

FAMILY
& FRIENDS

Family and friends are part of a larger system that can provide encouragement to your relationship, but that larger system can also be detrimental to your relationship if there is a significant lack of acceptance and support.

Your partner's family and friends, as well as your own, will impact your relationship in some way.

You want them to like your partner and you want your partner to like them. This happens naturally for some couples while others need to monitor these relationships so that the influence and interference on your relationship is appropriate.

If you are struggling to connect with your partner's friends or family,

take time to learn
and understand the
values they hold.

This might allow you to leverage a connection that leads to acceptance, support, and encouragement. If there are differences, don't compromise your own values, but strive to understand. If you already connect with your partner's family and friends, work with your partner to set appropriate boundaries to monitor the influence and interference family and friends have on your relationship. Your partner will appreciate the extra effort you put into managing the relationships.

DISCUSSION

// How do you know your relationship is accepted by your family and friends? How do you know your relationship is accepted by your partner's family and friends? How do you know the boundaries of your relationship are both respected by family and friends as well as your partner and yourself?

// Do family and friends cause conflict in your relationship? If so, how is this type of conflict normally identified and addressed? Do you or your partner become defensive when the topic of family and friends is brought up in discussion?

// How has a life transition (marriage, children, illness, etc.) impacted how you and your partner relate to family and friends?

// What boundaries do you currently have in place with regards to family and friends and your relationship with your partner? How can boundaries be adjusted to allow for more or less influence from others outside the relationship?

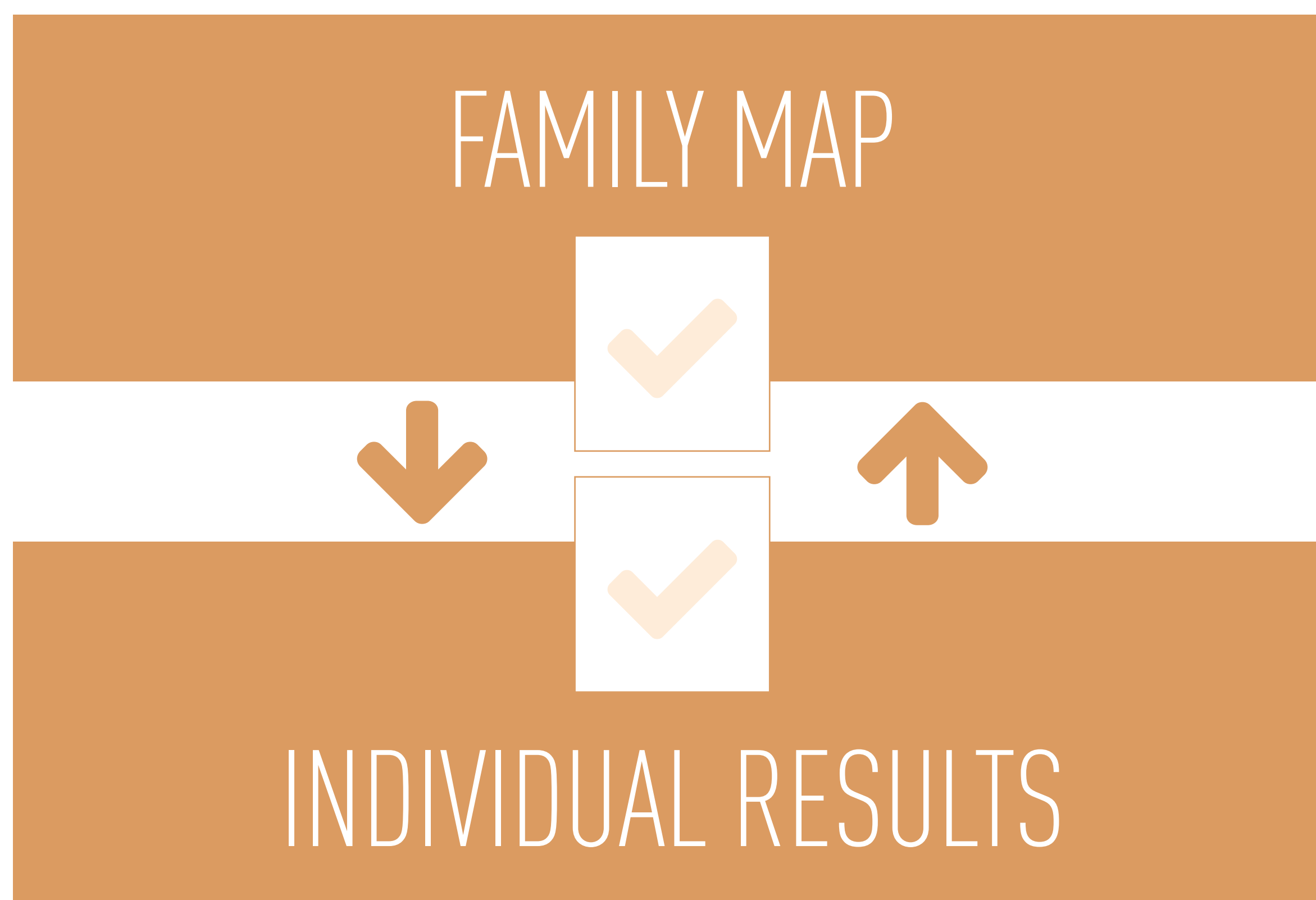
// Consider your definition of "normal" – How much involvement from family and friends is normal? How does this change throughout your relationship? How is your definition of normal similar to your partner's? How is your definition of normal different than your partner's?

CHECK IN WITH CHECKUP

Check in with your Couple Checkup results

by reviewing the *Family & Friends* and the *Family Map* sections of your report.

Take a look at the Family Map, keeping in mind the center square indicates ideal balance. Where are you plotted in relation to your partner?



Look at your individual results in the Family & Friends section – Does this accurately reflect how you feel about these relationships?

TAKEAWAY

The health of you and your partner's relationships with each other's family and friends contributes to the health of your relationship with your partner; it is important to nurture lifelong relationships with each other's family and friends.

APPLICATION

Reminisce about the first time you and your partner introduced each other to family and friends. Consider how far your relationships with family and friends have come, for better or worse, and recognize the effect it has had on your relationship with your partner.

NEXT STEPS

Making new friends can be hard, but developing new friendships with other couples can help build your own relationship with your partner. Try to connect with other couples in your community and make new friendships. Perhaps seek out new connections through your faith community, neighbors, or volunteer opportunities.

SECTION SUGGESTION

Consider exploring **Parenting** or **Money** next.