

REBUILDING FAMILY FUN

Quotes

M. C. Jacobson asked 1,500 school children, "What do you think makes a happy family?" The children seldom mentioned money, toys, beautiful homes, or modern appliances. Their most frequent response was that a family is happy because "they do things together."

—from the book, A Parents Blueprint, Tom Carr

All happy families resemble one another, every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

—Tolstoy

Notes

Several years ago two researchers, N. Stinnett and J. Defrain, did a very impressive study with over 3,000 families. The researchers wanted to find out what qualities were present in strong families. The most common qualities, as noted by the respondents, were:

- **Commitment:** Family members were committed to do everything possible to keep the family together, to "make it work."
- **Appreciation:** Family members show appreciation for each other.
- **Communication:** Family members find time for quality communication.
- **Time together:** The family regularly schedules quality time together.
- **Ability to cope with stress and crisis:** Adversities made the family stronger.
- **Spiritual wellness:** For many families, this was the unifying force.

Stinnett and Defrain's major study found that "time together" was a very important part of a successful family. Families not only need time together, but the time needs to be a fun, happy experience for all members. Even at today's hectic pace, parents, with some creativity, can rebuild family fun. Families that play, laugh, and hug a lot, survive!

Recommended Resources

- 201 Amazing Mind Boggling
- 50 Magic Tricks Using Common Objects
- The Little Hands Playtime Book



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ategies

1. Children must see happy parents. It is very important that children see mom and dad laugh, hug, giggle, tease, and touch often. Their behavior sets the tone in the house. How can a family have fun if the parents do not get along?
2. Parents must love every child unconditionally. Hugs and "I love you," must happen daily.
3. All family members must feel comfortable to act silly at times, tell jokes, and play an occasional harmless prank. Children won't forget things like their father dressing up as the Easter Bunny or their mother singing silly songs to the baby. Kids even appreciate their parents telling corny jokes.
4. There is a well-known saying that goes, "A home needs to be clean enough to be healthy and dirty enough to be happy." Happy homes may have a few toys lying on the floor, a dog on the couch, a dirty sock in the hall, and an empty pop corn bowl on the table. Houses that are too neat, clean, and organized might not be very happy.
5. Families can do volunteer work together. For instance, the whole family can go to the food bank on a regular basis to stock shelves and pass out food to the needy.
6. Research finds that families that attend weekly worship services tend to be a happier, close-knit group.
7. Parents can write positives letters to children. The letters can be mailed or hidden in the children's backpacks or lunch bags.
8. Families should try to keep in touch with relatives and schedule yearly reunions.
9. Create a family journal. Every day write a few family news items in the journal. Note activities that the family did together, record children's achievements, make note of funny things that happened, and other positive items of interest. Children love reading the family journal.
10. Take many photos and put them in a book or hang on the wall.
11. Have a pet or two. Dogs, cats and other creatures add much fun and many laughs.
12. Eat several meals a week together. This gives all members time to talk. Parents should not always dominate the conversation. Also, get a bit silly and creative with menu items. How about green eggs and ham to celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday?
13. Create several family rituals and stick with them. Rituals can act as glue in many families and children seldom forget them. Examples could include, children allowed to open one present on Christmas Eve, mom always cooking cherry pie on George Washington's birthday, or dad cooking dinner on Mother's Day.
14. Regulate the amount of time children sit at the computer or play video games. These activities seem to push family members away from each other.
15. Watch funny movies and cartoons together.
16. Get children outdoors to enjoy nature. Hiking, bike riding, bird watching, and fishing are fun family activities.
17. Plant a garden together. Let each member be responsible for certain vegetables. Have a contest to see who can grow the biggest, smallest, or funniest shaped vegetable.
18. Plan regular "table games" nights where you play cards, Monopoly, Scrabble, Uno, Clue and other "non-technology" games.
19. Leave fun gadgets lying around the house such as balls, squeeze toys, puzzles, stuffed animals, and other things for kids to pick up and play with.
20. Always be there. Whenever a child is playing a ball game, performing at a dance recital, or singing in church, make sure the rest of the family attends.
21. Children still love to play with parents. Invite your children outside to play catch, ride a bike, or chase fireflies.
22. Enjoy your children now. They won't be home forever.