ABSTRACT
        The evolution of the family concerns health educators
because family environment has been consistently linked to
development of various addictions and negative behaviors, such as
drug and alcohol abuse, eating disorders, workaholism, excessive
exercise, sexual promiscuity, vandalism, youth crime, and violence
and abuse. It is recognized that a family's overall functioning
pattern can negatively or positively affect a child's emotional,
social, or physical health. In "The Circumplex Model," a model that
seeks to explain family functioning patterns, family health has two
dimensions, located at either end of a continuum. The first
dimension, adaptability, measures how well a family deals with
internal change; the second dimension, cohesion, measures the
family's ability to function together as a unit. The two extremes of
adaptability are rigidity and chaos; the two extremes of cohesion are
enmeshment and disengagement. Research has shown that family
environment may be a very accurate predictor of at-risk behavior.
Family-related factors which affect drug use (or nonuse) and eating
patterns in offspring include: family health and parenting style,
parental support, independence, and parental control. A list of ways
to encourage children not to use drugs or alcohol focuses on
communication, development of independent thinking, self esteem, and
strengthening family interaction. (IAH)

THE EVOLUTION OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY AND ITS EFFECTS ON HEALTH BEHAVIOR CHOICES.

Presentation made by Terri M. Manning, Ed.D., Assistant Professor of Health Behavior, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Program presented at the annual National Convention for The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, April 9, 1992, Indianapolis, Indiana.

When Americans think of the American family, many still conjure up images of "Ozzie and Harriett" or "Leave it to Beaver". The family has drastically changed over the past 50 years but many people, including societal leaders and politicians, are wanting to pretend that nothing has changed.

Children have it tougher today than ever before in regard to getting what they need developmentally from our society, their family, their peers.... they have more temptation than ever before.

Likewise, parenting today is harder than it's ever been before. Families have begun separating and moving all over the country. Parents today are parenting alone, sometimes 2000 miles away from the nearest relative. The days of children growing up in the bosom of their extended family has all but vanished.

The problem is that societal changes have caused a tremendous backlash in the family yet the family is being blamed for all of our problems. We hear statements such as:

Mothers being in the work-force negatively affects kids. (mothers are blamed for everything)

Kids today just can't say no.

Fathers aren't around enough.

Parents have no control over their children.

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Children spend too much time alone (because mothers work and fathers aren't around enough)

In a study chaired by Senator John Rockefeller and conducted with over 3,000 people, the following information about parents and children was found:

70% of families eat dinner together five or more nights each week.

86% of parents of younger children read to them at least weekly.

88% of parents believe they know all or most of the time what their children are doing when they are not at home.

Almost 60% of parents want more time with their children.

One in two fathers, one in eight mothers and one in three single parents said they regularly work more than 40 hours a week.

More than half of all parents reported worrying that their family income will not be enough to meet living expenses.

Only a third of children in single-parent families reported seeing their fathers at least once a week. Almost one in five had not seen their fathers for five years.

40% of urban poor parents worry their children will get shot: 38% of their children worry that someone on drugs will hurt them.

Parents today are not doing that bad a job, what has changed is the circumstances under which most of us parent. Radical changes have taken place in the American family over the last 50 years. According to U.S. Census data, the following changes have occurred from 1940 to 1988:

1940	1988
The United States was 70% rural	The United States is 90% urban

This effects where children grow up and the amount of time spent in or near the home.

1940	1988
10-15% of children lived in divorced, step or step-blended families	35-42% of children live in divorced, step or step-blended families
78.7% of children lived with both parents (went up to 91.5% in 1960)	66.5% of children live with both parents

Children in single parent families get even less time from adults than children with both parents.

7.2% of mothers with children less than two were in the work force	40-55% of mothers with children less than two are in the work force

Real effects are that a large percentage of children are spending 10 hours per day in a daycare center.

70% of households had a grandparent living in the home	4% or less have a grandparent living in the home

This is significant because children got more positive strokes from adult role models. If your parents weren't very good parents, the grandparents picked up the slack for them. With the loss of grandparents in the home also came the loss of close relatives living on the same block or next door, etc.

Average marriage lasted 13.6 years	Average marriage lasts 6.9 years
Average age of marriage - 16	Average age of marriage - 25-26

Children today are only expected to wait 13-15 years to have sex after they reach puberty and have a desire to become sexually active. In 1940, children didn't go through puberty until 14-15 and were married at 16. No wonder they had lower teen pregnancy rates.

Some other changes not from census data but from modern studies are as follows:

Classroom size was 15-22	Classroom size is 28-42

The average 10 year old child spent 3-4 hours per day with a significant adult role model (one-on-one time)

Average 10 year old child spends 15 minutes a day with a significant adult role model (13 1/2 minutes are spent reprimanding him/her about things they could have done, should have done or need to do better)

No T.V.

Average child watches 5-7 hours of T.V. per day.

This gives unclear messages, validates instant gratification and takes time away from people.

Recreation meant people

Recreation means machines

In 1940 when you wanted to have a good time you got together with other people and interacted. Today, when you want to recreate, you play Nintendo, watch T.V., videos, etc.

Less dependence on peers

Greater dependence on peers

Children who don't get what they need in relationship to attention, self-esteem validation and love relationships are more prone to seek this from their peers.

Kids felt connected (they knew they were an active part of their family and needed)

Kids feel disconnected (they know they are a hardship to their family and aren't really needed)

Children today are not needed in the way they were needed when we lived in a predominantly rural society.

The reason the evolution of the family is of great concern to health educators is

that family environment has consistently been related to the development of

various addictions and negative behaviors such as:

> Drug and alcohol addiction
> Eating Disorders
> Workaholism
> Excessive exercising (modern day eating disorder)
> Sexual promiscuity or acting out
> Vandalism
> Youth crime
> Violence and abuse

It seems that some families develop patterns of functioning that can affect children both negatively or positively.

Dr. David Olson of the University oi Minnesota has developed a family model called "The Circumplex Model" which explains much of these family patterns.

He has found two dimensions of family health where families function along a continuum. Those dimensions are adaptability which measures how well a family deals with internal change, and cohesion which measures their ability to function together as a unit (see figure 1). The two extremes of adaptability are rigidity and chaos. The two extremes of cohesion are enmeshment and disengagement (see Tables 1 & 2).

Disengaged families are extremely separated with family time minimized. No real connection with family, they just live under one roof. Any real closeness and connectedness they feel is usually with peers. Everything is done on the individual level - no joint decisions or things done for the good of the family.

Enmeshed families are extremely close with independence being greatly restricted. Great boundary problems and blurred generational lines exist. Children aren't allowed outside friends. Great sense of "we" not "I".

Rigid families are strict and authoritarian - many rules (too many). Poor problem solving, no negotiation - strict enforcement. Children can't sway parents. May include military families and strict religious rigidity.

Chaotic families are unpredictable. This does great damage. Children never know what the rules are from moment to moment. Endless negotiation - poor

problem solving. Roles shift, rules change, nothing enforced. Kids feel they have no control of their environment. May include extreme religion.

Disorders seen in these types of families are:

Rigid -   Drugs and alcohol
                 Eating disorders
                 Sexual acting out (rebellion)
                 Workaholism

Chaotic -   Stress prone (highly controlling as adults)
                 Drugs and alcohol
                 Vandalism (no supervision)
                 Workaholism (controlling)

Enmeshed -   Incest
                 Family violence
                 Eating disorders
                 Drugs and alcohol
                 Codependence

Disengaged -   Drugs and alcohol (peer pressure)
                 Sexual acting out (need for love and belonging)

It has been found that any extreme type can produce severely affected offspring. Any child who feels like evening the score can participate in at-risk behavior to get even. Children who grow up in extreme family types know they are different and as they move through adulthood may find they have difficulty with intimate relationships, coping, problem solving, etc. It's about age 25-35 that these severely affected offspring realize they need help with their day-to-day lives. But one of the great problems in our society is that virtually all at-risk efforts are placed on adolescents with the majority of programing dealing with children and youth. We seem to have forgotten that adulthood is where 50% of people develop addictions and negative behaviors to cope with life.
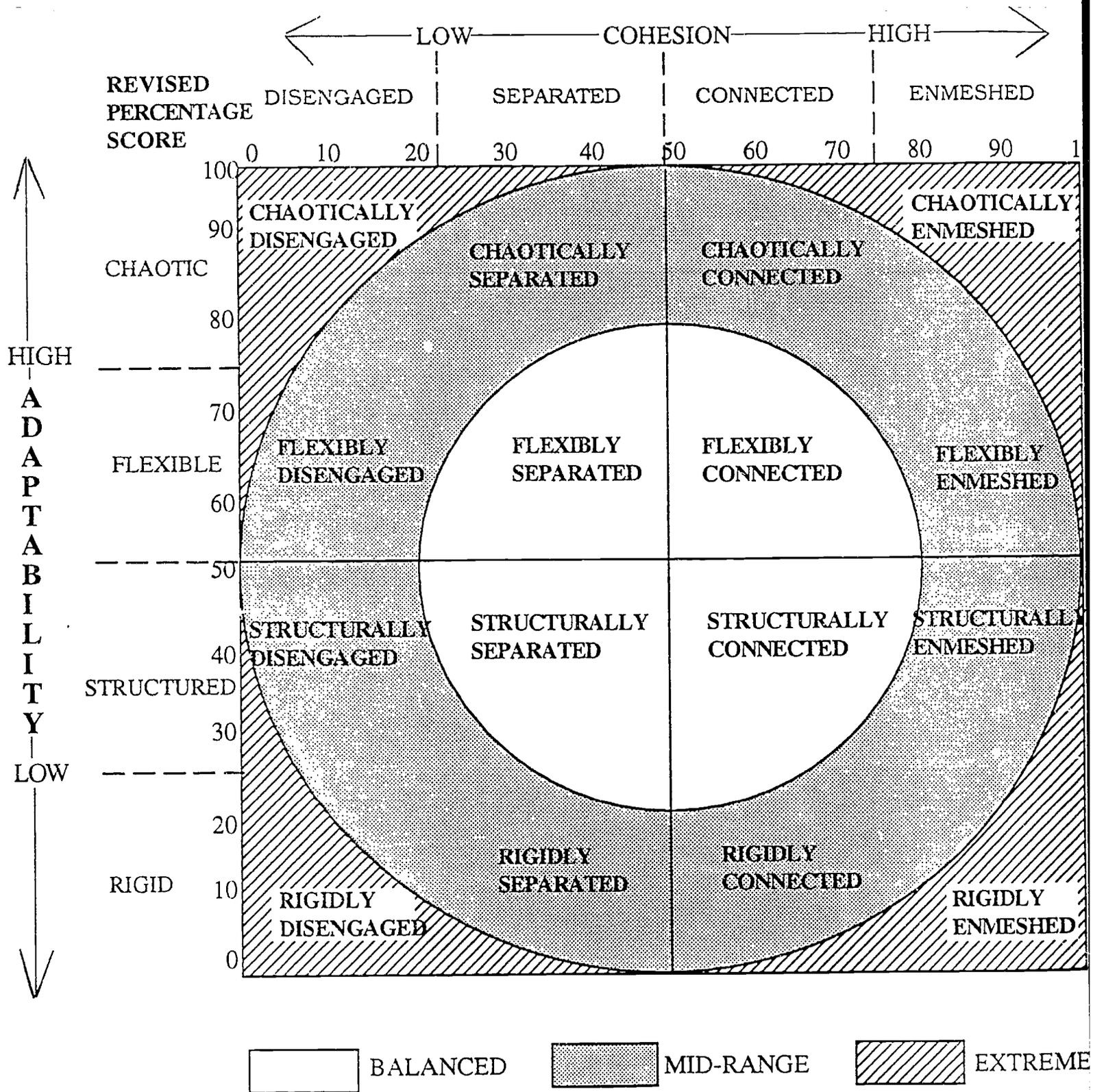
Research has shown that family environment may be a very accurate predictor of at-risk behavior. Table 3 points to family factors which have made a difference in the area of drug and alcohol usage and eating disorders among offspring. These factors point to two extreme types of families which produce eating disorders or drug addicts/alcoholics on one extreme and non-eating disorders or social/non-users (drugs or alcohol) on the other extreme.

Based on these factors, Table 4 is a list of ways to improve family health and at the same time, encourage your children not to use drugs.

In the way of solutions, we need more understanding of child and family development and clear definitions of what children need from their families at various ages. Any program developed for the prevention of at-risk behaviors or addictions needs to emphasize this point.

We also need health educators to plunge head-long into the family literature and gain great understanding of family change and patterns. We must stop focusing solely on genetic factors and family histories (i.e. addiction, cancer etc.) and start looking at patterns of discipline, views of child worth, coping patterns, family structure, etc. Programs that focus solely on the individual child and leave out the very influential role the family plays in the development of negative health behavior choices is doomed to begin with. Family health could possibly be the most accurate predictor of future dysfunctional behavior in offspring.

FIGURE I: FAMILY OF ORIGIN
BASED ON THE CIRCUMPLEX MODEL

LOW COHESION HIGH

REVISED PERCENTAGE SCORE

DISENGAGED | SEPARATED | CONNECTED | ENMESHED

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   1

100

CHAOTICALLY DISENGAGED

CHAOTICALLY ENMESHED

90

CHAOTIC

CHAOTICALLY SEPARATED

CHAOTICALLY CONNECTED

80

HIGH

70

FLEXIBLE

FLEXIBLY DISENGAGED

FLEXIBLY SEPARATED

FLEXIBLY CONNECTED

FLEXIBLY ENMESHED

60

A D A P T A B I L I T Y

50

STRUCTURALLY DISENGAGED

STRUCTURALLY SEPARATED

STRUCTURALLY CONNECTED

STRUCTURALLY ENMESHED

40

STRUCTURED

30

LOW

RIGID

20

RIGIDLY SEPARATED

RIGIDLY CONNECTED

10

RIGIDLY DISENGAGED

RIGIDLY ENMESHED

0

▢ = BALANCED   ▨ = MID-RANGE   ▨ = EXTREME

Ⓜ = Males Family of Origin

9

Ⓕ = Females Family of Origin

TABLE 1: FAMILY COHESION

Couple or Family Score	Disengaged (very low) 1-2	Separated (Low to Moderate) 3-4	Connected (Moderate to High) 5-6	Enmeshed (Very High) 7-8
Emotional Bonding (Feelings of Closeness)	Extreme separateness. Lack of closeness or loyalty.	Emotional separateness encouraged and preferred. Need for support respected.	Emotional closeness encouraged and preferred. Need for separateness respected.	Extreme closeness. Loyalty demanded. Separateness restricted.
Family Boundaries (External Relationship)	Influence of outside people and ideas unrestricted	Open to outside people and ideas.	Some control of outside people and ideas.	Influence of outside people and ideas restricted.
Coalitions (Marital) (Sibling) (Generational)	Weak marital coalition. Poor sibling relationship. Blurred generational lines.	Stable marital coalitions. Stable sibling relationship. Fluid generational lines.	Strong marital coalitions. Stable sibling relations. Stable generational lines.	Weak marital coalitions. Parent-child coalitions. Blurred generational lines.
Time (Physical and/or Emotional)	Time apart from family maximized. Rarely time together.	Time alone important. Some time together.	Time together important and scheduled. Time alone permitted.	Time together maximized. Little time alone permitted.
Space (Physical and/or Emotional)	Separate space needed and preferred.	Separate space preferred; Sharing of family space.	Sharing family space preferred. Private space respected.	Little or no private space permitted.
Friends	Mainly individual friends seen alone. Few family friends.	Individual friends shared with family. Some family friends.	Some individual friends. Some scheduled activities with couple/family friends.	Limited individual friends. Couple/family friends strongly encouraged.
Decision Making	Primarily individual decisions. No checking with other family members.	Most decisions individually made. Able to make joint decisions on family issues.	Most decisions made with family in mind. Individual decisions are shared.	All decisions, both personal and relationship, must be approved.
Interests and Recreations 10	Primarily individual activities done without family. Family not involved.	Some spontaneous family activities. Individual activities supported.	Some scheduled family activities. Family involved in individual interests.	Most activities and interests must be shared with family.
Total Cohesion				

11

TABLE 2: FAMILY ADAPTABILITY

Couple or Family Score	Rigid (very low) 1 2	Structured (Low to Moderate) 3 4	Flexible (Moderate to High) 5 6	Chaotic (Very High) 7 8
Assertiveness	Passive-aggressive styles of interaction.	Generally assertive with some aggression.	Mutually assertive with rare aggression.	Passive and aggressive styles. Unpredictable patterns.
Leadership (Control)	Authoritarian. Traditional leadership.	Leadership is stable and kindly imposed.	Equalitarian leadership with fluid changes	Limited and/or erratic leadership.
Discipline	Autocratic Strict, rigid conseq. Rigidly enforced.	Generally democratic. Predictable consequences Firmly imposed and enforced.	Usually democratic. Negotiated conseq. Fairly maintained.	L'aissez-faire: Inconsistent conseq. Erratically enforced.
Negotiation	Poor problem solving. Limited negotiations. Solution imposed.	Good problem solving. Structured negotiations. Reasonable solutions.	Good problem solving. Flexible negotiations. Agreed upon solutions.	Poor problem solving. Endless negotiations. Impulsive solutions.
Roles	Role rigidity. Stereotyped roles.	Roles stable, but may be shared.	Role sharing and making. Fluid changes of roles.	Dramatic role shifts. Sporadic role reversals.
Rules	Rigid rules. Many explicit rules. Many implicit rules. Rules strictly enforced.	Few rules changes. Many explicit rules. Some implicit rules. Rules firmly enforced.	Some rule changes. Some explicit rules. Few implicit rules. Rules fairly enforced.	Dramatic rule changes. Many explicit rules. Few implicit rules. Rules arbitrarily enforced.
Total Adaptability				

FROM: Olson, D.H., Russell, C.S., & Sprenkle, D.H. "Circumplex model of marital and family systems II: Empirical studies and clinical intervention." Advances in Family Intervention, and Theory, 1, 129-176.

TABLE 3

Definition of Family Factors That Make a Difference

The first factor reflected family health and parenting style. On one extreme, children felt happy and protected with a sense of family closeness. Communication was encouraged and family time optimized. Adequate affection was received with children feeling wanted by their parents. On the other extreme, the family was perceived as abnormal. Children felt unwanted, received little affection and viewed their childhood as unhappy.

The second factor dealt with parental support. On one extreme, parents supported their children in an excessive manner such as making excuses or defending them when they were wrong. On the other extreme, parents expected their children to pay the consequences for their actions. Parents who supported their children excessively were more likely to perform tasks (i.e. homework, making beds or cleaning rooms) that children should have done for themselves.

The third factor was independence. Families on one extreme allowed little individuality and respect for autonomy. Families on the other extreme deemed independence and individuality as valuable. People who were not encouraged to be independent were also more likely to have parents who had no control over them.

The fourth factor was abuse. The extreme families dealt with stress by using psychological crutches such as drugs, alcohol, physical abuse, extreme religion etc. Physical abuse occurred more often and there was a significantly greater number of alcoholics and drug abusers in previous generations.

The fifth factor was that of parental control. People on one extreme perceived their fathers as authoritarian figures and felt their parents were strict. People on the other extreme saw their parents as totally indifferent and ineffective in regard to discipline.

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TABLE 4

Ways to Encourage Your Child
Not To Use Drugs/Alcohol

1.   Communicate with your spouse in front of your children and encourage your children to communicate their feelings with you. How you communicate is how they will communicate (it's a modeled skill).

2.   Discuss the pros and cons of drug and alcohol usage with them. Don't lecture or issue ultimatums. Don't tell them "people who use drugs are bad." Discuss proper and improper coping skills.

3.   Give your children adequate affection. Tell them you love them. Don't expect them to "just know it". Always let them know you accept them no matter what.

4.   Make your home a "haven" where your children feel protected from the outside world. Make it as calm as possible. Chaos breeds dysfunction.

5.   Face your problems. Don't avoid them. How you deal with stress and crisis is how your children will deal with stress and crisis.

6.   Spend time together as a family. If you don't have a lot of time, make the best of what you have.

7.   Don't enable your children. At an early age, insist that they start taking responsibility. Let them make their own bed and do their homework. Let them learn what the word "consequences" means.

8.   Allow you children to make mistakes. Mistakes when they are 7 aren't as serious as mistakes when they're 20.

9.   Try to develop a positive sense of self-worth in your children. Help them feel special, good about who they are.

10.   Be more concerned about inner qualities rather than outward appearance.

11.   Give your children space to be individuals.

12.   Encourage your children to bring their friends into their home. Get involved in their activities.

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