Lesson 1
Families Today

Most people (adults and children) in this country do not realize how diverse our family forms have become. Families and households are much more complex than in years past and often do not fall easily into categories. Read through the Family Quiz Leader’s guide. These points are the focus of Lesson 1. Discussions of family form diversity serve to raise awareness, and in turn, promote acceptance of diverse family forms and the experience of parental marriage transitions. Discussions also serve to validate children’s experiences in their households and family structure.

1. ICEBREAKER - M&M’s ACTIVITY
   This activity will help the kids introduce themselves and get to know one another.
   - Pass around a bowl of M&M’s and ask each child to take “some” (do not tell them in advance what they will do with them). Be sure to tell them not to eat them. For each M&M they took, have them share with the group something about themselves or their families, and what they hope to learn in the program. They can eat the M&M’s as they go along. (Make sure no children have dietary restrictions!) As the facilitator, you demonstrate the activity for the group by going first. This activity may go on longer than you anticipate – but its importance lies in the group cohesiveness it builds and the increase in children’s comfort levels at being in the group.

2. MY FAMILY PICTURE & QUESTIONNAIRE
   Have children draw a picture of their family (For older children: have them draw a large circle and write in the names of their family members).
   - Ask children to share their drawings
   - Comment on the diversity of responses
   - How many people are in your family?
   - Who has the most people? Who has the least?

3. FAMILY QUIZ
   Have children take the quiz then go through each one together and discuss responses and give information (included in Family Quiz Leader’s Guide).
**Family Quiz**

**True or False:**

1. The people in most households in America all have the same last name.
   - **FALSE**
     - There is a wide variety of family types. Can you name some?
     - Name some circumstances where household members would have different last names.
     - By the year 2010, stepfamilies will be the most common family form – usually at least two members have different last names.

2. Most children in America will spend some of their growing up years in a single-parent household.
   - **TRUE**
     - Parent could never have married
     - Could be after a divorce
     - Could be after a parent dies
     - Could be when a child goes to live with a grandparent or relative when a parent cannot take care of them.

3. You can’t control what you do with your emotions.
   - **FALSE**
     - Emotions – what you are feeling – are never wrong or bad.
     - What you do with your emotions – your behavior – can be wrong or bad.
     - You can have control over your actions and your words.

4. Conflict is always a bad thing.
   - **FALSE**
     - Conflict is a normal part of human relationships
     - You can learn a lot about yourself and others through conflict
     - Learning to control your actions and words will help you manage conflict in your life
     - We will learn about conflict management in an upcoming lesson.

5. A family is made up of people living in the same household.
   - **FALSE**
     - The definitions are different: A family is made up of your important relationships; a household is made up of family members who live together in the same house.

   - **TRUE**
     - What stories include stepparent characters?
     - How are they portrayed?
     - Did any of those thoughts enter your mind when you found out you would have a stepparent?
• What is this called – when we decide what a person will be like just based on what we’ve heard about that category of people? Stereotype
• We’ll talk more about stereotypes in an upcoming lesson.

7. Empathy means trying to see the other person’s perspective (putting yourself in their “shoes”).
   **TRUE**
   • This is an important idea to understand in families – especially stepfamilies
   • We will learn more about empathy in an upcoming lesson.

8. There is usually instant love between members of stepfamilies.
   **FALSE**
   • It can take a while to feel love for someone
   • In many stepfamilies, members care for each other, but may not love each other – and that’s ok – that can still be a strong stepfamily.
   • Respectful attitudes and behaviors are most important in a healthy family or group.

9. If children care for their stepparent, then they are being disloyal to their parent.
   **FALSE**
   • We can care deeply for more than two adults in our life.
   • A parent doesn’t love their first two children any less, if they have a third or fourth child.

10. Certain kinds of families are better than others.
    **FALSE**
    • No type of family is “right” or “wrong”
    • Discuss: What makes a healthy, strong family?
      List their ideas. Try to hit on:
      • Appreciation/Caring/Respect for other members
      • Democratic decision-making
      • Flexibility and Openness to change
      • Communication skills
      • Shared values
      • Quality time together and in pairs
      • Connections with others outside the family
4. VIDEO
   Watch segments of “That’s a Family”
   Discuss impressions after each segment

5. LESSON SUMMARY
   Be sure to include these points:
   - “Families” are different than “households”
   - Millions of children experience parental separation and divorce
   - Most children will spend some time in a single-parent household
   - Very soon, the stepfamily will be the most common type of family
     - Different means different, not bad or worse

6. FAMILY ACTIVITY
   Have the children fill out the “My Family” worksheet. (The flower worksheet is for younger children). Explain that their parents and stepparents will come in for a family activity. Each will share their answers. The rules are:
   - Everyone gets a turn
   - No one’s thoughts or feelings are “wrong”
   - Think about what answers are surprising or interesting – tell that person so

   If parents are not participating in the program, encourage them to take their drawing and the flower worksheet home to show their family members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;M’s in bowl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blank Drawing Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crayons/Markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notebooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handouts (3-hole punched)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video – “That’s A Family”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pencils</td>
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<tr>
<th>OPTIONAL ACTIVITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS:</td>
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<td>- Materials: drawing paper, magazines, scissors, paste</td>
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<td>Have the children cut out pictures of people from the magazines until they have a pile of fifteen or so. Then have them mount the pictures on the paper in family units.</td>
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<td>Encourage them to create as many types of families as possible – single-parent, extended, interracial, stepfamilies, etc. Remind them that families may live in two or more households.</td>
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• Discussion:
  Does anyone know a family with no children?
  Does anyone have grandparents or other relatives besides parents and siblings living with him or her?
  How are other families different from and similar to yours?
Hand-outs
Lesson 1
My Family

Write your answer on each part of the flower. Color the flower then share it with your family.

My family has _____ members.

One thing we fight about is:

One thing we like to do together is:

Our favorite place to visit is:

One really good thing about my family is:

My family's favorite food is:
My Family

Complete the following phrases and discuss with your family.

1. List your family members and one thing you like to do with each one:

| ____________ | ______________ |
| ____________ | ______________ |
| ____________ | ______________ |
| ____________ | ______________ |
| ____________ | ______________ |
| ____________ | ______________ |

2. One thing our family fights about is__________________________

3. One thing I like that no one else likes is______________________

4. I'm proud of my family because_______________________________

5. One thing I'd like to see changed in my family is__________

6. What is one thing about you that no one in your family knows?_______________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
Family Quiz

True or False:
1. The people in most households in America all have the same last name.
   T or F

2. Most children in America will spend some of their growing up years in a single-parent household.
   T or F

3. You can’t control what you do with your emotions.
   T or F

4. Conflict is always a bad thing.
   T or F

5. A family is made up of people living in the same household.
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   T or F

7. Empathy means trying to see the other person’s perspective (putting yourself in their “shoes”).
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8. There is usually instant love between members of stepfamilies.
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9. If children care for their stepparent, then they are being disloyal to their parent.
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