

1. Members come together regularly and enjoy each other's company.

A variety of Strong Families Studies agree on one fact – that people in strong families come together either formally to share a meal or meet on people's birthdays and other special events; or come together informally – they just hang out together.

How much time do you spend with your family?

2. People share their feelings, even unpleasant feelings and they learn how to manage them effectively.

People in strong families connect on a deeper emotional level. When someone is unhappy or miserable; it's not ignored. It's acknowledged and it informs how people behave – whether to give that person space; provide a shoulder to lean on or simply to cheer them up. **Does your family connect on an emotional level?**

3. Family members care deeply about each other – come together through difficulty.

People in strong families draw together when the chips are down and crisis happens. Hardship galvanises rather than pushes people away. **Would your family pull together or disintegrate when hardship hits?**

4. Family members communicate and show emotion.

People don't always get their communication right but there is a willingness to forgive transgressions of others and to look for ways to move forward rather than be stuck in the past. **How much affection is shown in your family on a daily basis?**

5. Conflict is resolved respectfully and responsively, rather than ignored.

Parents will see conflict situations as opportunities to bring people closer together rather than take sides and apportion blame. **Is conflict ignored or handled respectfully in your family?**

6. There is a strong sense of shared identity.

Strong, emotionally smart families have a strong sense of who they are. They generally have identifiable rituals and traditions that are passed down from one generation to the next. **What are your key traditions and rituals?**

7. Decisions are shared and all members honour opinions and ideas.

The old autocratic parenting approach “Do as I say”, no longer works in Western families. Parents in strong families use an authoritative parenting approach to raise their children. **What parenting approach do you use?**

8. There is a feeling of optimism and hope in the family.

Strong families usually have something bigger than them that they connect with – whether it is religion, caring for the environment or shared compassion for mankind – hope and optimism are gained from a shared set of ethics, beliefs or values.

How does your crew measure up?