

Families and how they care for us

This topic explores families and the role they play in our lives. There may be some children who do not have family, whilst for others their family is the site of violence, distress or abuse. Some children may come from unconventional family structures, be adopted or be Looked After. In all of these circumstances, it is important that teachers handle the lesson sensitively, by encouraging the definition of family to be as wide as possible.

It is perfectly acceptable for children to include imaginary friends, non-relatives or pets within their definition of “family”.

Key stage 1

Lower key stage 2

Learning Intention:

- To know that there are different types of family and that all families have special roles in children’s lives.

Learning Outcome:

- To be able to describe their family.
- To understand why their families are special.
- To identify different ways that families and individual members care for each other.
- To have identified their special people and be able to describe what makes them special.

Resources needed:

- “Wheels” by Shirley Hughes
- Paper and pens/crayons
- Paper printed with a circle and the sentence “My family is special because...”

Teacher introduction:

We are going to think about families today and what they can look like. In the olden days, if someone talked about their “family” they did not just mean their relatives like mums, uncles, or brothers – they meant everyone who lived and worked in the same place and who was a part of their lives. When we talk about family today we will think about our relatives but we will also be thinking about everyone else who is special to us. We can even think about our pets and friends who are imaginary!

Activity 1:

Discuss with the children what the word 'family' means. Teach them some basic words for family in other languages – “famille” from French, “Familie” from German and “Famiglia” in Italian. Point out the similarity between these words. Ask if anyone in the class speaks another language and if so ask them what word they use for “family.”

Discuss with the children why they think every language has a word for “family” and explain that it is because everyone in the world belongs to some kind of family.

Also useful for: CF, RR

Activity 2:

Ask the class to think about who makes up their family. Make a list of everyone they say - brother, cousin, stepmother, two dads, mum by herself, half-siblings. Use the list to illustrate the way that everyone's family is different.

Make sure the children understand that although family members are usually related, there is more than one way to be a family, and that these (such as being a foster child) are just as important.

Also useful for: CF, RR

Activity 3:

Read “Wheels” by Shirley Hughes to the children. Ask them to think about Carlos' family. Who are his family? Discuss the role of each family member and why his family helped him when he was sad. Discuss what makes his family special to him. (Similar books are listed in the “resources” section).

Also useful for CF, RR

Activity 4:

Ask each child to think about their family and the time they spend together. Give every child a piece of paper and ask them to draw all the things that they do together as a family when they have time off together. Give some introductory suggestions such as going shopping, doing housework, going to the park, swimming and so on.

Make a collage of all the drawings and discuss all the different things that the children do with their families. Scribe a list and add to it as the children think about their family life.

Also useful for: CF, RR

Activity 5:

Ask the children to think of their family and their special people, and what makes them special. Give each child a piece of paper printed with a circle and the sentence “My family is special because....”

Ask the children to draw their special people inside the circle and then to complete the sentence in their own words.

Also useful for: CF, RR

Plenary:

Remind the children what they have learnt:

- That families are different.
- That families do things together and care for each other.

Debriefing activity:

Count up the number of people on the scribed list of “who is our family.” Tell the children that “just for our class alone, there are X people who we care about and who we think are special.” Encourage a minute’s quiet reflection on how special people make us feel – loved, safe, happy – then close the lesson.

Differentiation for SEND:

Children with medical conditions or disabilities (or who have siblings with similar issues) may spend a lot of family time in hospital or find their leisure time restricted. Help to explain that sometimes families have to do things that are not so nice, but they do them because they care for each other.