

Characteristics of the Healthy Family

- Sane, balanced parents. No depression, no mental illness, no extreme frustration with either life in general or some element of it. If depression was part of their past, they've dealt with it adequately.
- Non-addicted parents. No alcoholism or drug use, as well as no obsessive compulsions such as workaholism, rageaholism, compulsive spending, eating disorders, gambling, etc.
- Mature parents. Self-sufficient, able to deal with life.
- Parents with a positive, comfortable self-image.
- Parents who can appropriately relate to God. In the best-case scenario, God is central to the family structure.
- Parents committed to maintaining a happy marriage.

Characteristics of an Unhealthy (Codependent) Family

- One or both parents are mentally unbalanced, preoccupied, frustrated, unrealistic in their worldview. If only one parent suffers thus, the other will be preoccupied with the ill mate.
- Parents addicted to alcohol, drugs, work; consumed by rage or hungers; compulsive about things healthy people are casual about.
- Immature parents; especially parents who lean upon the children for nurturance, ego-bolstering, advice, help.
- Parents with a poorly developed or skewed self-image.
- Parents in an uncomfortable relationship with God; one or both may be atheists (no relationship at all) or agnostics. Or they may be intensely religious but strongly behavior-directed (if you act exactly right and look exactly right and think exactly right, God will accept you), extremely rigid in their theology (the only right way to relate to God is this way), and just as adamant that the children follow exactly in the parents' theological footsteps.
- Parents who divorce; separate; fight viciously; feel bitter toward each other or toward marriage in general or parents who remain together in a hostile relationship "for the sake of the kids."

(taken from *Love is a Choice: The Definitive Book on Letting Go of Unhealthy Relationships* by R. Hemfelt, F. Minirth, and P. Meier.)