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FAMILY TIME

KEEPING FAMILY A PRIORITY

C H I L D R E N ' S H O M E S O C I E T Y O F C A L I F O R N I A



With so many activities going on each day, it may be difficult for your family to find time to spend together, especially if you are a single parent. Although it may be a challenge, the benefits of having time together are worth the effort. There are many opportunities for you to enjoy time with your children. “Family time” is an important way to build and strengthen relationships within the family.



It is easier than you may think to create ways to spend quality time with your children. Doing chores together, cooking as a family, and playing together are all opportunities to talk and spend time with one another. Regular time with your children gives them a sense of security, love, and belonging and emphasizes that family is a priority.



★ WORKING TOGETHER

There are many ways to spend time at home together while, at the same time, completing tasks that need to be done. These times can be fun and easy, especially when you do them together.



- In a jar, place slips of paper with small tasks to do around the house. Your child is more likely to do small tasks that require short amounts of time like dusting, vacuuming, or putting away laundry.
- Prepare a meal together. Your child can help with simple tasks such as finding the vegetables for a salad, pulling out utensils, or mixing ingredients.
- Put groceries away together. For young children, this provides a great opportunity to begin pre-reading and math skills. Your child can sort items by color, count items as he or she puts them away, or search for letters among the items.
- Set up an area and time for you and your children to complete work together. At the dining table, you can take care of bills, homework, or other paperwork while your children draw, color, or do their homework. This way, you can also help them with their projects.

Spending quality time with your children, whether a little or a lot, is important for healthy family relationships.



If you have infants or toddlers, plan activities that involve them. Encourage older children to spend quality time with their younger siblings in order to build the bond between them.

★ ACTIVITIES

Special activities can be planned for the family to enjoy together. It is best to schedule these times as expected events each week or each month. This way, your family can plan around these days and look forward to the activities. Mark the activities on a “family calendar.” The following are some ideas for family activities:

- Plan a picnic at a park, a beach, or even the backyard. Let your children help pick the location or plan the menu.
- Take a trip to a local tourist site. Some attractions such as zoos, aquariums, museums, or gardens may offer discounts on certain days.
- Go to a movie theater or watch a movie at home. Afterwards, talk about the movie. Ask, “What did you like about the movie? Why was it funny? What would you do if that happened to you?”
- Take a walk together. Infants can be pushed in a stroller, or carried in a sling.
- Play together at home; for example, building with blocks, drawing, board or card games, or charades.
- Work on a project together; for example, doing a big puzzle, making a family photo album, or making gifts for grandparents and other relatives.
- Read a book at home, at the library, or at a bookstore. Children will enjoy participating by taking turns selecting the book. Let older children read to the family.



★ FAMILY MEETINGS

Regular gatherings to talk about the family can also be a helpful way to strengthen the family unit and keep communication open. As with family activities, scheduling regular family meetings once a week or once a month can help your family avoid missing these important meetings. Meal times or times after a meal may be a good time for your family to meet.

During the meeting, ask open-ended questions so your children will respond with more than “yes” or “no” (for example: “What did you learn at school today?” or “What was your favorite thing you did this week?”). Be sure to ask older children to be patient listeners with their younger siblings. Some topics for discussion are:

- Good news acknowledging your child’s school, athletic, or artistic performance.
- News affecting the family such as job changes, a new baby, or the start of the school year.
- Family planning including vacations, family activities, or arrangements for school drop-offs and pick-ups.
- Events of the past week; for example, a trip to the dentist or doctor, or activities at school.
- Concerns or frustrations like a child’s struggle at school or with friends, or family chores not getting done.

★ BALANCING YOUR TIME

As dedicated parents, all of your efforts at work, school, and in other settings help make your family successful. In addition, the special moments of enjoying one another keep your family healthy. It is helpful to sort out which activities are most important for your family’s needs. This allows you to balance your time and energy between being with your children and fulfilling other responsibilities.

TO LEARN MORE

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

THE FAMILY BOOK

Todd Parr

ALL KINDS OF FAMILIES

Norma Simon, illustrated by Joe Lasker

FAMILIES

Ann Morris

BOOKS FOR ADULTS

BECOMING THE PARENT YOU WANT TO BE

Laura Davis & Janis Keyser

365 OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR CHILD

Steve & Ruth Bennett