



# TRANSFORMING OUR NARRATIVES ABOUT 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY FAMILIES

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## Family Trends: True Or False?

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(According to the 2015 Pew Research Center study, *Parenting in America*:  
[www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/parenting-in-america/](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/parenting-in-america/)

CIRCLE T (TRUE) OR F (FALSE).

(If you like, note whether it's also true or false for your own congregation.)

1.    T    F    The percentage of mothers with children under age 18 in the workforce has increased significantly since 2000.
  
2.    T    F    Just under half of all children under age 18 live with two parents in their first marriage.
  
3.    T    F    Most children under age 18 live with two married parents.
  
4.    T    F    One out of three children in a single-parent household live in poverty.
  
5.    T    F    A majority of births among African American children are to unmarried women.
  
6.    T    F    Half of all mothers believe they are doing “a very good job” as a parent. Younger moms are more likely to say they’re doing a “very good job.”
  
7.    T    F    Three out of four moms and dads say that being a parent is very or extremely important to them.
  
8.    T    F    Parents of teenagers are more likely to say that being a parent is enjoyable and rewarding most or all of the time compared to parents of children.

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# Barriers to Engaging Today's Diverse Families

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Use this worksheet for personal reflection. What barriers limit your congregation engaging with the diversity of today's families in today's complex world? Are you comfortable with leaving the barrier in place, focusing your attention elsewhere? If not, what might be some ways you could explore removing (or working around) that barrier?

## What Might You Do?

### Theological

Engaging some families may challenge or contradict your congregation's theological commitments.

### Practical

Transportation, language barriers, and other practical issues may limit opportunities to engage some groups of families.

### Cultural

The culture of your congregation may not be familiar or comfortable to families with a different cultural background.

### Strategic

Your ministry may be focused on different demographic groups and thus not include some families.

### Networks

You may have few opportunities to interact and build relationships with some groups of families.

### Customs

"We've always done it this way" and other customary patterns (for families or for your congregation) can limit opportunities.

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## Transforming Our Narratives: Six Shifts Overviews

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These six shifts are needed to guide how we understand and engage today's families. Use this page to capture insights that grab you and that seem most relevant to your own work.

### From an emphasis on . . .

1. Pathologizing or idealizing families

2. Parenting as a set of strategies

3. "Passing on" the faith

4. Reaching families through programs

5. Serving families

6. Congregational-centered ministries

### Toward an emphasis on . . .

1. Tapping and nurturing strengths and resilience

2. Parenting as relationships

3. "Living into" the faith

4. Reaching families through relationships

5. Partnering with and empowering families

6. Community-centered ministries

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## Your Idea

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On the sticky note below, CLEARLY write **ONE NOVEL IDEA** of how you put families at the center of your ministry with family strengths in mind. Give your idea to one of the symposium leaders. We'll sort the ideas and share them later during the symposium.

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# The Developmental Relationships Framework (2.0)

Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them. They involve a dynamic mix of five elements, which are expressed through 20 actions.\*

Elements	Actions	Definitions
<p><b>1. Express Care</b></p> <p>Show me that I matter to you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Be dependable</b>..... Be someone I can trust.</li> <li>• <b>Listen</b>..... Really pay attention when we are together.</li> <li>• <b>Believe in me</b> ..... Make me feel known and valued.</li> <li>• <b>Be warm</b>..... Show me you enjoy being with me.</li> <li>• <b>Encourage</b> ..... Praise me for my efforts and achievements.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. Challenge Growth</b></p> <p>Push me to keep getting better.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Expect my best</b> ..... Expect me to live up to my potential.</li> <li>• <b>Stretch</b> ..... Push me to go further.</li> <li>• <b>Hold me accountable</b> ... Insist I take responsibility for my actions.</li> <li>• <b>Reflect on failures</b> ..... Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. Provide Support</b></p> <p>Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Navigate</b>..... Guide me through hard situations and systems.</li> <li>• <b>Empower</b> ..... Build my confidence to take charge of my life.</li> <li>• <b>Advocate</b>..... Defend me when I need it.</li> <li>• <b>Set boundaries</b> ..... Put in place limits that keep me on track.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4. Share Power</b></p> <p>Treat me with respect and give me a say.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Respect me</b> ..... Take me seriously and treat me fairly.</li> <li>• <b>Include me</b> ..... Involve me in decisions that affect me.</li> <li>• <b>Collaborate</b> ..... Work with me to solve problems and reach goals.</li> <li>• <b>Let me lead</b> ..... Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5. Expand Possibilities</b></p> <p>Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inspire</b> ..... Inspire me to see possibilities for my future.</li> <li>• <b>Broaden horizons</b> ..... Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.</li> <li>• <b>Connect</b>..... Introduce me to people to help me grow.</li> </ul>	

\* Because relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, each person in a strong relationship engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for the purpose of clarity, the framework is expressed from the perspective of one young person.

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# Search Institute Studies on Developmental Relationships

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Across multiple fields and disciplines, positive relationships are recognized as propelling positive development and learning in young people. However, relationships are rarely operationalized in a holistic framework that links theory, measures, strategies, and practical tools to improve youth outcomes and reduce inequities.

To fill this gap, Search Institute introduced the original developmental relationships framework in 2013 based on literature reviews and focus groups with youth, parents, educators, and youth workers. It has since been the basis of several qualitative and quantitative studies, and it has been shared with thousands of practitioners for feedback. The current version of the framework reflects this additional research. It is currently being tested. Below are the studies that are cited in this workshop.

## Families

***Don't Forget the Families: The Missing Piece in America's Effort to Help All Children Succeed.*** This study reports on an online survey of 1,054 parents with children ages 3-13 across the United States. Download from [www.search-institute.org/dff](http://www.search-institute.org/dff) (Published October 2015.)

***Developmental Relationships Among Youth and Their Parents: A Matched Pair Study.*** A pilot survey of youth (ages 12 to 18) and their parents in 633 families in two communities in the Midwest and South in the United States. (Not yet published.)

## Schools

***The REACH Survey Field Test.*** A survey focused on student motivation that included measures of seven actions from the developmental relationships framework. The pilot was completed with 602 students, grades 9-12, in a Midwest city. REACH is an acronym for Relationships, Effort, Aspirations, Cognition, and Heart. These represent focus areas in Search Institute's holistic, strength-based approach to academic motivation.

***Developmental Relationships between Students and Teachers: A Pilot Study.*** A survey of 610 students, grade 6-12, in one community in the Northwest United States.

***The Power of Peer Relationships: A Study of Peer Programs in the United States.*** In addition to summarizing existing research on peer relationships, this report presents findings from a

qualitative study of five peer programs across the United States. (To be available in summer 2016.)

## Out-of-School Settings

***Mapping Non-Family Relationships Among Disadvantaged Youth: An Exploratory Study.*** In-depth interviews were conducted with six youth who were identified as living in challenging circumstances but having strong relationships with caring adults beyond the family. The study examined the dynamics of these relationships.

***SCA's Human Impact: Youth Development Through Service to Nature.*** Pre-post surveys of 1,137 participants in Student Conservation Association service programs included measures of developmental relationships as central to SCA's approach to youth development and conservation.

## Some of What We Learned So Far

- Developmental relationships are consistently associated with multiple character strengths, including student motivation and thriving, after controlling for demographic factors.
- Young people are least likely to experience sharing power and expanding possibilities.
- Sharing power is the area most strongly associated with multiple positive outcomes.
- Youth experiencing financial strain are less likely to experience developmental relationships.
- Youth with strong relationships are more resilient in the face of stress and trauma.

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# A Family Relationships Checklist

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Privately checkmark each action that you think is **almost always true** in your family. There are no right or wrong answers. (This activity is for your personal reflection. You will only share insights you choose to share.)

## Express Care: Show me that I matter to you.

- We trust each other.
- We really pay attention to each other when we are together.
- We make each other feel known and valued.
- We show each other that we enjoy being with each other.
- We praise each other for our efforts and achievements.

## Challenge Growth: Push me to keep getting better.

- We expect each other to live up to our potential.
- We push each other to go further.
- We insist that we each take responsibility for our own actions.
- We help each other learn from mistakes and setbacks.

## Provide Support: Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.

- We guide each other through hard situations and systems.
- We help each other be strong, confident, and take charge of life.
- We defend each other when we need it.
- We set limits that keep each other on track and moving forward.

## Share Power: Treat me with respect and give me a say.

- We take each other seriously and treat each other fairly.
- We involve each other in decisions that affect each person.
- We work together to solve problems and reach goals.
- We give each other chances to make decisions and take the lead.

## Expand Possibilities: Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.

- We inspire each other to be hopeful for the future.
- We expose each other to new ideas, experiences, and places.
- We introduce each other to people who can help us grow.

# How Your Congregation Nurtures Family Relationships

In what specific ways does your congregation intentionally **help families intentionally cultivate** developmental relationships across ages and stages? Keep in mind how families experience all five elements of developmental relationships:

- Express care
- Challenge growth
- Provide support
- Share power
- Expand possibility

	What do you do now?	What could be different?	How could you help families through key transitions?
<b>Infancy and Early Childhood</b>			
<b>Elementary Years</b>			
<b>Middle School</b>			
<b>High School</b>			
<b>Emerging Adulthood</b>			

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## 30 Relationship-Building Ideas for Families: Getting Started

Here are ideas parenting adults can use to build developmental relationships with their kids.

### Express CARE

1. Focus attention on your kids when they are talking about things that are important to them. Put away the smart phone.
2. Ask follow-up questions so both you and your kids know you're tracking.
3. Have fun when you're together. Laugh. Smile. Be silly. Don't always make it all about chores or homework or getting something done.
4. Find satisfaction in doing things for your kids, even if those things aren't important to you.
5. Make an effort to understand your kids' point of view when they share ideas or opinions.
6. Do what you say you will do with or for your kids. When you can't, apologize.

### CHALLENGE Growth

7. Talk with your kids about the positive things they have to look forward to in the future.
8. Expect your kids to do their best, even when doing something they don't like.
9. Help your kids find their own solutions rather than just telling them what to do.
10. Challenge you kids to try things that are a little hard for them.
11. Teach your kids that making mistakes is part of learning.
12. Require your kids to take responsibility if they do something wrong.

### Provide SUPPORT

13. Praise your kids for their hard work, whether they succeed or fail.
14. Encourage your kids to try things they might be interested in.
15. When you teach your kids a skill, demonstrate it by breaking it into smaller steps.
16. Do what you believe is right, even if others disagree.
17. Show your kids how to ask for help when they need it.
18. When your kids are not getting the help they need from other adults, talk to the person and try to find a solution.

### Share POWER

19. Respect your kids' opinions, even when you disagree.
20. When you're in a disagreement, take time to understand each other's point of view.
21. Be open to changing your opinions on important topics based on what you learn from your kids.
22. When your kids don't understand what you're trying to teach, try to show them in a different way.
23. Develop new interests based on things you learn from your kids.
24. Respect one another's point of view, even if you disagree.

### Expand POSSIBILITIES

25. Find opportunities for your kids to spend time with people who are different from your family.
26. Introduce each another to new music, art, or activities.
27. Introduce your kids to other trustworthy adults who have similar hobbies, talents, or interests.

28. Teach your kids about ideas or cultures that are different from your own.
29. Teach your kids how the "real world" works—particularly if it doesn't work in her or his favor.
30. Tell your kids about people and ideas that have inspired you.

# Living into the Faith: What Your Congregation Emphasizes

Use this checklist (based on Search Institute’s Faith Maturity framework) to reflect on which aspects of faith your congregation emphasizes in its ministries with families.

In your ministries with families, how much do you emphasize . . .	A Lot	Some	Not Much	Notes
1. <b>Trusting and believing</b> , including acceptance of core theological beliefs.	___	___	___	
2. <b>Experiencing the fruits of faith</b> or personal well-being.	___	___	___	
3. <b>Integrating faith and life</b> , including family, work, and political choices.	___	___	___	
4. <b>Seeking spiritual growth</b> through religious practices and study.	___	___	___	
5. <b>Seeking to be part of a community</b> of believers for worship and mutual support.	___	___	___	
6. <b>Holding life-affirming values</b> , such as a commitment to the welfare of others.	___	___	___	
7. <b>Advocating for social justice</b> to bring about greater justice in the world.	___	___	___	
8. <b>Engaging in acts of service and compassion</b> for other people.	___	___	___	

**Reflect on your responses:** Are there one or two areas that you believe would be important to address more intentionally in order to support families as they seek to live into their faith?

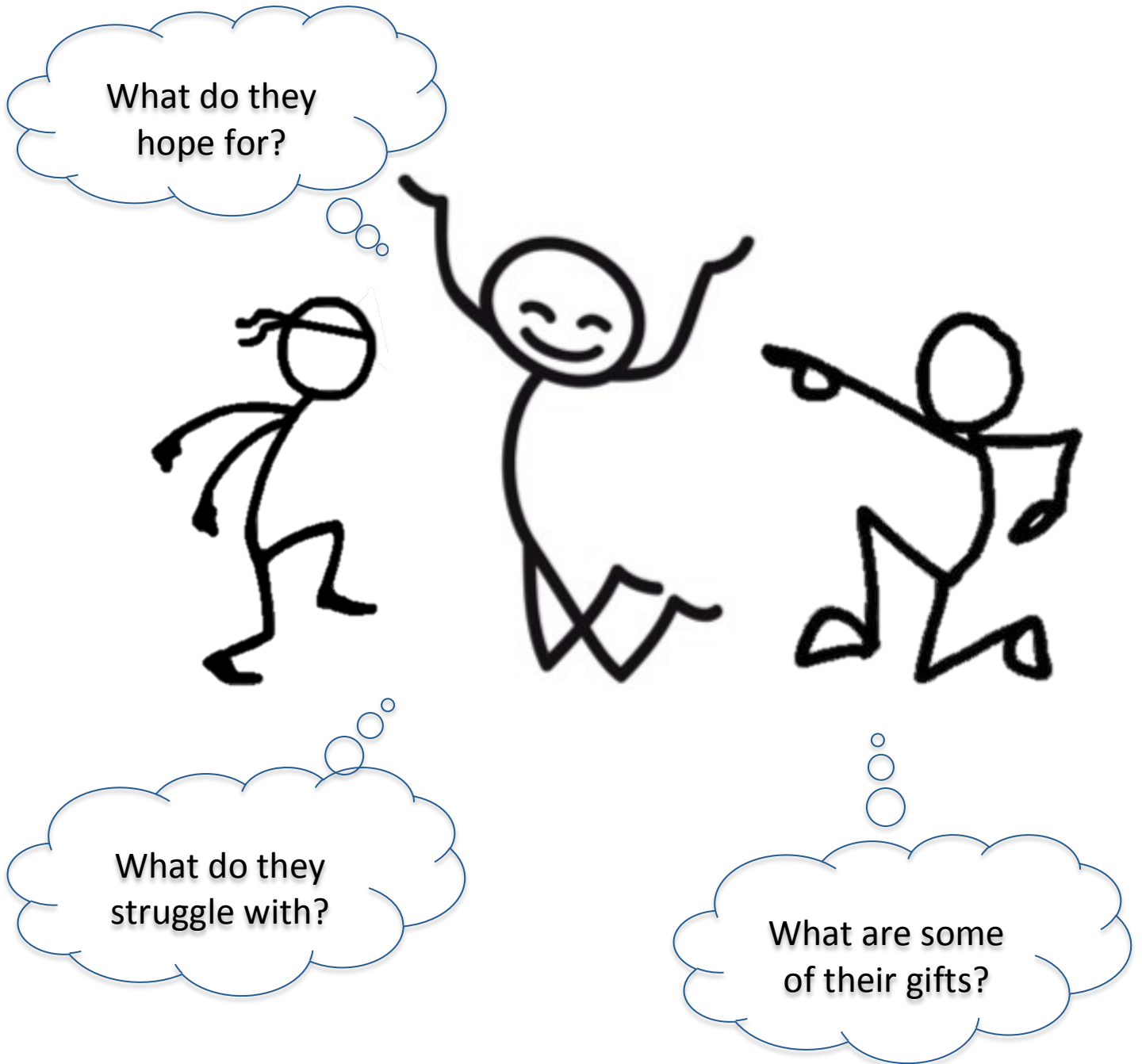
Place an asterisk by these. Identify opportunities during this symposium to explore that focus.

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## Reaching Families Through Relationships

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A family you interviewed in preparation for this Symposium (or one you hope to engage)



# Reflecting on Your Relationships with Families

Use this worksheet to reflect on your relationships with the families who are part of your ministries. (Don't focus on those that you only see in passing.)

		The statement is generally true about my relationship with . . . .			
		Very few of the families	A few of the families	Many of the families	Most of the families
<b>Express Care</b>	I am someone they can trust.	___	___	___	___
	I really pay attention to them when we are together.	___	___	___	___
	I make them feel known and valuable.	___	___	___	___
	I show them that I enjoy being together.	___	___	___	___
	I praise them for their efforts and achievements.	___	___	___	___
<b>Challenge Growth</b>	I expect them to live up to their potential.	___	___	___	___
	I push them to go further.	___	___	___	___
	I insist that they take responsibility for their actions.	___	___	___	___
	I help them learn from mistakes and setbacks.	___	___	___	___
<b>Provide Support</b>	I guide them through hard situations and systems.	___	___	___	___
	I build their confidence to take charge of their life.	___	___	___	___
	I defend them when they need me to.	___	___	___	___
	I put limits in place that keep them on track.	___	___	___	___
<b>Share Power</b>	I take them seriously and treat them fairly.	___	___	___	___
	I involve them in decisions that affect them.	___	___	___	___
	I work with them to solve problems and reach goals.	___	___	___	___
	I create opportunities for them to take action and lead.	___	___	___	___
<b>Expand Possibilities</b>	I inspire them to see possibilities for their future.	___	___	___	___
	I expose them to new ideas, experiences, and places.	___	___	___	___
	I introduce them to people to help them grow.	___	___	___	___

As you review your responses, do you think the families would respond the same way about your interactions with them? Are the actions you do most consistently the ones they need the most right now? This checklist is a self-reflection tool. It is not a formal assessment.

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## Takeaways

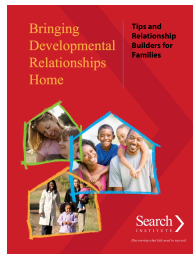
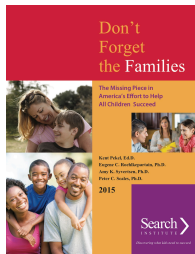
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1. What themes or patterns stand out for you?
2. What **affirmed or encouraged** you in your work with families?
3. What **could you apply** now in your work with families?
4. What do you want to **explore with others** in more depth during this symposium?

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## Resources and Services from Search Institute

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**Don't Forget the Families (2015).** This study of more than 1,000 parents along with the activities booklet, “Bringing Developmental Relationships Home: Tips and Relationship Builders for Families,” are available for free downloading at [www.search-institute.org/dff](http://www.search-institute.org/dff)

## Parent Further

**ParentFurther.com** is a free online resource to help families strengthen relationships through shared activities. It includes self-quizzes for parents to reflect on each element of a developmental relationship as well as short, self-guided activities can enjoy together to strengthen their relationships.

Coming in Fall 2016

## KEEP CONNECTED

*A Relationship-Based Resource  
for Family Engagement*

Don't let families disconnect from each other or from your school or program as they enter the middle-school years. Keep Connected offers a **six-session workshop series** for parents and middle schoolers. Families explore the five essential elements of parent-youth relationships through a mix of learning and sharing activities for parents, for youth, and for parents and youth together.

To receive information about the release of *Keep Connected*, contact Mary Shrader at [marys@search-institute.org](mailto:marys@search-institute.org).



**The American Family Assets Study (2012)** presents a compelling national portrait of families. It introduced the framework of Family Assets—relationships, routines, and opportunities that help families thrive. For this study, a parenting adult and a 10- to 15-year old were surveyed in 1,511 diverse U.S. families. Download the study from [www.search-institute.org/research/family-strengths](http://www.search-institute.org/research/family-strengths).

### Surveys

[www.search-institute.org/surveys](http://www.search-institute.org/surveys)

Available surveys examine developmental relationships, student motivation, youth program quality, and developmental assets. Each survey is offered online and includes an actionable report on findings.

### Workshops

[www.search-institute.org/  
keynotes-workshops](http://www.search-institute.org/keynotes-workshops)

Build expertise and develop practical strategies to put Search Institute research into practice with a range of workshops.

### Other Resources

[www.searchinstitutestore.org](http://www.searchinstitutestore.org)

Search Institute offers a variety of books and resources for educators, youth workers, parents, and other leaders that focus on practical strategies to build assets and other strengths.

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## Answer Key to Family Trends: True Or False?

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(According to the 2015 Pew Research Center study, *Parenting in America*:  
[www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/parenting-in-america/](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/parenting-in-america/))

CIRCLE T (TRUE) OR F (FALSE).

(If you like, note whether it's also true or false for your own congregation.)

1. **FALSE** The percentage of mothers with children under age 18 in the workforce has increased significantly since 2000.  
**Most increases occurred between 1975-2000.**
2. **TRUE** Just under half of all children under age 18 live with two parents in their first marriage.  
**46%**
3. **TRUE** Most children under age 18 live with two married parents.  
**61%**
4. **TRUE** One out of three children in a single-parent household live in poverty.  
**31%**
5. **TRUE** A majority of births among African American children are to unmarried women.  
**71%**
6. **TRUE** Half of all mothers believe they are doing “a very good job” as a parent. Younger moms are more likely to say they’re doing a “very good job.”  
**51%**
7. **FALSE** Three out of four moms and dads say that being a parent is very or extremely important to them.  
**It’s much more than that: 94% of Dads and 93% of Moms.**
8. **FALSE** Parents of teenagers are more likely to say that being a parent is enjoyable and rewarding most or all of the time compared to parents of children.  
**Parents of younger children are more likely to say it’s enjoyable and rewarding.**

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