

INTRODUCTION
For PARENTS

Teaching the Joy of Family

A child who feels the Joy of Family Security and Identity can face most anything that life offers him and can “handle” both the disappointments and the setbacks that are inevitable parts of human existence. There are really three parts to this joy: First the **security** part, the warmth of unconditional love and guaranteed acceptance. Secondly there is the **identity and pride** part, the feeling of specialness in a family and the pride in being collectively who you are. Third there is the element of **loyalty, appreciation, and mutual support** of each other.

Concept

This is the unit where obviously most of the learning is done within each Joy School family’s home. The things learned at home will be reinforced during the Joy School lessons.

Let’s think about what this form of joy can mean in the life of a child and the life of a family:

When I was growing up, I knew a group of brothers and sisters, schoolmates of mine. I was always impressed because they seemed so unconcerned about being with the “in group” or the “right people.” They didn’t even care much about wearing the newest thing, the latest style. They were all friendly, though, and all well liked. They seemed so secure, unafraid of failure.

Each of the six had his own personality, but all possessed one similar quality, a quality that I grew to greatly admire. It was a peace, a calm, a security, a naturalness, a confidence. None of these adjectives quite describe it, but it was there. You could feel it; you knew they had it. I was always interested in where it came from. It wasn’t from individual brilliance, or from exceptional athletic abilities, or from particular handsomeness or beauty; they were pretty average in each of these categories. The clue seemed to be in their love and acceptance of each other.

I remember that one boy played on the high school basketball team. He sat on the bench most of the time, but I noticed that his brothers and sisters were always at the games. I knew a couple of them well enough to know that they had little interest in basketball. They supported each other. Each had his own circle of friends, but none was ever too busy with friends to have time for a brother or sister.

One day an unexpected opportunity came to discover the true source of their confidence. The family moved into a house just through the block from my house. Now, instead of seeing them just in school, I saw them at home, and the secret was revealed! The confidence, the assurance, the security, the unity came from the unconditional love of their home. From the outside their home was ordinary; on the inside it was extraordinary. I remember the youngest child, who was just turning two. The first words he ever said were "Ah, mush," a phrase often used in the family in mock-fun-poking at the frequent hugs and pats and physical affection that were shown in the home.

I was with one of the sons (who by then had become a good friend) one day as he brought home a not-so-good school grade, a grade he hated to show his father. I wish I could describe the father's reaction. There was no anger, no belittling, no criticism, just a look that somehow said, "Son, a grade could never alter my love and respect for you; I have complete confidence in you. I just assume there is a reason for this grade, and you don't need to tell me what it is. Just figure it out and do better next time." I remember suddenly realizing that my friend's apprehension about showing the grade was not because of fear that his father would be critical or angry, but because he knew his father wouldn't be angry. He knew his father loved him unconditionally, and he was proud of him unconditionally and he hated to disappoint him.

But at the same time my friend was proud to be a part of a strong family, a family that had a tradition of doing its best, and he felt bad that he had let down that tradition and that family with the poor grade. He was motivated by love, not fear, by a desire to please and be part of his great family, rather than by apprehension of criticism or of anger.

A vast percentage of our problems in society stem from dysfunctional families who haven't been able to communicate the important things that preschoolers will begin to learn in this unit. The secret of success for most families, even with the inevitable ups and downs is the warmth and acceptance and security of a loving home – a joy irreplaceable, and unavailable from any other source.

Obviously, most of the imparting of the Joy of Family: The Joys of Security, Identity and Pride, must take place within the family, within the home.

Even though most families who participate in Joy School are already modeling these joys, parents working together in a Joy School group can, assist each other in teaching their

children the basic principles of this joy, and even more importantly can motivate and encourage each other to make each individual home, whether it is a single family home or a multi-generational home, a true institution, complete with traditions, heritage, unity and safety.

The other great worth of this unit should be the perception of children that their home and family will always be a “safe port from the storm.” Part of the challenge is teaching these materials effectively. But the most important part is making our homes the kinds of “ports” that provide the ongoing security, identity and pride which lasts long after the Joy School lessons are concluded.

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Now, these three elements are things that occur inside homes and within family units. Thus, this joy, more than any other, really must be taught (and experienced) primarily in individual homes. Thus, much of the materials in these group lesson plans is designed either to review and comment on and expand what occurs within your homes or to send ideas and thoughts back home (with the children) which will prompt security and unity-building activities within the home. Therefore, it is essential that you decide as a group to each do certain similar things in your home during the course of this unit (and even before this unit starts) which can be talked about and reinforced in Joy School.

Keep in mind that the underlying objective of this unit is to **institutionalize our homes in the most positive sense of the word**. To make them the kind of institutions (complete with identity, uniqueness, laws, traditions, etc.) that breed security and individuality in our children.

Tips and Reminders

1. Be sure you have read the Joy School Introductory Manual.
2. Read the corresponding chapter in *Teaching Your Children Joy* by Richard and Linda Eyre,

so you will better understand the joy you are trying to teach. (Free copies can be found at eyresfreebooks.com). The chapter that corresponds to this unit is Chapter 9.

3. A word about discipline (if needed): A child needs consistency in order to feel secure. All the parents in your group should be in agreement on what each child should be expected to do for himself and when he should be helped. They should agree on what kinds of minor misbehavior should be ignored and which behavior should not be tolerated, and on what form of discipline to use (usually separation from the rest of the group . . . playing in another area until he will behave). Then be consistent so the children will know what to expect. Knowing what is expected of you helps a person to feel secure
4. Remember to read the “Notes to Parents” to the children each day before they go home. Then staple or paper clip them on their art/craft project (or their shirt if no project is sent home).

Lesson Overviews

- As with any lesson, it is important to plan ahead. With this unit’s lesson, however, you should read your lesson(s) at the beginning of the unit (right now!), if not before. Many of the activities require the children to bring something from home, such as a family or baby photo or supplies for the art projects, and you need to warn the other parents far in advance in case they need to have their photos printed.

Lesson 9.1: I’m An Important Part Of My Family

learning the importance of family. Being at home and being in a family is where we can have that feeling of security and unconditional love.

- **Have family photos brought to this lesson to use throughout the unit.**

Lesson 9.2: I Am Wanted, I Am Loved

A very special visitor is coming today. A baby! We will get to help the mother and watch the mother take care of the baby. We will also make something as a group for the baby. We will learn about how we were once babies as well and before that our parents “Wanted Us” to come to their family.

- **Don’t forget to collect baby photos of all the children for “Guess The Baby” activity.**

Lesson 9.3: A Family Brings Security

The children will learn about their family names and a great song; “Snuggle Me Warm”. This lesson reflects on how a family is a place where we can feel safe, loved and protected.

- Children should go home and learn about the origins of their family name and learn about some traditions in their own family.

Lesson 9.4 Family Traditions

The lesson addresses the importance of family from the children learning about their “family” names to giving family a ‘family traditions report’.

- Children should be prepared to report on a family tradition and their family names.

Lesson 9.5 My Family Tree

This lesson will focus on our extended family (more so Grandparents). The children will get to explore their relationship with their Grandparents and have fun remembering all the fun things they do with them.

Lesson 9.6 The Joy of Belonging

This lesson introduces to children that there are other groups we belong to including our Joy School group. You will be making pom poms for the Joy School Pep Song.

- You will need at 8”x10” photo of the class, preferably one with the children standing apart from each other, not touching. Read lesson for more info.

By the End of This Unit...

The children should feel a sense of pride to belong to such a great family institution. Using all the elements outlined in these lessons (family flag, traditions etc) will help give a child a sense of security. Family traditions and values should be honored to help children feel a strong sense of family identity.

At a minimum, we recommend that you each implement the following in your homes. Details and “how to” appear in the lesson plans, but use your own ideas if you feel they will fit in better. Remember each family is different and unique. What works well for one family may not work as well for another. However the principles taught in these lessons we feel are universal. The application is up to your own discretion.

1. A **family flag** (with a family motto, song, slogan, etc.)
2. A **family traditions book or chart** with a list of at least one simple but fun family tradition each month.
3. A **family tree** showing pictures of all four grandparents (and great-grandparents) if you have pictures of them.

Book List

	Title	Author(s)	Synopsis or Theme
9.1	<i>Corduroy</i>	Don Freedman	Corduroy the stuffed bear longs to belong, and finally gets a family of his own.
9.2	<i>On The Night You Were Born</i>	Nancy Tillman	Celebratory picture book about the joy that comes when babies are born.
9.3	<i>Sleepy Book</i>	Charlotte Zolotow	Animals sleep, and so do children.
9.4	<i>Love You Forever</i>	Robert Munsch	Modern classic about a mother's unending love for her son.
9.5	<i>Me and My Family Tree</i>	by Joan Sweeney	A clear and simple book teaching children the reality behind the concept of a family "tree".
	<i>Clifford's Family</i>	Norman Bridwell	Clifford the puppy gets adopted by a family and learns that he is loved and that he belongs.
	<i>Home For A Bunny</i>	Margaret Brown	A furry, lovable bunny finds a home.
	<i>Guess How Much I Love You</i>	Sam McBratney	A bunny and his father compare notes on who loves each other more.
	<i>Moths and Mothers, Feathers and Fathers</i>	Larry Shiles	An older book that explores the confidence that comes from the love of our parents.
	<i>On Mother's Lap</i>	Ann Herbert Scott	A book about a mother's expandable love.
	<i>The Day We Met You</i>	Phoebe Koeler	A book about the preparations that for the arrival of an adopted baby.
	<i>The Relatives Came</i>	Cynthia Pulant	This book describes the visit of a large group of relatives one summer.
	<i>Over and Over</i>	Charlotte Zolotow	A book about the year's festivities, told from the eyes of a child.

	<i>Now One Foot, Now the Other</i>	Tomie De Paola	A child copes with his Grandfather's disability.
	<i>At Grammy's House</i>	Eve Rice	
	<i>The Relatives Came</i>	Cynthia Pulant	
	<i>Over and Over</i>	Charlotte Zolotow	
	<i>I Go With My Family To Grandma's</i>	Ricki Levenson	
	<i>Now One foot, Now the Other</i>	Tomie De Paola	
	<i>Spot Visits his Grandparents</i>	Eric Hill	