



## Survival Topic #10: Families and Children

### Questions to Ask:

- What was your family life like in your country?
- What are the rights and responsibilities of children in your country?
- What are some marriage customs?
- What are the positions of men and women in your society?

### Topics to Share:

Describe your family structure. Are you close to your family? What was it like growing up in your household? Discuss the challenges faced by American parents today and the challenges of raising children influenced by American culture.

### English Language Learner Tips:

Practice simple sentence patterns such as “I have a sister,” “I have two brothers,” and corresponding questions, like “Do you have any siblings?” Keep the patterns simple and predictable.

Use pictures of your own family and their family to practice relationship names. Put the English words on cards next to photos so that they can review their English later.

Use the vocabulary to build a story. Help your mentees say as much as possible about their family.

### Other Notes:

In many cultures, the family is the center of activity and the extended family is just as important as the nuclear family. Adapting to life in a new country places many demands

on refugees. Sometimes, the family provides comfort for one another in times of stress. Other times, the many drastic changes can lead to familial problems.

Many children learn English more quickly than their parents and act as the family spokesperson. This upsets the traditional balance of power within the family, and some families experience a loss of control over their children. The struggle to become more “American” often causes children to refuse to adhere to their own cultural norms. This can cause a lot of tension, but simply discussing the issue can really help.

While it is against the law to abuse children here, harsh physical discipline is the norm in many cultures. In many cultures, young girls are expected to care for their younger siblings at an early age. These cultural differences have led to problems with child protective authorities in the past.

Both men and women need to know the laws regarding domestic abuse in the U.S. Some refugee women have chosen to live in shelters or get restraining orders against their partners because of physical abuse. Refugee men need to know they could go to jail for beating their wives regardless of their own culture. Women need to know their options.

Know that just because cultural practices of your mentees are different, does not mean they are wrong. Knowing what your mentees think of families and familial relations will help you to understand them and their family situation better as they adjust.