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Changing families

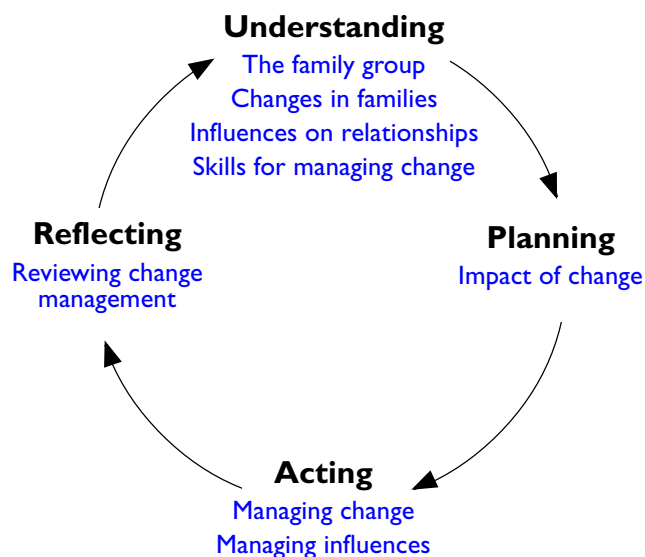
Strand
Enhancing Personal Development

Purpose

Students explore the impact of change on families and predict the impact of these changes on social and emotional growth and development of family members. They investigate how attitudes towards, behaviours in, and expectations of, relationships in families are influenced by changes in families. Students develop and demonstrate skills and strategies to manage the influence of these changes in a way that enhances relationships and individual and family wellbeing.

Overview of activities

Activities in this module are based on a learner-centred approach with an emphasis on decision making and problem solving. As the following diagram shows, activities are sequenced in **understanding**, **planning**, **acting** and **reflecting** phases.



Core learning outcomes

This module focuses on the following core learning outcomes from the Years 1 to 10 Health and Physical Education Syllabus:

Enhancing Personal Development

- 5.2 Students develop strategies to manage the influence of individuals and groups on attitudes towards, behaviours in, and expectations of, relationships.
- 5.3 Students predict how changes associated with significant transitions in their lives, including pubertal changes, may influence physical, social and emotional growth and development.
- 5.4 Students demonstrate skills to deal effectively with challenge and conflict in social, team or group situations.

Core content

This module incorporates the following core content from the syllabus:

Enhancing Personal Development

- relationships in families, friendships and groups with an emphasis on enhancing and managing relationships;
- factors influencing identity and relationships, particularly stereotyping and interactions with others;
- interpersonal skills related to expressing feelings, ideas and emotions, and conflict resolution, negotiation and cooperation.

Assessment strategy

The following are examples of assessment tasks that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the core learning outcomes identified in this module. Other activities in this module provide opportunities for teachers to gather evidence about students' demonstration of outcomes for assessment purposes.

Enhancing Personal Development 5.2

- **Students investigate the influence of peers, family members and media on their own and others' attitudes towards, behaviours in, and expectations of, relationships when there is a change in the family composition. They identify strategies that can enhance the positive influences of the change and overcome the negative influences.**
 - Can the student identify how individuals and groups (for example, peers, family, media groups) influence his or her attitudes towards, behaviours in, and expectations of, relationships when there is a change in the composition of a household?
 - Can the student develop appropriate strategies to effectively manage the influence of individuals and groups on attitudes towards, behaviours in, and expectations of, relationships when there is a change in the composition of a household?

Enhancing Personal Development 5.3, 5.4

- In small groups, students identify and research an aspect of change or significant transition in family life. They predict the impact the change will have on the social and emotional growth and development of each family member and suggest how to help deal with the change. They develop a plan to demonstrate their understanding of strategies and skills to manage that change or significant transition in a way that enhances the wellbeing of individuals within the family.
 - Can the student identify a change or significant transition that may occur in family life?
 - Can the student make appropriate predictions about the impact of the change or transition on different family members — for example, altered roles and responsibilities, their social and emotional development?
 - Can the student demonstrate skills to effectively manage such a change or transition?

Enhancing Personal Development 5.3, 5.4

- Students explore the importance of interpersonal skills in forming new relationships in families — for example, when a family member is added or lost. They identify the types of challenges or conflicts that may arise and the skills needed to resolve conflict. Students develop and demonstrate some of these skills. They predict how these new skills will influence social and emotional growth and development.
 - Can the student identify skills to effectively deal with conflict and challenge in family relationships?
 - Can the student demonstrate skills to deal effectively with conflict in family relationships?
 - Can the student demonstrate skills to deal effectively with challenge in family relationships?

Background information

Family relationships

A number of significant transitions in people's lives result in changed roles, responsibilities and relationships within the context of their families. Individuals need to develop a range of communication and interpersonal skills and strategies to manage change in ways that enhance the wellbeing of family members. This module looks at transitions young adolescents may face and how they can best manage family relationships.

Prior knowledge



Students should have already discussed and come to an understanding of the various meanings of the term 'family' (see Resource Sheet 1, 'What are families?'). This module assumes that the term 'family' has different meanings for different people. Students are encouraged to acknowledge and value this diversity.

Sensitive issues

Discussion of issues related to the family can be very sensitive. It is recommended that a supportive environment be provided by discussing the issues ‘at a distance’ from the students — that is, the learning experiences should not be personalised. For example, when illustrating a family group, students should be asked to draw *a* family rather than *their* family. Similarly, when discussing different types of families, use examples from media families and case studies. At all times students should be discouraged from discussing families they know — for example, when describing examples of conflict in a family environment. It is recommended that this expectation is made clear to students at the start of the module and ground rules for discussion established.

Students wishing to discuss personal issues that arise during this module should be referred to the appropriate school personnel, such as a guidance officer or school chaplain.

Terminology

Activities in this module involve use of the following language in the context of Health and Physical Education:

blended family	heterosexuality	nuclear family
conflict resolution	homosexuality	re-partnering
de facto relationship	lifecycle	stereotype
extended family	marriage	single-parent family

School authority policies

Teachers need to be aware of and observe school authority policies that may be relevant to this module.

Policies relating to the treatment of sensitive issues are of particular relevance.

Social justice principles

This module provides opportunities for students to increase their understanding and appreciation of supportive environments and diversity. It includes learning activities that encourage students to:

- think in terms of equity when they examine whether certain family members are advantaged or disadvantaged when they take on new responsibilities and when tasks are allocated on the basis of gender;
- develop interpersonal skills for creating supportive, harmonious family environments in times of change;
- consider a range of family structures to acknowledge that ‘family’ means different things to different people and that different families meet needs in different ways.

Students with disabilities or learning difficulties may require some activities to be modified to optimise both their participation and their ability to demonstrate the outcomes. Teachers should consult with parents/carers and specialist support staff to determine whether modification is necessary.

Support materials and references

Bennett, P. & Kearney, E. 1988, *Never Felt Better! Health and Human Relations in the Junior School*, Rigby Heinemann, Port Melbourne, Vic.

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Family and Children's Services, Western Australia, *Living with Parents*. Available URL: <http://www.fcs.wa.gov.au/parenting/lwp/home.htm> (accessed May 2000).

Healey, K. 1995, *Parenting: Issues for the Nineties*, Vol. 39, The Spinney Press, Sydney.

Queensland Department of Education 1993, *Interpersonal Skills in Drug Education: Activities for Groups*, 3rd edn, Health Issues Section, Health and Personal Development Unit, Brisbane.

Sunderland, G. & Pickup, G. 1993, *In Great Shape! Book 2*, Rigby Heinemann, Port Melbourne, Vic.

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Activities

Understanding

THE FAMILY GROUP

Revising what constitutes a family group

► Students discuss their understanding of the term ‘family’ and consider the range of groupings considered to be families.

Focus questions could include:

- What makes up a family?
- Where do we get these ideas about families from?
- What other types of ‘family’ are there?
- What factors affect our notions of what a family is and what it might do?
- How is the family defined differently according to the culture, time or society in which we live?

Teaching considerations

It is expected that students already will have explored in depth the meaning of the term ‘family’.

Encourage students to explore and accept a range of understandings of families. There may be a need to revisit the concept of ‘family’ — identifying that the term has many meanings — and point out that such diversity should be acknowledged. Useful examples are Aboriginal families which often call non-blood people their ‘aunts’ or ‘cousins’; and homosexual couples, some of whom adopt children or have children from previous relationships. Students could also discuss ‘nuclear’ families and ‘extended’ families.

It may be necessary to ensure students have prior understandings of terms such as ‘homosexuality’, ‘heterosexuality’, and to be prepared to clarify these concepts further.

Resource Sheet 1 defines different types of families.



CHANGES IN FAMILIES

Identifying potential changes in families and the impact these changes may have

► In groups of three to six, students brainstorm changes that may occur in families over a period of time and that may occur in different families. Groups share their responses and discuss the changes identified.

Teaching consideration

Encourage students to consider changes that relate to the lifecycle and those associated with physical, social and emotional growth and development of family members, such as adolescents seeking independence.

- ▶ Starting with forming a partnership (or getting married), students draw a timeline that includes changes that might occur in a family. They highlight the changes they themselves may experience in the future.

Teaching consideration

The types of lifecycle changes students might identify include marriage, births of children, children leaving home, care of family members with a disability, grandparents coming to live with the family, death, separation of parents, illness, accidents, re-partnering. Other changes could be moving house, moving to another town, changing schools, going to boarding school, emigrating, employment, unemployment.

- ▶ Students form small groups to discuss and record their ideas about how changes that may occur in a family, such as separation of parents or other family members, remarriage or unemployment, influence their physical, social and emotional development.
- ▶ Students list words that describe how parents/carers and children may feel when someone new comes into a family, keeping separate lists for different new members. They use these words as the basis of a survey to assess the feelings of adults and children who have recently 'gained' a family member. Students collate results and compare findings for adult females (for example, mothers) with those for adult males (for example, fathers) and for boys compared with girls.

Focus questions could include:

- How did male parents/carers and female parents/carers feel about the new family member?
- How did boys and girls feel about the new family member?
- How did other family members feel about the change?
- Are there any differences in the feelings of family members based on gender, on age or on position in the family?
- Why do you think people react differently to a new family member?
- Did family role expectations change as a result of the new family member? Why?

Teaching consideration

Students could repeat the above activity by conducting a survey of how 'new' family members feel — for example, step-children, foster children, step-parents.

'New' family members could include an exchange student, grandparent, step-parent, step-sibling, foster parent, guardian.

- ▶ Students collect information about the amount of unpaid work done by different family members. They present this information as a graph.

Focus questions could include:

- Who performs most of the unpaid work in families? Why do you think this is?
- How might the balance of paid and unpaid work influence relationships in families?

Teaching considerations

Bittman (1991) examined the hours spent on household tasks by women and men. His research indicated that girls in the home spend more time on household tasks than boys. Students could discuss these issues in relation to whether the distribution of work in households is equitable.

Maintain cultural sensitivity by acknowledging that each family has its own organisational responsibilities.

Point out to students the benefits to males when they engage in household tasks and caring for family members — for example, sense of satisfaction, pride, development of good interpersonal relationships.

- ▶ Students survey teenage boys and girls to identify the household tasks for which teenagers commonly have responsibility. The survey should include questions relating to the composition of the family to which the teenagers belong, such as number of children, their position in the family, number of parents/carers.
- ▶ Students discuss the new responsibilities that teenagers might take on if the family composition changes — for example, as a result of a sibling leaving home, divorce or a death in the family. They identify ways in which the allocation of new tasks may be managed so that tasks are allocated in a socially just manner. To inform their discussions, students consider the survey data they collected about who does what in different family situations — for example, where there are young children or only teenage children or single-parent families.
- ▶ In small groups, students identify a situation when someone new joins a family — for example, a baby or step-parent. They brainstorm the implications of that person's becoming a family member and suggest instances where the addition of a new family member creates increased responsibilities for parents/carers, children and other family members such as grandparents. Students draw up a 'new responsibilities' chart showing who might take on the added responsibilities. They examine any advantages or disadvantages that may be caused by the new family member and discuss how any disadvantage might be redressed.

Teaching considerations

Remind students that such a change in a family may influence physical, social and emotional growth and development.

The additional responsibilities will vary according to how dependent the 'new' family member is. Some might be practical responsibilities such as helping around the house; others might be interpersonal such as learning to get along with the new person; and other responsibilities might be financial.

Be aware of the sensitive nature of the subject and consider past or present experiences of students.

► Students identify examples in the media of reinforcement of traditional allocation of household duties according to gender, and examples where these stereotypes are challenged. They discuss how media images of what boys do and what girls do around the home influence task allocation and expectations of relationships and discuss the issues associated with such stereotyping.

Focus questions could include:

- How do the media influence attitudes towards, behaviours in, and expectations of, roles and relationships?
- What strategies could be utilised to manage or challenge the influence of media on expectations of relationships?
- How could the media more accurately represent the range of roles and responsibilities that people have? Is this important?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of allocating tasks according to a person's gender?
- How do people feel when they take on tasks that are different from those portrayed in stereotypes?
- How can the cycle of stereotypical behaviour be broken? Should it be broken? Why would some people think things should stay the same?
- What are some television programs that provide examples of family-related behaviours that are different from the stereotypes? How do people view these families?

Teaching consideration

Ensure students understand the meaning of 'stereotype' and the negative implications that arise from stereotypical portrayals.

INFLUENCES ON RELATIONSHIPS

Investigating the influence of individuals and groups on family relationships

► Students investigate the influence of individuals and groups on attitudes towards, behaviours in, and expectations of, relationships within families. As part of the investigation they consider the amount and type of influence exerted by individuals and groups, the characteristics of individuals who exert an influence on them and how the various groups exert their influence.

Focus questions could include:

- What is the range of family relationships in your life?
- Do your attitudes towards these relationships vary? Are some more important to you than others?
- How do your behaviours in these relationships vary? How do your expectations vary?
- Who or what influences your behaviours in these relationships? How?
- Who or what influences your expectations of these relationships? How?
- What are some of the characteristics of individuals who exert an influence over your family relationships?

Teaching considerations

Individuals and groups influencing family relationships could include immediate family members, other significant adults, peers, media, religious advisers.

Remind students to consider both positive and negative influences on family relationships.

- ▶ Students could develop a concept map that shows how various individuals and groups influence their family relationships.

**SKILLS FOR
MANAGING
CHANGE**

Enhancing relationships by developing skills for resolving potential conflict arising from changes in families

- ▶ Students view a television show or cartoon or videotape showing family relationships and identify the interpersonal skills (or lack thereof) that contribute to those relationships.
- ▶ Students identify the ‘positive’ skills needed by young people when they enter new relationships, including those within families — for example, with a step-parent, boyfriend or girlfriend.

Teaching consideration

Skills could include communication, cooperation, negotiation and conflict resolution.

- ▶ Students identify the types of conflicts that may arise in families. In groups, they discuss and list the skills needed to resolve conflict. Groups share their ideas to compile a class list of conflict-resolution skills.

Teaching considerations

Conflict may occur for example through differences in values and expectations about behaviours, roles and responsibilities.

Skills students may identify include:

- focusing on the issue (for example, the untidy bedroom) rather than the person (for example, you are untidy);
- listening to the other person’s point of view;
- not talking over the top of another person;
- letting others know how you feel without blaming the other person (for example, ‘I feel hurt when you do not ask my opinion about ...’, rather than: ‘You’re terrible because you never ask me ...’).

Point out to students that the first step in conflict resolution, especially in relation to close relationships, involves recognising and dealing with one’s own and the other person’s anger.

Refer to Resource Sheet 2, ‘Conflict resolution’, which has further explanation of conflict-resolution skills.



- ▶ Students compose scenarios that involve conflict in family situations and use role-plays to develop and practise conflict-resolution skills.

Focus questions could include:

- What skills are important for resolving conflict in families when a new family member is involved?
- What skills are required for establishing new roles and responsibilities?
- What skills are required when family members have different expectations and values?

Teaching considerations

Teach conflict-resolution skills before asking students to participate in role-plays.

It is important to debrief students after a role-play (see Resource Sheet 3, 'Debriefing').

Encourage students to develop and practise skills for negotiation, assertiveness, conflict resolution, mediation and communication.

It is important for students to realise that the understandings and skills learnt are transferable, that is, skills for resolving conflict in family situations can be used to resolve conflict in social and team situations.



Planning

IMPACT OF CHANGE

Researching and managing the impact of change

- ▶ In small groups, students identify and research an aspect of change in family life — for example, arrival of a step-parent, going to boarding school, moving house, living between two homes. They interview three or four people who have experienced such a change to gauge the impact (both positive and negative) it had on family members.

Teaching consideration

Ensure students are aware of the sensitive nature of the topic before they conduct interviews.

- ▶ Students identify strategies to manage change in a way that enhances the wellbeing of individuals within the family.
- ▶ In groups, students plan how they will demonstrate to the class, school or community their understanding of strategies and skills to manage a significant transition in family life. They explore a range of options for demonstrating their understanding — for example, by developing an information brochure, organising a photographic display, writing an article for the local or school newspaper, writing and presenting a play, choreographing a dance, holding a student forum or organising an annotated art exhibition.

Focus questions could include:

- Have you collected sufficient information? Where might you be able to obtain further information?
- How do you plan to demonstrate your understandings and skills?

- Who will carry out each part of the plan?
- What are the barriers and enablers to your demonstration?
- What steps will you take to capitalise on the enablers and overcome the barriers?
- Whose support do you need?
- What new skills might you need?

Acting

MANAGING CHANGE

Demonstrating strategies and skills to manage change and deal with conflict in relationships

► Students undertake the project developed in the planning phase to demonstrate strategies and skills in managing a significant transition in family life in a way that enhances individual growth and development and family wellbeing.

MANAGING INFLUENCES

Developing strategies to manage influences on family relationships

► Students refer to their earlier investigation of the influence of individuals and groups on attitudes towards, behaviours in, and expectations of, family relationships to develop and practise strategies to manage these influences.

Teaching consideration

Strategies include respecting the opinions of others, being assertive, undertaking critical analysis of advice, being realistic, accepting criticism and compliments.

Reflecting

REVIEWING CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Reviewing the success of the project to demonstrate managing change in families

► Students reflect on how successful they were in demonstrating their understanding of, and skills in, managing change in families.

Focus questions could include:

- How successfully did you demonstrate skills for managing change?
- Would you change anything if you did this again?
- What skills did you learn for managing change?

► Students reflect on what they have learned about relationships in families, the strategies and skills to manage various influences on these relationships and significant changes that may occur in them. As part of their reflection, they complete a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) on the topic of 'My family relationships'.

What are families?



Families come in various sizes and patterns. We use the term 'family' to describe several different groups to which we belong. Families may form, grow and decline through birth, new partnerships and death. Ideas of what 'family' means can change with place, time and type of social group.

Definitions

1. A family is two or more people, at least one of whom should be a person aged 15 years or more, who are related by blood, marriage (legal or de facto), adoption or fostering, and who usually live together in the same house.
2. A family is an intimate group of people who show commitment, caring and sharing over time.
3. A family is a group of related people living in the same house.
4. A family is a social group where sexual relationships are socially approved between adult members, and where the group is concerned with the care of dependent children.

Family descriptions

There are various terms used to describe family groups. For example, a nuclear family describes a married couple and their children.

Nuclear family	A man, a woman and their children.
Blended family	A man and a woman who, when they marry, each bring children from previous relationships.
Extended family	A man and/or a woman with their children, grandparents, uncles, nieces and nephews who may or may not live in the same house.
Same-sex family	Same-sex couples living together as if married, with or without children.
One-parent family	A man or a woman living with his or her children.
De facto family	A couple living together as if married, with or without children.
Communal family	Adults and children, who may or may not be related, choosing to live together.
Childless family	Married couple without children.

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Conflict resolution



Conflict occurs at some time in most relationships. Having the skills to resolve these conflicts and come to mutually acceptable agreements enables us to build more productive relationships.

Many conflicts and disagreements between adolescents and their parents occur over differences in values and expectations about behaviour.

Four common ways of dealing with disagreements and conflict are:

- Ignore it and hope it goes away.
- Walk away from the conflict by breaking the relationship.
- Confront the problem and continue the conflict.
- Confront the problem and resolve the conflict.

Family conflict should not be ignored. The cause of the conflict will not go away and may build up to the point where relationships start to break down. However, resolving conflict can be a difficult task that depends on family members being able to communicate effectively with each other.

Guide to effective communication

- State clearly what you want to say.
- Listen carefully to what is being said by others.
- Ask questions if you don't understand something.
- Avoid interrupting, changing the topic or talking over others.
- Avoid sending 'mixed messages'. Make sure that what you are saying in words is the same as what you are saying through your body language.
- Avoid blaming.

Community help

Conflict within a relationship, if not resolved satisfactorily, may lead to a breakdown of the relationship. There are several community services for helping couples to resolve their conflict effectively, such as:

- mediation centres
- marriage guidance counsellors
- Family Court counselling services.

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Debriefing



Debriefing (after role-play activities) is vital. Participants must leave their roles and return to normality. The participants' involvement in the role will determine the time given to debriefing. Participants who have become heavily involved in their role may require some time to debrief.

Participants should be asked questions about the characters they played to enable them to shed the role. Such questions would be:

- How did you feel about the character you played?
- What kind of person was your character?
- Did you like your character?
- How did people react to your character?
- Why did your character say the things/act the way he/she did?
- Did you agree with the character's words/actions?

If the participant has had a very demanding role it might be necessary for the facilitator to say:

'You are no longer (character's name) but (participant's name). The character of (name) no longer exists.'

Source: Adapted from Queensland Department of Education 1993, *Interpersonal Skills in Drug Education: Activities for Groups*, 3rd edn, Health Issues Section, Health and Personal Development Unit, Brisbane.

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This sourcebook module should be read in conjunction with the following Queensland School Curriculum Council materials:

Years 1 to 10 Health and Physical Education Syllabus

Years 1 to 10 Health and Physical Education Sourcebook: Guidelines

Health and Physical Education Initial In-service Materials

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