



Using the Family Star (Relationships)™

The Family Star (Relationships) has been developed to support parents and others with a key parenting role to tackle disagreements in a healthy way and to help their children to thrive.

It is a version of the Outcomes Star, a suite of tools for supporting and measuring change when working with people.

The Family Star (Relationships) resources consist of:

- The Family Star (Relationships) Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan for use with parents
- The Family Star (Relationships) User Guide, with both brief visual scales and detailed scale descriptions, which can be shared with parents as needed
- The short illustrated Scales
- An illustrated summary of the Journey of Change
- This Guidance for Workers
- A web application for online completion and analysis at www.staronline.org.uk

The Family Star (Relationships) was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in collaboration with Essex County Council and Hertfordshire County Council. The process involved workers, managers, parents and associated professionals.

Completing the Star is intended to be a helpful, engaging and empowering process that stimulates and focuses discussion and provides a useful, shared basis for an action or support plan. It is a flexible tool that relies on the skills of the workers using it, as well as on a degree of understanding and trust between worker and parent. The Star is designed to be used one to one; the aim is to have a genuine interaction and complete it collaboratively.

Before using the Family Star (Relationships), all workers need training from Triangle or a licensed trainer.

Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

It made me think honestly about how I was feeling.

Service user

It helped me a lot to understand how to deal with situations and with my relationship.

Service user

It helped me make changes to my life that made a difference for me and my children.

Service user

The Star is really respectful for clients.

Worker

Want to use this Star?
Visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk

Contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk
or 020 7272 8765

Before you use the Family Star (Relationships)[™]

Make sure that you have received training in using the Family Star (Relationships) and that you are familiar with the materials and know when and how it is used in your service. It is vital that you understand and use the Journey of Change underlying the scales – **stuck, accepting help, believing and trying, finding what works** and **effective co-parenting**. This will ensure consistent and reliable information as a basis for support planning and for use by your service. You also need to be familiar with all the scale descriptions, so you can unpack and rephrase them as needed.

How to introduce the Family Star (Relationships)[™]

Before you introduce the Star to someone for the first time:

- Devise a short script to introduce the Star in a way that feels natural to you and clear for those you are working with
- If you meet with parents you support in groups, it can be useful and save time to explain the Star to the group before starting one-to-one work within individual sessions
- Consider giving parents who are interested a copy of the User Guide to read before the session. Although the User Guide is quite detailed and relies on someone being comfortable with reading, the whole document is worded in accessible language, so it can be shared.

When introducing the Star:

- Explain that people may start anywhere on the journey, can move both up and down on the scale and that 10 is the top of the Star scales but not the end of the journey
- Be really clear that this is about establishing where they are and building up a map of their world, experiences and journey – it is not about being judged or being awarded an overall “score”. It is best to avoid the word “score” completely
- Let the parent decide which scale to start with, or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss, such as “Practical arrangements”.

Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

“The Family Star (Relationships) is a way of finding out about what’s going well and areas where you need more information or support.”

“The Star tells us where you are now and what needs to happen next, and it helps you and me plan that together.”

“This is about hearing your voice and what you think about what’s going on for you now, so that together we can work out what support you need.”

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How to complete the Family Star (Relationships)[™]

Complete the Star collaboratively with a parent in a way that responds to their needs and abilities. The aim is to engage them in meaningful discussion, and to listen and learn about them, rather than to complete the Star as quickly as possible. The worker's role includes helping parents gain insight into what's going on for them and what might help. This needs to be done in a skilful and supportive way, preferably using open questions, listening and feeding back to check understanding.

Use the scale descriptors as a basis for discussion about the chosen area, or have an open discussion about the area and then use the scale to place the parent on the Journey of Change. The brief visual scales in the User Guide are designed to be used directly with parents. Although the detailed scales are intended primarily as a resource for workers, they are written to be accessible, so feel free to refer to specific points for clarification with parents. Avoid reading them out in their entirety because of their length.

Always use the scales – these are designed to reduce subjectivity, otherwise one person's 2 could be another person's 4 and the completed Star won't be a useful basis for completing the action plan and your service won't be able to treat collated Star data as reliable for reporting purposes.

If you don't agree, have a discussion – this can help you learn about the parent and help them reflect on their situation and see it in new ways. Encourage parents with low confidence to see their strengths. If a parent is able to engage meaningfully and is at 5 or above for most of the Family Star (Relationships) areas, encourage them to take the lead in placing themselves on the scales. You may need to be more directive for parents in the **accepting help** stage. Those who are **stuck** in all or most areas will not discuss the Star meaningfully and you may need to do a worker-only reading.

If you can't reach agreement, record both views on the Star, labelling which is your opinion and which is the parent's, using the Star Notes to record points from your discussion. Use your professional judgement to decide when further discussion is not helpful.

Recognise external factors. While the Journey of Change focuses on the parent, there may be societal factors or other conditions beyond their control – and beyond the control of your service – which make it harder for things to improve. These may include poor housing, financial difficulty or lack of suitable mental health provision or other services. These also need to be acknowledged and recorded when using the Star. Your service may then be able to use this information to identify gaps in provision, plan future developments or raise issues with policy-makers.

When you have completed all of the scales, join the points to create a shape. Mark each reading on the Star Chart and join the points. Encourage parents to do this and to create the shape. This applies whether you and the parent are completing the Star on paper or on screen, for example using the Star Online.

Seeing the Star visually helps me to see that I am changing, that things are happening, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Service user

How to use the completed Star Chart as the basis for a support plan

Look at the shape of the completed Star together and prompt the parent to reflect on it as a basis for what to do next. Ask questions such as:

- Is the shape of the Star an accurate picture of how things are for you now?
- What does it tell you about what is and is not going well?
- What are the strengths that you bring to the areas that are going well? How might you apply those strengths in other areas?
- What is it most important to address first?

Once you have chosen the areas to be included in the support plan, further motivational questions for each area include:

- Where on the journey do you want to get to and by when?
- What needs to be done to bring about this change?
- Who is responsible for these actions? When can they be completed?

Complete the Family Star (Relationships) Action Plan or use your service's support planning documentation. The Journey of Change provides valuable pointers for thinking about the goals of support with the parent and achievable, realistic actions, as summarised on the next page:

Not for use
Sample for information only

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