to point out that each person will define “family” differently in deciding who to include. Families might include people who live at home, extended family, birth, adoptive and/or foster family members, pets, etc. Students should include whoever they think of as their family, and there is no wrong way to do this activity.

Allow 15 minutes. Here's an example:



Invite 3 or 4 volunteers to describe their diagrams to the class. Help each volunteer to articulate the characteristic they value about each family member.

5. Examine communication within families.

If one of the needs a family can meet is the need to feel listened to, how can a person listen well? How do you know if somebody's really listening to you? How do you feel when someone is doing a good job listening to you? How do you know when they're not?

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Choose a dramatic student to role-play with you a conversation between two siblings. Play the scene twice, using the *Communication Roleplay Script*.

You play the older sibling; the student plays the younger sibling. In the scenario, the younger sibling is upset because they got in trouble at school for something that they didn't do; the younger sibling feels frustrated and hurt and is trying to tell their older sibling about it.

The first time you exhibit poor listening skills (allow yourself to be distracted by the phone, don't make eye contact, cross your arms and lean backwards, tell the other person they don't really feel upset, and change the subject).

The second time, you exhibit good listening skills (allow no distractions, look the person in the eyes, uncross your arms and lean forward, check out whether you understand the person's feelings by asking, and nod). Each time, ask your fellow role-player how their character felt in the scene.

After the second scene, ask the class to tell you exactly what they saw you do differently in the two scenes. Write the class's observations on the board under the title "Behaviors that contribute to good listening."

6. Examine who benefits from good communication.

Tell the class you want to share a case study with them and get their reactions to it. Read aloud:

"Abdi and Sofia were both in sixth grade and they were best friends. One day Abdi came to school grouchy. He wouldn't take his coat off. He yelled at someone who tripped over his foot by mistake. He didn't even sing during music, and he was usually the best singer in the class. Mr. Tran, his teacher asked him what was wrong, and he wouldn't tell her. The music teacher, Ms. Washington, came out to talk with him during recess, and he just pulled away. Finally, at lunch he told Sofia that his dog had been hit by a car. He told her he couldn't tell anybody but Sofia because he was embarrassed that he might cry. As he said this, one tear slid down his cheek and Sofia offered him her sleeve to wipe it."

Ask the class how they think Abdi felt. Ask them also how they think Sofia felt. The point is that even though it's a very sad situation, both people also feel good: Abdi, because she didn't laugh at his feelings, and Sofia, because Abdi trusts her so much that he will talk to her when something is personal and important. He feels listened to, and she feels needed and special.

8. Answer "Anonymous Question Box" questions about family.

Help students appreciate the similarities, differences and purposes of families. It may helpful to have school and community resources to refer students (e.g. divorce, alcoholism, domestic violence, etc.)

9. Summarize the lesson by asking the class to tell you what a family *is* and what it is *for*.

Related Activities For Integrated Learning

Reading

Have students do a book report, not about the plot of a book, but about the family of the main character. Who is in the family? How does each one help meet the needs of the others? What is special about each one?

Homework

Students' options:

- Family homework: What are some things that make our family special?
- Individual homework: List 3 things that are special about your family or about a person who is like family to you.

Communication Roleplay Script

1st Roleplay – Poor Listening Skills

The older sibling (played by the teacher) demonstrates poor listening skills:

- Is distracted by the phone
- Doesn't make eye contact
- Crosses arms and leans backwards
- Tells the younger sibling (played by the student) they don't really feel upset
- Changes the subject

Younger Sibling:	You won't believe what Ms. Jones did to me! She wouldn't let me go to recess and said I was talking even though I wasn't! It was totally unfair. And I told her and she wouldn't even listen to me!
Older Sibling:	Don't you think you're making a big deal out of this? I mean, it's just recess.
Younger Sibling:	But it wasn't fair! And I didn't do it! And now she thinks I was being rude and I wasn't!
Older Sibling:	I know you talk sometimes when you're not supposed to. You probably had it coming to you.
Younger sibling:	You're not even listening to me! You don't understand!

2nd Roleplay – Good Listening Skills

This time, the older sibling (played by the teacher) exhibits good listening skills:

- Allows no distractions
- Looks directly at younger sibling (student)
- Uncrosses arms and leans forward
- Asks how younger sibling (student) feels
- Nods and shows interested facial expression

Younger Sibling:	You won't believe what Ms. Jones did to me! She wouldn't let me go to recess and said I was talking even though I wasn't! It was totally unfair. And I told her and she wouldn't even listen to me!
Older Sibling:	That's terrible! I'm so sorry.
Younger Sibling:	It wasn't fair! And I didn't do it! And now she thinks I was being rude and I wasn't!
Older Sibling:	I hate it when things like that happen. How are you feeling now?
Younger Sibling:	I feel mad at her and worried that she will think I was being bad. And embarrassed because the other kids saw that I didn't get to go out to recess.
Older Sibling:	I would feel the same way. Do you want to think together about how you could talk with her tomorrow and clear things up?