



# Family-Strengthening Activities

## Activities you can do with your family to strengthen your familial bonds

Families look differently for everyone- some families have a mom, dad, and one child. While other families may include stepsiblings, half-siblings, grandparents, aunts or uncles, or close family friends. These activities can help strengthen bonds with those who you live with and call family!

- Plan one extra (beyond celebrating just birthdays and holidays together) all-family activity just for the purpose of celebrating your family life. During the fun, talk to each member about their impressions of your family life.
- At the dinner table, have each person name one thing about the family for which he or she is thankful.
- Count the members of your immediate family. Then add relatives. Then add special friends. How big is your "family"?
- Make some resolutions to improve family communication; i.e., schedule regular "family meetings," assist a member with a difficult task once each week, plan a special family celebration once each month, etc.
- Write, "love notes" to each other, and hide them where they can easily be found.
- Hug, kiss, smile, wink.
- Create a family symbol or a family motto as an expression of your family's unity.
- Write a letter to a distant relative.
- Parents can learn by having children grade parents with an occasional report card. Subjects – smiling, laughing, sharing and playing.
- Play the one-a-day compliment game for a week, with every family member. Keep score!!!
- Volunteer to help someone who doesn't have a family.
- Make a "suggestion box" and encourage everyone to contribute whatever is on his or her mind. Open it once a week, and discuss the contents.
- Make a resolution to maintain your family as your highest priority.
- To strengthen bonds with an incarcerated family member, you can write letters, color pictures to send, or talk about favorite memories you have of them

# More activities to strengthen family bonds

## Family Awards

Scheduling a weekly family awards night can help build a positive, trusting and encouraging environment. For the awards, choose something the kids enjoy such as stickers or favorite candy bars. On awards night, recognize each family member for three positive accomplishments such as being kind to a sibling, taking out the garbage or acing a test. After receiving an award, have the family speak about his accomplishments and say something positive about other family members.



## Everyday Activities

The quality and quantity of time family members spend together is essential to building and maintaining strong communication, according to a publication by North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, "Strengthening Family Relationships."

Working together at household chores or yard work opens up the lines of communication and may help create fun, laughter and fond memories. This might not happen right away, but if you lead your family towards more togetherness and increased communication, the children will likely adapt and learn to enjoy the time.

Additional family activities can include, but certainly aren't limited to, going to church together, family game night and creating family traditions around birthdays and holidays.

## Family Dates

Try planning family "dates." Enter an official family date on the calendar where everyone can see it. The date can be anything from going to see a movie together to spending an afternoon at the park. Explain to all the family members that everyone must keep the "date" unless an emergency arises. Family dates help strengthen relationships within the family not only because they give family members a chance to share activities, but also because they give all family members something to which they can look forward too. If dates for the entire family are difficult to schedule, you can arrange dates on a smaller scale -- such as a date with one parent and one child, or a date with an older and younger sibling.

## Family "Celebrities"

For this activity, the adults or older siblings in the family can dress up as newspaper reporters, complete with a hat, badge and overcoat if available -- and learn as much as possible about the younger children in the family who are can act as the "celebrities." Some ideas for questions might include asking their favorite colors, favorite foods, fears, what makes them sad or happy and how they would spend a day off from school if they could do anything they wanted. Take notes -- and the younger children will gain a feeling of importance from the undivided attention. You can also switch roles and have the younger children act as the reporters and ask questions of their older siblings and parents.

More important than the activity you chose to do with your family, is to have family night consistently! Let your children know that it is mandatory to participate in the lesson or activity. Let them offer feedback or ideas on what would make family night more engaging for them depending on the age of your child. Talk openly about family values, expectations, and how important a strong family is!