

# Families

## Unit 5 of 5

**Remember:** Some of the questions may ask you to put yourself in the place of another gender (for example, asking you how a mother or father would feel in a certain situation). Please answer these questions regardless of your gender - just try to put yourself in their shoes!

\* If there are any questions about family, friends, or anything else that you feel uncomfortable answering - just make up fictional characters for these questions. \*

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### Family

Now that you've come to your last Unit, you've explored how families can be biological, connected by marriage, friends, immediate, extended, supportive, distant, good or bad influences, and much more. Have a look at some of the quotations below about families and answer the questions.

*"My family is my strength and my weakness"* - Aishwarya Rai Bachchan

**1. What does this quote mean to you?**

*"The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life."* - Richard Bach

**2. Do you think if a family has not fostered respect and joy, they are still worth being around? Why or why not?**

*"Family quarrels are bitter things. They don't go according to any rules. They're not like aches or wounds, they're more like splits in the skin that won't heal because there's not enough material."* - F. Scott Fitzgerald

**3. What suggestions do you have for overcoming a family quarrel?**

**4. Write your own quote about family.**



**5. Write a short story about the characters in the image above. Write one version with a happy ending, and another version with a not-so-happy ending.**

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## Poems

### "A Family Is Like a Circle"

A family is like a circle  
 the connection never ends  
 and even if at times it breaks  
 in time it always mends  
 a family is like the stars  
 somehow they're always there  
 families are those who help  
 who support and always care  
 A family is like a book  
 the ending's never clear  
 but through the pages of the book  
 their love is always near  
 A family is many things  
 with endless words that show  
 who they are and what they do  
 and how they teach you so you know  
 but don't be weary if it's broken  
 or if through time it's been so worn  
 families are like that - they're split up and always torn  
 but even if this happens  
 your family will always be  
 they help define just who you are  
 and will be a part of you eternally.

- Nicole M. O'Neil

Sitting here so helpless,  
 Never feeling better,  
 Staring at a closed steel door,  
 Hoping for a letter.

Not today, they passed me by,  
 No one wrote to me.  
 They didn't care to take the time.  
 What I go through, no one sees.

I pace the floor, then stare some more,  
 at my closed, cold, steel door.  
 For tomorrow may bring that letter  
 That I've been waiting for.

- Rex A. Mires

### "Grandma"

Grandma would chase me  
 around the house  
 with a butcher knife  
 she a tortoise  
 me a hare

In prison I learned  
 she should have  
 gotten me at night  
 as I slept  
 in my bed

- John Byron Yarbrough

**6. Do you think the poem by Rex A. Mires is more similar to "A Family Is Like a Circle" or "Grandma"? Explain.**

"A Family Is Like a Circle" repeats the idea that your family will always be there.

**7. Do you think "A Family Is Like a Circle" is too idealistic?**

In the poem by Rex A. Mires, he talks of a person waiting patiently for a letter, possibly from a family member or friend.

**8. Write the letter that the person in the poem has been waiting for.**

**9. As you can see, Rex A. Mires' poem is untitled. Think of a name!**

10. Talk about the life of the person speaking in the poem, "Grandma". Some questions to think about: Why is this child living with his grandma? Why did he describe his grandmother as a tortoise and him a hare?

11. Write your own poem focused around family.

### Story

In past Units, we've read excerpts from Russell, Diane, Willie, and Blake in *Frontiers of Justice, Volume 3: The Crime Zone*. In our last Unit, we'll be reading from a story written by Arthur, who talks about what it was like to be released from prison and return to his family.

*"The property officer dressed me out in my street clothes and all that remained was to sign my release papers. I sat in a plastic chair in the booking area waiting for the guards to process me out, and through the tall glass windows that looked out on the visiting lobby, I saw Dawn come in. Only the width of the shatter-proof glass separated us and we were all smiles and anticipation."*

*"The June morning was ripe with the promise of a hot summer day as Dawn and I strolled the length of the parking lot to her car - so many emotions running rampant in my mind. I was free. Like Lazarus, I too had just risen from the dead. For the first time in longer than my body could recall, I was on the other side of the wall and no chains or manacles weighed down my limbs or my soul. Freedom. I wanted to dance crazy on the asphalt, shout out my excitement and my joy, grab Dawn up in my arms and devour her lips with my mouth. I was free."*

*"How quickly sunlight can turn to darkness. How short the time between bliss and ruin. No Oracle I, but had I the power of prophecy, I would have seen the future in the first act of that day. In less than nine months, I would be so different from that happy, laughing person. In less than nine months, I would not laugh about something so innocent, something so humorous. In that time, I would become cold, hard, mean spirited and cruel. Such an error then would lead to a tantrum, a rage, an abusive verbal assault or a cold silent contempt."*

*"I didn't drink for almost the first five months of my freedom. I didn't smoke and even kept up with my running and writing for a time. But everything inside me was still there, all that suppressed rage from years and years of confinement and isolation, all the paranoia, the secretiveness, the hatred, the violence, the alcoholism, the addictions. I wasn't tending to my soul. I knew in my heart that I needed to address these issues, but my arrogance over-rode my understanding."*

*"Not long after I began to drink, I also started smoking cigarettes once more. For three years I had gone without a cigarette and was extremely proud of this accomplishment. When I picked them up again, I decided to blame Dawn rather than taking responsibility and admitting the role of the alcohol. Soon after, I started playing with drugs again. In no time, I blew up to over 200 pounds. I rarely, if ever, sat down to write. Self-loathing was a constant companion and the worse I felt, the more I took my pain out on my wife and my family."*

*"I might well have died at this point and, in fact, had very little desire left to live. My saving grace, however, was still my wife. Despite everything, she still cared. She witnessed my deterioration and refused to allow me to destroy myself. Following a car wreck in which I totaled my vehicle, she convinced me to seek help. I entered rehab, sought out a counselor and for the first time in my life talked to professionals in the psychiatric field who were truly interested in helping me rather than just being tools for various prison administrations."*

12. How could Arthur have realized he needed help sooner?

Arthur says he blamed Dawn "rather than taking responsibility and admitting the role of the alcohol."

13. What excuse did Arthur make up for blaming Dawn?

14. From Dawn's perspective, do you think she had any reservations when Arthur was released from prison? Is there anything more she could have done to help him? Why or why not?

15. Now pretend Arthur was a female. Do you think the story would be any different? Explain.

16. Imagine Arthur did not have a "Dawn". Where else might he have found the strength to seek help?

Later in the story, Arthur talks about the help of the psychiatrist and how his diagnosis of severe depression helped him recover his life.

17. What can prison administration do to make life after prison easier?

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18. Has your definition of "family" changed after taking this Course? If so, how?

Since this is your final Unit, we'd appreciate any feedback or suggestions you have for improving the Course!

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*Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes*