

Children Benefit if They Know About Their Relatives, Study Finds

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Children who know stories about relatives who came before them show higher levels of emotional well-being, according to Emory University researchers who analyzed dinner time conversations and other measures of how well families work.

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The research, by Emory psychologists Robyn Fivush and Marshall Duke,

and former Emory graduate student Jennifer Bohanek, was recently published in Emory's online *Journal of Family Life*.

"Family stories provide a sense of identity through time, and help [children](#) understand who they are in the world," the researchers said in the paper "Do You Know? The power of family history in adolescent identity and well-being".

Researchers have theorized that family stories are a critical part of adolescents' emerging identity and well-being, but they haven't been able to measure how much kids know about their family history and intergenerational family stories. In this study, Emory researchers developed a "Do You Know" (DYK) scale to try to measure that. The DYK scale has 20 yes/ no questions asking the child to report if they know such things as how their parents met, or where they grew up and went to school.

Researchers studied 66 middle-class, mixed-race, 14- to 16-year old [adolescents](#) from two-parent families. They completed the DYK scale, as well as multiple standardized measures of family functioning, identity development and well-being. Teens who knew more stories about their extended family showed "higher levels of emotional well-being, and also higher levels of identity achievement, even when controlling for general level of [family](#) functioning," the study found.

"There is something powerful about actually knowing these stories," the study said. However, the authors cautioned that since this is the only study to use the DYK scale, more research is needed before any firm conclusions can be drawn.

More information: www.journaloffamilylife.org/doyouknow

Provided by Emory University

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