

Assessment of Family Interaction

The following assessment was influenced by the Family Environment Scale (FES), a research questionnaire that has ten factors: 1) Cohesion, 2) Expressiveness, 3) Conflict, 4) Independence, 5) Achievement Orientation, 6) Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, 7) Active Recreation Orientation, 8) Moral-Religious Emphasis, 9) Organization, and 10) Control. Wikipedia describes this instrument that is used for research, which is not our purpose here; *our's is to elicit thoughtful consideration.*

Statements below do not question specific details. They are *metaphorical* guides designed for self/family inventories. Healthy and toxic families each come in many forms. Forty positive and negative descriptions roughly describe family behaviors.

Go over the list and check those items that loosely describe your family. There is no score, but it is obvious there is an advantage to having more checks in the white rows than in the shaded areas. Family members will need to decide how to proceed.

① COMMITMENT TO OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS	✓
Family members provide support, help, and time for one another.	
Family members truly relish each other's accomplishments and rewards.	
Family members are out for themselves and do not volunteer extra effort.	
Family members undermine each other and engage in one-upmanship.	
② COMMUNICATION OF THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS WITHIN FAMILY	✓
Family members have spontaneous, open, and honest discussions.	
Bills, money issues, and potential problems are candidly discussed.	
There are family secrets that no one dares to mention.	
It is not safe to share innermost beliefs, thoughts, and feelings.	
③ WAYS OF DEALING WITH FRUSTRATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT	✓
Disagreements are acknowledged and rationally handled.	
Reasonable tones are used to resolve issues.	
Fights and insults are common amongst family members.	
Anger is dealt with by yelling, throwing things, hitting, or criticizing.	
④ RESPECT AND SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALITY OF EACH FAMILY MEMBER	✓
Family members are able to discuss their controversial views at home.	
Independence is encouraged and disagreements reasonably discussed.	
Family members are expected to toe the line and not complain.	
Nonconforming views are to be kept to oneself and resolved secretly.	

5 ASPIRATIONS, ACHIEVEMENT, AND COMPETENCE		✓
Family members strive to be the best one is capable of being.		
Improving oneself and getting ahead is important.		
Family members do not put much effort into what they do.		
There is little ambition and family members are satisfied doing nothing.		
6 OUTSIDE INTERESTS AND SELF-IMPROVEMENT		✓
Outside interests, be they theater or hockey, ballroom or square dance.		
Attend school or workshops to learn new things and develop hobbies.		
Remain home alone, watch television, and have no interest in community.		
Complacent and lazy, having no desire to learn new things or change.		
7 RECREATION AND FUN ACTIVITIES		✓
Welcome visitors to one's home and visit with friends.		
Attend sports, entertainment, movies, recreational activities.		
Members have no hobbies, outside interests, or involvement in activity.		
Evenings and weekends are spent being inactive at home.		
8 MORAL, ETHICAL, AND SHARED VALUES		✓
Have a philosophy that provides life with meaning and purpose.		
Participate in a group — religious or otherwise — having moral practices.		
Espouse pervasive cynicism and mock those who have ethics and values.		
Declare that it is every man and women for himself or herself.		
9 STRUCTURE OF FAMILY ORGANIZATION AND RULES OF ORDER		✓
There are reasonable, agreeable, and consistent rules and expectations.		
Family members are courteous and inform others of their whereabouts.		
People change their minds often without concern for others.		
Money issues and duties are usually handled haphazardly.		
10 DECISIONS, EXPECTATIONS, AND CONSEQUENCES		✓
Activities are planned with general input and no surprises.		
Duties and responsibilities are reasonable and agreeable to family.		
One family member makes all decisions to which others must comply.		
There are no rules or expectations and everyone does their own thing.		