

# The Benefits of Family Time

**Children tell me**, “We could...go for a family walk, have a family movie night, a family game night would be fun, a ‘special’ dinner night.....doing one of these things once a week would help me. It would help our family.” I invite Mom in, or Mom and Dad, who sincerely want their child to feel better and be happier, and they nod a tentative nod that tells me they are thinking something like, “How can I add one more thing?”

Too often, the child returns to therapy the next week, the family having not done the family activity. Many children are so protective of their parents, and understand how busy their parents are, so they are readily prepared to defend all of the reasons that it was not done. Many children feel that they are either the reason for a problem, or are trying desperately NOT to become the reason for the problem. There are many family scenarios, this just being one.

## **Is your family having a hard time making a commitment to at least one quality family time per week?**

1. With both parents working in many families, or one parent working overtime, it is often hard to find the time.
2. Are you stressed about your job or money, you may be tired, on edge, just need some time to yourself?
3. Is the marriage stressed? Are you trying to avoid family time, because you don't want to end up in a fight with your wife (husband), especially in front of the children?
4. Siblings who have already decided that their friends are where it's at, not their siblings.

## **What are the Benefits of Spending Time Together as a Family?**

1. Stronger Family Bonds
2. Greater Academic Success
3. Fewer Behavioral Problems
4. Less Likely to Engage in Violence
5. Lower Risk for Substance Abuse
6. Reduced Risky Sexual Behavior
7. Greater Intimacy Among Parents
8. Siblings Fight Less (get along more!)
9. Family Members Come to Trust Each Other More and Can Count on Each Other More
10. Children Open Up More With Parents and Share More About Their Experiences Outside of the Home.

## **What Kinds of Activities Constitute Quality Family Time?**

1. Family game night
2. Family movie night
3. Easter Egg decorating
4. Special Family dinner night

5. Walk on the beach
6. Game of catch
7. Pumpkin decorating
8. Raking leaves together, and other “chores”
9. Gingerbread house kits

Check out this site for a lot of “frugal” ideas for family time! <http://www.frugalcapecod.com/>

### **What are the Guidelines for Quality Family Time?**

1. No Skipping - “Family” time means no one skips out. Sure, you can have Mother-daughter (or son) time, or Father- Daughter (or son) time, but family time is everyone. It is in families that children learn about taking turns, treating each other nicely and working together. Sometimes they realize they have actually enjoyed the time together, when they assumed they would not. But even if not, family is family and family supports each other, even when someone isn’t getting their own way.
2. Pre-planning - We want our children to plan well enough that their homework gets done on time, or their chores get done before they are saying goodnight and we are asking, “Did you do your chores?” This is a learned habit and we have to teach them. Talk with everyone early in the week, maybe at dinner about what they would like to do. Teach them how to plan and based on age, work together to make it happen. For example, if it is a Saturday night movie, don’t wait until Saturday morning to try and get a consensus and then assume that you will agree AND you will be able to obtain the movie.
3. Unclutter – Children and parents, make sure your obligations are met so that you won’t be distracted or tempted to say, “Oh, the children look happy and settled with the movie. I’m going to slip away and do some work around the house, or check my social networks”. Be fully present.
4. Capture Memories – Take a picture, even if it is the family lounging in their pjs watching a movie. Talk about the best parts of the time together and what each person might change next time or an idea that was sparked for next time.
5. End Well! – When saying goodnight, tell your children, even if every aspect of the family time didn’t go as well as you hoped, that you are so grateful that you were able to spend the time with them, that you are glad to have him for a son (or her for a daughter). Point out something that they did or said that you took note of. If they struggled with a negative attitude, point something out about how you want to help them work on not always being first, for example, or how you were pleased when they started getting along. Share something similar you might have struggled with as a child. Connect, connect, connect. After all, (s)he will be borrowing your car not long from now☺, if they aren’t already.

During the month of November Tracy will provide the “recipe for success” with family game night, dinner night, dessert night (yummy!) and other great ways to bring your family closer together for happier more confident children, a more personal relationship between parents and tips for single parents as well.