**[90-day assignment] – FLE 711-3 Essay on Family Life Education**

Write an essay on one of the following topics. The essay should be 5-7 pages in

length, double-spaced, and should express your understanding of the essential

elements of the course and the topic.

1. How to adapt a Family Life Education program for use in your professional

setting (i.e., ministry, business, school).

2. Your personal philosophy of Family Life Education (Use the development

process itemized in the Course Outline – V. D. on p. 9.)

3. What a Family Life Educator would do to build relationships with a family and each

of the family members with whom he or she is working.

Family Life Education is the professional practice of equipping and empowering family members to develop knowledge and skills that enhance well-being and strengthen interpersonal relationships through an educational, preventive, and strengths-based approach. (<https://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/what-family-life-education>). As a Family Life Educator, building relationships with a family can range from helping them develop strong communication skills, knowledge of typical human development, good decision-making skills, positive self-esteem and healthy interpersonal relationships. (<https://www.ncfr.org/cfle-certification/what-family-life-education>). This allows rapport to develop when the families become comfortable or see improvements in family life.

How can a family begin to develop strong communication skills? Communication skills influence relationships in families, children, friends and at work. Good communication helps build relationships in good times, and mend relationships in difficult times. These skills include speaking as well as listening and nonverbal communication. (<https://child.unl.edu/family-communication#:~:text=Communication%20skills%20influence%20relationships%20in,as%20listening%20and%20nonverbal%20communication>.) When the family feels comfortable enough to communicate with each other they begin to trust and rapport the effectiveness of the Educator. Conversations lead to solutions that address the issues a family faces. This is easier said than done but in the difficult times we need to strive for growth. Growth can be challenging to begin but once it is done the family would reap the benefits and fruits of the work. As a Family Life Educator, what is learnt is to be able to encourage the family to strive to develop healthier habits for a better life. Communication is one of the ways a family can become healthier. This can be done by knowing when to discuss the issue, making communication a habit, and by not allowing yourself to hinder the other person from finishing their concerns, for example raising your voice because you disagree with what is being said at the point in time, not interrupting and not jumping to conclusions. (<https://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g1840.pdf>). In this it must be clear that between the clients and the educator, it is critical to be a good listener in the midst of it all. Allowing them to be free to communicate without interruption or judgment is often helpful for rapport and in the long run develop a deeper relationship with the family/ clients.

Another way a Family Life Educator can build relationships with the family is through understanding theories because it can give a clear view of why families behave the way they do which can help you give them a better understanding of their own life/lives. And also understanding that families are all unique, this helps the educator be more empathetic with all the trials or stressors they are facing. Erik Erikson’s Stages of Psychosocial Development is just one of the popular theories which addresses development across the entire lifespan, from birth through death, and deals with conflict that serves as a turning point in development. (<https://www.verywellmind.com/psychosocial-stages-2795743>) Human development according to Measure of America of the Social Science Research Council defines it as the process of enlarging people’s freedoms and opportunities and improving their well-being. Human development is about the real freedom ordinary people have to decide who to be, what to do, and how to live. (<https://measureofamerica.org/human-development/#:~:text=Human%20development%20is%20defined%20as,by%20economist%20Mahbub%20ul%20Haq>.)

Understanding human development can lead to understanding and accepting what a family member faces on a daily basis. It is critical to a child’s wellbeing for a parent to be involved and have a better understanding of what the child is learning, dealing with and how they develop coping with situations. According to K. Rymanowicz & J. Schulz, parental or family engagement in a child’s education can improve their test scores, attendance, social skills, relationships, behavior and how a child feels about school. (Michigan State University, 2021). Based on the information just simply listening to what is going on with your child and being involved with their daily activities can improve their behaviour.

Another way to improve the family connection can be empowering them to develop good decision-making skills. The family unit can be complex due to the fact that human beings tend to have different thoughts, feelings and ideas however it is critical for the family to understand that if they do not strive for health, conflict can or may occur. It is possible for two or more persons to come to a mutual place of compromise. Paul Parcon states the process for decision-making is to firstly define the problem/issue, then brainstorm all the possibilities or potential alternatives. Thirdly as a group, select the best possible alternative which then leads to following through and carrying out the decision and finally evaluating the decision and adapting, if necessary. (Develop Your Decision Making Skills, 2006, https://books.google.tt/books?id=ul2B-SQiWDcC&pg=PA84&dq=effective+decision+making+skills+families&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi-pYi4\_9X3AhXzRDABHfUFAv0QuwV6BAgJEAc#v=onepage&q=effective%20decision%20making%20skills%20families&f=true). Understanding the process can make it manageable for the family to handle making certain decisions when they arise. It allows them to either be more flexible and not react with too much emotion because they are focusing on following the steps. The family can also effectively make better decisions by reviewing and evaluating what took place and what can be done to improve. Compromising between family relations and compromise between family and educator is necessary for growth.

Positive self-esteem is always something that will help improve an individual’s lifestyle. This can help build relationships between the families and their educators. Anytime someone has a better outlook on themselves they begin to evolve into a better person. It is likely that productivity increases. A positive esteem helps develop a positive outlook on life. A person's mindset shapes their faith, beliefs and value system. If the family has different value systems or beliefs, this can create friction when it comes to decision-making. However, understanding the differences can still help limit altercations and disagreements. We need to teach individuals and even families that they do not have to accept certain actions or views to have understanding. This creates peace between family members and inevitably throughout conflict and decision-making. Understanding your own self-worth is critical before reaching the stage of allowing someone to understand and accept something. It is wrong to expect someone to treat you a certain way and you yourself do not know who you are as an individual or confused by your beliefs. Self-esteem refers to how you feel about your abilities and limitations. When you have healthy self-esteem, you feel good about yourself and feel deserving of the respect from others. When you have low self-esteem, you put little value on your opinions and ideas. (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/self-esteem/art-20047976#:~:text=Self%2Desteem%20is%20your%20overall,on%20your%20opinions%20and%20ideas>.)

.According to D. Plummer, she listed seven key elements to develop a healthy self-esteem. *Self-knowledg*e which focuses on finding out who you are and where you fit into the social world, *self and other*s which refers to understanding the joys and challenges of relationship and developing and maintaining your own identity as a separate person while still recognising the natural interdependence of relationships, *self-acceptance* which involves knowing your own strengths and recognizing areas that you find difficult and may want to work on. *Self reliance* refers to knowing how to take care of yourself, both physically and emotionally, building a measure of independence and self-motivation and reducing your reliance on other people’s opinions and evaluations. *Self -expression* involves understanding how we communicate with each other and developing creativity in self-expression and recognizing the unique and diverse ways in which we each express who we are. *Self-confidence* refers to knowing your opinions, thoughts and actions have value and that you have the right to express them, developing the knowledge and abilities so that you feel able to experiment with different methods of problem-solving. And lastly *self-awareness* which is the cornerstone to self-evaluation, it refers to developing the ability to be focused in the here and now rather than absorb in negative thought about the past or future, learning to listen to your body and emotions so that you are aware of your feelings and understanding the emotional, mental and physical changes being a natural part of life. (<https://books.google.tt/books?id=wfkPBQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=self-esteem&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=self-esteem&f=true>)

Finally, healthy interpersonal relationships can help lead to a better educator/family relationship. Interestingly enough, this deals with not the family directly but the individual within the family unit. The nuclear family or even the extended family is constantly living in your space and because of that constant interaction sometimes it is critical to take a break from all the “noise.” This is where the healthy interpersonal relationships come in that help you also take the pressures, burdens and expectations off the people living with you and dealing with you directly. Some interpersonal relationships vary when it comes to what the purpose of it is. The different types of interpersonal relationships can be your family relationships, friendships, professional work relationships, spousal or love relationships and platonic relationships. (<https://www.managementstudyguide.com/types-of-interpersonal-relationships.htm>)

In conclusion, as a Family Life Educator it is critical to first understand the dynamics of the family to then help build their relationships with a family and each of the family members. Building relationships with a family can range from helping them develop strong communication skills, knowledge of typical human development, good decision-making skills, positive self-esteem and healthy interpersonal relationships. These are dealt with throughout the paper allowing better understanding of the methods of helping the family unit. This allows the family to grow and become healthier. Good communication helps build relationships in good times, and mend relationships in difficult times. These skills include speaking as well as listening and nonverbal communication. Secondly, theories help giving a clear view or understanding of why families behave the way they do which can help you give them a better understanding of their own life/lives. Thirdly, decision-making skills which allows them to either be more flexible and not react with too much emotion because they are focusing on following the steps addressed earlier. Positive self-esteem is always something that will help improve an individual which is the other way an educator can build relationships because when someone has a better outlook on themselves they begin to evolve into a better person. Lastly, building a healthy interpersonal relationship helps you take the pressures, burdens and expectations off the people. It is critical to focus on trying to build these qualities or methods for a greater response as a Family Life Educator.