

Three important things happy families do!

HAPPY FAMILY HABITS

...because happy families don't just happen.

by
Lorle Campos

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by Lorle E. Campos

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First Edition

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With love and admiration
to the smart, kind, strong,
and passionate women
in my life.

To my mother Nancy,
who taught me, above all else,
how to be a good person.

To my daughter Candace,
who devoted seven years of her life
helping me achieve my dream.

To my sister Teri,
who has always listened with an open heart
and given me such good advice.

To my dear friend Karen,
who is not family, but feels like it.
She is “pure goodness.”

Happy families don't just happen...

FAMILY

Family doesn't happen naturally like it used to. People sat down to dinner every night and talked about their day. Everyone went to grandma's house on Sundays, and vacations were vacations without computers, cell phones or video games. Family just happened. Eating healthy and getting plenty of exercise used to happen naturally too, when people worked more physical jobs, walked everywhere, and there wasn't so much unhealthy food around to eat. Now we have to read food labels and schedule trips to the gym. In today's DIZZY BUSY world, we have to plan for a good family life too... because happy families don't just happen.

Is this book for you?



Is your family too busy to have fun together?
Do you worry about the values your children are learning?
Would you like more engaging dinner conversations?
Do you feel guilty as a parent no matter how hard you try?
Would you like to make your holidays more memorable?

If you said yes to one or more of these questions, you are like many parents today: frustrated and eager for help. This book is for you.

How can it help?

The HAPPY FAMILY HABITS make it simple for families to get what they need in less time, with less effort and less stress. They are based on scientifically proven “protective factors” that help build strong, loving, happy families. The three most important things parents need to give their children are: Family Talk, Family Fun, and Family Memories. Once you understand what’s worth your time and effort, you’ll see how easy it is to accomplish more in a lot less time.



What is 10-Minute Parent?



10-MINUTE PARENT is a new, and refreshingly realistic, approach to work/life balance. It’s not about prioritizing, getting organized or letting go of guilt. It’s based on 35+ years of analyzing the literature and research on parenting and family life and 20 years developing products and programs to help busy parents sort through the chaos of family life. They need quick, practical information, and 10-MINUTE PARENT offers simple, effective tips and tools to raise good kids and build strong family ties in just 10 minutes a day. We’ve done the work for you, so you can relax and enjoy family life.



Lorle

We all want the same thing for our children: loving relationships, strong family values, and happy holiday memories. What seems so simple and basic is getting harder and harder to achieve in our DIZZYBUSY world today. There are plenty of things I wish I had done differently with my children, now that I know what I know. But I must have done something right. My children definitely have a strong sense of family. The photo below is thirteen years old and it's one of my favorites because of how it shows the warmth that exists between them. Their father and I know, that when we are no longer here, they will always be there for each other. What a comfort that is.

My Family



Sean
Dylan
Candace
Travis
Kevin

Our babies grow up ...

I was watching my first-born child, this lovely young woman I am so proud of, shake hands with the principal at her high school graduation. She is smart, determined, creative, courageous, kind...and so independent that she'd been chomping at the bit to go out into the world for years. It seems like yesterday she was just a baby, asking me to read her favorite story one more time and sneaking into my room at night to sleep next to me. How did 18 years go by so fast? I thought I had all the time in the world. How did I not see this coming? I was relieved that we got here with no teenage disasters, glad that she was going to a great university next fall, but worried about a lot of things.

Have we taught her everything she needs to know?

Can she make good decisions on her own?

Have we given her a sense of family and connection?

Does she know how much we love her?

There were many things I had wanted to do for her, but there never seemed to be enough time. I wish I had kept a journal of her childhood, the sweet and funny moments I would like to share one day with her children. I wish I had had taken the time to put on paper the valuable life lessons I have learned over the years. And, it would have been nice to send her off to college with a beautiful big family album full of memories of all the fun things we did together. There was never enough time.

Does she know that we will always be there

to catch her if she falls, dust her off and

send her back out with a hug and a kiss?

Isn't that what family is for?

I looked at her brothers, ages 11 and 15, in their dress shirts and ties, growing up just as fast. Then I looked down at my huge tummy and thought about the newborn twins I was about to have. I felt another wave of motherly guilt and parental panic. Will I be sitting here feeling the same things when they graduate? Right then and there, I made myself a promise. I know I was going to have even less time in the coming years than I had in the past, but I was determined to figure out how to raise my children, manage my business, maintain our home, and still to do the things I know in my heart are important to make sure my family stays connected.

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Chapter

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Ask The Children

1

What do children wish for?

1000 children were asked this question:
“If you were granted one wish to change how
your mother’s or father’s work affects your life,
what would that wish be?

56% of parents assumed
that their child’s first choice would be that their
parents work less or that they spend more time
together.

Only 10% of the children said
they wished they could spend more time
with their mothers or fathers (15%).

34% said that what they wanted most
was for their parents to be less stressed and less
tired from their work.

What do children think about work?

Ellen Galinsky, President of the Families and Work Institute and author of *Ask The Children*, directed and wrote about one of the most significant studies on work and family that has been published in the last 20 years. 1000 children (grades 3-12) and their parents went through extensive interviews to determine how they really think and feel about the subject of mom and dad working. The surprising and encouraging results should help us all relax a little. The amount of time children say they spend with their parents and the overall rating they give to their parental skills had nothing to do with whether or not they were employed. This is great for all those “guilty” parents. The majority of the children gave both their parents an A in 12 categories, such as “Being there for me when I am sick” and “Making me feel important and loved.”

Good news for working parents

The most significant finding in this study was the fact that children seemed to be fine with their parents working but were definitely affected by how tired and stressed they are when they come home from work. With the exception of parents who spent only an hour or two a day with their children) the majority of the kids (73%) said that the amount of time spent with parents was either plenty or too much. Most importantly, this was the same whether they were working or not. This is good news for parents. It means that we don’t have to feel guilty about how much time we spend away from our children working. We just need to learn how to make the most of the precious time we do have.

Parents admit they come home tired

Parents did acknowledge that work leaves them with less energy for their kids and they admitted that they tend to withdraw when work is especially demanding. Part of the problem is that we know we won’t have a moment to relax once we get home. It’s hard to keep going with an energetic and happy attitude when there is no relief in sight. This only adds to our stress. Apparently, kids see family life as even more rushed than their parents do. The study shows, however, that when kids spend time with parents who appear relaxed and calm, those children think their parents are successfully managing their work and family responsibilities, and those parents see themselves as better parents.

Children feel our anxiety and stress

The less time parents have to spend with their kids, the more guilty and stressed they feel, and the worse job they see themselves doing as parents. They say and do things, without realizing it, that communicate their stress. Children feel their parent's stress and rank those parents as not managing their work and family responsibilities as well. Which makes sense. Just like the over-protective mother who makes her child feel nervous about life, the guilty mom keeps apologizing for not being there and trying too hard to compensate. She ends up sending a negative message to her children: "I feel bad that I am not here for you, that I can't give you what you need." She's so worried she isn't doing enough that she convinces them it's true.

Relaxed parents make for relaxed kids

If parents come home feeling confident that they have plenty of time to give their children what they really need, kids will pick up on that relaxed, confident mood and will feel they are well taken care of. So, in the end, it's not so much how our children perceive the situation, but how WE do. As long as we BELIEVE we're not giving our children what they need, we feel guilty and therefore act more anxious and stressed when anything comes along that cuts into the precious time we have with them.

What does all this mean?

It means that the problem isn't about how our children see the situation. It's about how WE see the situation. Even when our time is somewhat limited, if we are happy and relaxed and present with our children, they will get what they need and will, in turn, be happy and relaxed. Based on the findings from this study — along with many others — it's obvious that parents need to find a way to feel good about the time they spend with their children. They need to have a clear understanding of what their children need, and they have to believe that it's possible to weave those important things effectively into the compact pockets of time available to us. Parents are only human and also need time to relax and recharge. They will be more relaxed, however, if they know that there will be downtime for them at the end of the day: a hot bath, a good book, or a favorite TV show — without having to fold laundry or pay bills at the same time.

Ellen Galinsky's Tips for Success

Ellen Galinsky has shown a deep caring and interest in the welfare of working parents and their children throughout her career. The advice she gives parents, in her book *Ask The Children*, is based not only on this well-known study, but many years of research and analysis. Below are just some of her very useful suggestions:

Enjoy family rituals and traditions

1

Family rituals and traditions provide comfort and security in our lives. They help create the memories that connect us to each other in powerful ways. Pay special attention to the simple daily and weekly rituals, such as your special drop-off-at-school kisses, or sharing highs and lows at the dinner table.

Plan fun family activities together

2

We get so busy rushing around to school, work, and all those extra-curricular activities, that we run out of time to just have fun together. But it is an important part of family life. You will read about the FAMILY FUN BOX later in this book. It's a wonderful way to have fun and create a sense of belonging.

3

Protect and preserve family time

It's critical that you create boundaries to protect your family time. Examples would be: No work calls or emails from 6 pm to 9 pm, no phones at the dinner table, and no kids activities or playdates on family fun night or family holidays. This sends a strong message to your children that family is very important.

4

Ask your children how they feel

You might be surprised when you hear what your children have to tell you. Try one-on-one conversations so that they feel more comfortable. Ask if they think you spend enough time with them. Listen and respect their answer. If it's NO, then that's the time to discuss what they wish they had. It might be alone time with you or a particular activity, as opposed to more time overall.

5 Talk about your work

Talk to your children about your work - in positive ways. There is no reason to feel guilty about enjoying what you do and you certainly don't want your children to get that impression. Share what you like about your job and how it feels to make a valuable contribution to society.

What does this study tell us?



How much TIME
we spend with our children
is not as important as
how we FEEL and
what we DO while
we're together.

Chapter

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DIZZYBUSY Damage



The DIZZYBUSY lifestyle

At first, the fast pace seemed so exciting: easy access to information, endless opportunities, and all those cool technological advances. Now, we're afraid that if we slow down, we'll miss something. We work harder, go faster, but still feel as if we haven't accomplished anything worthwhile. We feel out of balance, as if life is spinning out of control. I call it DIZZYBUSY. It's difficult unplugging because racing about has become a way of life. We brag about how stressed-out we feel, like a badge we've earned for multitasking. Except that we are not doing a very good job at anything — which just adds more guilt and more stress. We miss appointments, we're late picking up our kids, we forget the tooth fairy, and we don't hear half of what our children say to us. We're too busy thinking about what's next on the to-do list. We drive away from the hamburger joint without the food, and we leave our keys hanging in the front door overnight. One woman told me she was in such a hurry, and so distracted, that she pushed the button on the garage door opener and, without thinking, drove right into the garage door before it could open. That's how DIZZYBUSY we are. It's not our fault, though. It's the world we live in:

1. Too many choices

I went to a local grocery store to pick up some Tylenol, and I couldn't believe how many different versions of painkillers there were to choose from. Ninety-three to be exact: different brands, different strengths, different ailments, different shapes and quantities. I had never paid attention before, but I was amazed. So I walked around the store, observing the number of choices we have in other products. There were 147 different types of toothpaste, 196 different shampoos and — you won't believe this — 310 different deodorants. Do we really need all those choices? Everytime we go to look for something, it takes more time. It's no wonder we're overwhelmed.

2. Too much information

The Technology has brought the entire world to our doorstep — which is good and bad. There's no end to the information you can find and the potential connections you can make, which means it's hard to stop. We've become obsessed with responding to text messages, checking emails, hopping on Facebook. Like too many choices, too much information is overwhelming. Imagine how easy it was for our parents when it came to childrearing advice. There was only one book — Dr. Spock — and everyone had it. Now there are over 100,000 books available on parenting.

3. Too high of expectations

We live in a world that judges us by what we accomplish, not by who we are, and our culture expects us to be good at everything we do. We want it all. We want to be a good parent, a good spouse, a good sibling a good son, and a good friend — and all while we try to excel at work, volunteer at school, sing in the church choir, maintain a beautiful home, and coach the soccer team to the championship. But we can't do it all. It's just not possible. So we try to do everything and end up not doing anything very well.

No time left to connect

There's no time anymore for the simple, good things, like sitting down to dinner together and talking. We rush past each other, in and out of the house, on the way to another activity or event. Parents have no time to exercise, relax, or simply share their day. No one is getting enough sleep, which we need to soothe our bodies and minds as well as repair the wear and tear of stress. So we're tired, distracted, and irritable. There's little time and no energy left at the end of the day to connect as a family and create the loving, safe haven we all need at home. Parents feel like they don't have a life, and family is definitely getting lost in the shuffle.

DIZZYBUSY Damage

The worst part is that stress affects our health in a significant way. A little stress can be a good thing. It keeps us going and helps us develop coping strategies. But a lot of stress, or a little stress over a long period of time (our DIZZYBUSY lifestyle), results in all types of physical, mental and emotional problems, including headaches, depression, cancer, gastrointestinal problems, eating disorders, and substance abuse. Stress impairs our ability to focus and think clearly, resulting in poor judgment, accidents and errors.

Employee stress is a major drain on corporate resources, productivity and competitiveness in the business world. All of this affects the cost of products and services offered, as well as the number of jobs available - which in turn creates more stress. Billions of dollars are spent every year on stress management programs, products and services to help people feel better. These expenses are estimated to grow at 20-25% per year. Yet, we don't seem to be making a dent in the problem.

DIZZYBUSY damage

Medical researchers estimate that more than 80% of illness and disease is stress-related, and that chronic stress is as bad for your heart as smoking and high cholesterol.

More than \$300 billion, or \$7,500 per employee, is spent annually in the U.S. on stress-related claims, reduced productivity, absenteeism, medical expenses and employee turnover.

Frantic frazzled families

We all know what we want for our families, but our “fairytales” image of what a happy family looks like is often far from our day-to-day reality. It’s not easy being a parent in this hurry-up world. Instead of doing what we know in our hearts we should be doing, we are busy doing what our world makes us think we should be doing. We are rushing our kids to more and more activities, at ever younger ages, in an effort to prepare them for the best schools, so they can get into the best universities, and get the best jobs. Hurry! There’s no time to even stop and think about what we are doing.

DIZZYBUSY children

The saddest part of all of this is that our children are experiencing our stress and anxiety along with us. They absorb it like sponges from just being around us. And, since we live in a culture that values accomplishments above all else, children feel the pressure to perform and succeed. According to recent studies, today’s kids are feeling very stressed, disconnected, and pessimistic about life. A surprising 60% of 8,000 children in America reported suffering from stress at least once a week and 33% said they felt tense every day. We have to ask ourselves, if this DIZZYBUSY lifestyle is leading adults to alcohol and drugs to escape and feel better, what is it doing to our kids?

Are we pushing our kids too far?

Is it possible that by modeling the DIZZYBUSY lifestyle and pushing our kids into the same rat race we’re in, we may be causing the very things we try to prevent: alcohol and drug abuse, casual sex, depression and suicide? Is it the violent video games and R-rated movies that tempt our children to go in the wrong direction, or is it the pressure to be what society says they should be that pushes them there? Are we, as parents, so focused on success that we are actually making things worse? There’s a fine line between encouraging and pushing, and it’s not always easy for us to see where that line is because our egos are wrapped up in the middle of it. Even the way we push ourselves to be “successful” in life is setting a powerful (potentially negative) example all by itself. Take a moment to look at, and think about, some of these scary statistics...

Some Scary Statistics

20 years ago, 1 in 500 kids was reported as suffering from anxiety, sadness or neurosis.

Now, 1 in 25 visits to the pediatrician turns up one or more of these symptoms.

49% of college students binge drink and/or abuse prescription and illegal drugs.

23% of students meet the medical criteria for substance abuse and dependence.

Use of cocaine, heroin and other illegal drugs is up 52% at colleges in the U.S.

The number of college students seen for depression has doubled and the number of suicidal students seeking help has tripled.

Chapter

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Work Life Balance



Is work/life balance a joke?

With everyone feeling so overwhelmed and stressed-out, work/life balance has become the hot topic of the day. It's affecting our health in serious ways and having a huge negative impact on productivity in the workplace. Businesses, which bear the brunt of both these issues, are spending billions of dollars trying to help working parents with flexible schedules, telecommuting, on-site childcare, gyms, and medical services. There are free massages, ping-pong tables, and every type of workshop or consultant imaginable to help employees deal with the stresses of life. Some companies have even offered concierge services to pick up forgotten homework, walk the dog, or look in on an elderly parent. Yet we still feel as stressed-out and overwhelmed as ever.

Nothing seems to be working

We know what we're supposed to do. We've bought the books, listened to the experts, and read plenty of articles. But, for some reason, we just can't seem to do it — no matter how hard we try. The advice makes sense and some of it helps, but never enough to bring true balance to our lives. Why? Prioritizing works if you're spending time doing unimportant things that you don't mind eliminating from your to-do list. Since many of us have already cut out sleep, exercise, relaxation, and fun, there's not a lot left except the big things, like work and parenting. If being a good parent is a priority, you're not going to cut that out, even though it's consuming an overwhelming amount of your time. Getting organized can be helpful, but unless you are an organized person by nature, it's difficult to do and maintain. Managing your time is easier said than done. Finding time to exercise, go on a date with your spouse, or relax with friends simply causes more stress, because you know you'll have to pay for it by staying up late to finish a report or fold the laundry. Massages, yoga and breathing techniques are great for temporary relief from the stress, but these things are simply Band-Aids. They don't get at the heart of the problem.

Stressed-out is the new norm

It's no wonder we believe that work/life balance is a joke, an unrealistic concept that we don't expect to achieve. We've given up on getting organized and managing our time better, so our focus has shifted to managing the stress. We're so used to high levels of anxiety that we consider it normal and joke about it at social gatherings. Stressed-out has become the new norm.

We feel guilty for a reason

My very favorite of the work/life balance tips is “letting go of the guilt.” Seriously? Who thought of that one? You can’t just “let go” of guilt. It doesn’t work that way. You may be able to repress it or distract yourself from it temporarily with a glass of wine, a hot bath, or a few laughs. But it doesn’t go away. It’s still there, underneath, waiting to surface when your emotional guard is down. Why? We feel guilty for a reason. It’s our conscience telling us that we are not living our lives the way we BELIEVE we should be. I am not saying that what we believe is realistic or practical or fair. It’s simply what we believe. And, as long as there is a gap between how we THINK we should be behaving, and how we ARE behaving, we are going to feel guilty.

What is guilt?

Since guilt seems to be linked to the anxiety and stress we feel, it might help us get at the heart of the work/life balance problem if we understand it a little better. Let’s look at some of the dictionary definitions of guilt. The Oxford Dictionary says that guilt is a result of having “committed a wrong or failed an obligation.” The medical profession defines guilt as “feelings of culpability, especially for imagined offenses or for a sense of inadequacy. “Wikipedia describes guilt is “an emotional experience that occurs when a person realizes or believes — accurately or not — that he or she has violated a moral standard (expectations) and feels responsible for that violation.” In other words, we feel guilty because we’re afraid that we can’t succeed at what we believe we are responsible for and what is expected of us. We feel inadequate.

Why do parents today feel so guilty?

Working parents have a long list of things they THINK they should be doing that they feel guilty about. We don’t spend enough time with our kids. We don’t sit down to dinner often enough and talk. We don’t get to every game and every school event. We don’t have time to make cupcakes for fundraisers or put photos in albums. We don’t make amazing gourmet lunches. We let our kids stay up too late, and we know we’re not teaching them to be responsible or respectful because we don’t have the energy. Plus, we don’t want to be the bad guys when we have so little time together. But where did all these expectations come from? Certainly not from our own parents. They didn’t seem to feel guilty about how much time they spent with us. If fact, if we got in the way, they simply sent us outside to play and said “be home by dark.”



We can't just
LET GO of guilt!
We have to
change how we LIVE or
change how we THINK.

Work is not the BIG problem

Yes, some of us may be working a few more hours a week than we did twenty years ago, but it's a difficult time for our country, and it's only normal that we all pitch in and work a little harder to keep our lifelines and our families afloat. If we don't, who will? Recent surveys indicate, however, that this extra work we take home is not something we necessarily have to do, but something we choose to do because we want to look good and keep our jobs. To be fair, more and more businesses are trying to help their people save time and make it easier to take care of family obligations with flex scheduling and telecommuting, as well as on-site childcare, gyms, doctors, and pharmacies. For many employees, those benefits outweigh any extra hours they may put in that help keep their company going and their families fed. Work doesn't seem to be the biggest reason we feel so out of balance.

Blurred boundaries go both ways

Yes, technology has blurred the boundaries between work and home, which means we are getting work-related emails, texts and phone calls in the evenings and weekends that we feel obligated to respond to. Again, our natural reaction is to take care of them immediately so that we appear dedicated to our jobs. Some employers, in response to this added stress, are already implementing policies to discourage these after-hour invasions. But the blurred boundaries work both ways. We're using more work time to text our kids, spouses, and babysitters, make doctors' appointments, carpool arrangements, or a quick purchase online. We also take time off for school programs and doctor visits. If we are honest with ourselves, many of us would have to admit that the time we spend at home doing work rarely adds up to the time we spend at work doing personal things. Don't forget Facebook and other social networks. We all know what a distraction that is. Technology is definitely taking up a good chunk of our time, but it's still not the biggest problem we have that makes work/life balance so difficult.

It's easier to blame work

We want to blame work, because then it's someone else's problem. We don't have to fix it, and we don't have to change. We don't have to take responsibility for our behavior or look at our own choices. It's easy. But since work is not the real problem, we can't expect our employers to fix it for us, although we can applaud the efforts they are making to help. This does mean, however, that we CAN do something about it and that's a good thing.

Concerned Executives

Fortune 500 companies have been pouring billions of dollars into programs to help employees find work/life balance. Yet a roundtable of top HR executives from some of the largest corporations in the United States admit that, after decades of on-site childcare, flexible hours, telecommuting, and other work/life balance services, parents are still experiencing high levels of guilt and stress.

Superficial strategies and temporary tactics

Most of the advice we hear from work/life balance experts appears to be ineffective because it doesn't get at the heart of the problem. We keep dancing around the real problem that no one wants to talk about with all kinds of superficial strategies and temporary tactics. The reason behind most of our busy-ness is important, very important. It's why all these great work/life balance concepts that make sense aren't working. We have a natural tendency to work harder and stay up later, and try to get more done, simply because we don't feel comfortable slashing important things off our to-do list. We don't want to let go of many of the tasks that are making our lives crazy. In fact, we haven't even considered eliminating the things that are really at the heart of the problem because our hearts are at the heart of the problem.

The heart of the problem

By that I mean our children. Nothing is more important to most parents than being a good parent. So being a good parent and helping our children succeed is a top priority for us, and that makes it very difficult to eliminate tasks that we believe are essential to being a good parent. This is the real problem. We are surrounded with so much information about how a good parent behaves that it is difficult to know what to believe or how to parent. There are also so many opportunities to choose from that we believe will help our children be more successful in life that we don't want to say no to any of them. And last, but not least, expectations about being a good parent are totally out of control.

Parenting: the new competitive sport

It's not surprising that parenting has turned into a competitive sport like everything else. We work hard to be the "perfect" parent, and we work even harder to give our children the "perfect" childhood, free from rejection, disappointment and frustration, and full of every activity and opportunity that might possibly enhance their future. This never-ending race to perfection is exhausting and stressful for both parents and kids, but we can't stop because we want to win. We want to be good at it. We want our kids to succeed in life and be happy. We don't have time to sort through the endless advice on parenting, so we end up being influenced by whatever media and marketing happens to come our way.



We work hard to be
the **PERFECT** parent,
but we work even harder
to give our children the
PERFECT childhood.

The self-esteem fiasco

How did we become so obsessed with parenting? Little by little, parenting experts and marketing executives have led us to believe that we should be doing EVERYTHING for and with our children. Self-esteem is the magic bullet and it is our job to MAKE our children happy, GIVE them self-esteem, and CREATE success for them. It's an impossible job, which is why we are so stressed-out and exhausted. But the self-esteem movement that inspired this style of parenting now appears to have been based on nothing. No substantial scientific studies with any kind of significant results. Nothing. Anyone who has been in a long-term relationship already knows that you can't make someone happy or give them self-esteem. You can't create success for them. They have to do it for themselves — and so do our kids.

We don't like what we see

Many parents today are more educated about parenting than previous generations, and they spend so much more time with their children than our parents did: entertaining them, coaching their sports teams, and helping with their homework. Yet 50 percent of Americans think they are doing a poorer job parenting than their parents. Why? Perhaps it's because we aren't exactly pleased with the results. Although every generation has its share of spoiled, lazy, ungrateful, irresponsible, and disrespectful children, there seems to be more of them now. A lot more. And they're no fun to live with. They talk back to teachers, they're too busy to do chores, they don't give your needs a second thought and they feel they have the right to question every decision you make. They sit on the sofa playing video games while you run past them, picking up things with one hand and holding a baby in the other. They ask you to get them a drink. You say you're busy and their response is, "But you're closer to the fridge, so why can't you do it?"

Why parents hate parenting

It's no wonder parents complain about how much work it is to parent and how little joy they get in return. We're exhausted. There's no time for us. Our kids don't seem to appreciate all the work we do for them, nor do they give the slightest thought to what we might like or need. It's all about them. Parenting is no fun because we're not parenting anymore. We've become slaves to our children's self-esteem and college applications. In our heart of hearts, we know that we are not doing what we should be doing to prepare our children for life. That is why we feel so guilty.

Experts have led us to believe
that it's a parent's job to:
GIVE our children self-esteem,
MAKE them happy, and
CREATE success for them.

It's no wonder we're overwhelmed and exhausted!

Chapter

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10-MINUTE PARENT



A new approach to work/life balance

I hope I have been able to show you that most work/life balance advice fails because it is based on the idea that you have to prioritize how you spend your time and eliminate some of the things that are less important. Since “being a good parent” is a top priority, we can’t eliminate it, even though it takes up most of our non-working hours. And, since we BELIEVE that we need to be doing everything for and with our children, “being a good parent” becomes an overwhelming, exhausting, never-ending job. There is only one way parents can simplify their lives and achieve a satisfying work/life balance. They have to become comfortable removing some “parenting tasks” from their to-do list because they BELIEVE it is better for their kids. If you have read *DIZZYBUSY DOZEN*, you have learned that a lot of the things we do for our children are actually handicapping them instead of helping them. Our “help” prevents them from experiencing and learning what they need to become competent, confident, and prepared for life. The simple truth is: we can do less for our children and actually be better parents. You can discover how in *DizzyBusy Dozen*.

No need to lower expectations

Wouldn’t it be great if we didn’t have to lower our expectations and convince ourselves that we’re okay with “good enough” when we know we’re not? Wouldn’t it feel wonderful to go to work feeling like a great parent, knowing that we’re giving our children everything they need and that there is time left over for us, our partner, and our friends? The truth is, we CAN have a simple, joyful, meaningful family life — despite the challenges we face today. We CAN be successful at work and great parents, too — without driving ourselves crazy, neglecting our health, or lowering our expectations. We CAN give our families everything they need with less money and less time, and it’s easier than we think. Because it’s not about doing more. It’s about doing less, and doing the right things.

Easier for parents, better for kids

The solution is simple. We stop doing some of the things we waste time on that are not good for our kids, and free up time for family, fun, and friends - which will give us balance. We can get more sleep, make time for exercise, and maybe slip in a date with our spouse. We will also have more time to do things with our families that we have been neglecting and feel guilty about, such as family dinners and family fun night. Life becomes easier for parents and better for kids.

We CAN be successful at work
and GREAT parents too,
without driving ourselves crazy,
neglecting our health,
or lowering our expectations

HAVING it all without DOING it all

The problem with the “have it all” debate is that we are focused on TIME instead of RESULTS. If “having it all” means having a high-powered job that takes us away from home 60 or more hours a week AND spending 50 hours a week with our children, then having it all is impossible. There simply aren’t enough hours in the day. If “having it all” means having a successful career and being a great parent too, then yes, that is very possible.

We have to be realistic, though. And yes, we have to make choices. There are certain professions that are inherently demanding and naturally create conflict for people (men or women) who also want to be good parents. If it’s important to be there for every birthday and every special event in your children’s lives, then maybe delivering babies isn’t a good career choice, since you can’t control when your patients are going to need you. Whether it’s work/life balance or any other aspect of life, you can’t have “everything.” You can’t be a racecar driver or a policeman without taking risks. You can’t be a campaign manager without having to travel for long periods of time. You can’t eat cake and ice cream all day long and stay skinny.

Men are struggling with work/life balance, too

Men aren’t achieving work/life balance in their jobs either. Studies show that men, who are now more involved in their children’s lives and doing more housework and cooking, are beginning to feel the guilt and the stress women have been talking about for years. We will, no doubt, see more rapid changes in work/life balance programs as both women and men push the issue. For now, we just have to stay focused on what’s really important. Getting to the top of the ladder may be a wonderful goal, but it doesn’t necessarily mean you’ve won if you have to sacrifice what’s important and you feel miserable about the rest of your life. Why not leave those extremely demanding jobs to employees who choose not to have kids? They deserve to have something we don’t have if they are willing and able to work 60, 70, or 80 hours a week. “Having it all” isn’t about having everything. It’s about having what’s important. What’s important is doing a good job at whatever profession we choose and feeling appreciated and respected for our contribution. What’s important is building loving relationships with our children, preparing them for life, and creating memories that will keep us connected as a family forever. We can do all that and we don’t have to be home 16 hours a day to do it. That’s what 10-Minute Parent is all about.



“Having it all”
isn’t about having
EVERYTHING.
It’s about having what’s
IMPORTANT.

Sorting through the chaos of life

The big question is, what should we be doing? We want to raise good kids, and we want them to come back home year after year, with spouses and grandchildren, happy to see everyone. But what exactly should we be doing to make all that happen? And how can we do it in the limited time we have? What can we cut out? Busy parents need help sorting through the chaos of life to figure out what's worth spending time and money on and what's not. We have too much information, too many choices, and not enough time. I hear the same comment over and over: "I'm too busy to read parenting books. I don't even know which one to buy. I just want someone to tell me what to do and how to do it."

The 10-Minute Parent solution

Experts have been talking about our busy schedules, stress, and the decline of family and moral character for decades. There are thousands of books to choose from, but what most experts don't realize is that parents don't have time to read 300-page books. They are barely keeping their heads above water. They need quick information they can trust and practical solutions they can put to work right away. 10-MINUTE PARENT was created to give parents just that. With the right information and the right tools, parents can create the meaningful conversations and memorable moments that lead to the happy family life they want - in just 10 minutes a day.

Quality information, solutions and tools

10-MINUTE PARENT provides quality information that is based on many years of in-depth analysis of the literature and research on parenting and family life, plus thirty-nine years of my own personal experience raising five children: They are now 39, 35, and 32, 21 and 21. We've created quality solutions by combining that information with the collective wisdom of generations of parents and grandparents who have found what works and shared their ideas with the world. Those ideas became products. As Founder and Creative Director of Once Upon A Family, I watched and heard about how those products were used in the homes of hundreds of thousands of families. 10-MINUTE PARENT is the result of what I learned from those previous experiences. I understand what works, what doesn't, what parents think they need, and what their children really need to be happy and successful in life. Parents need tools that make it easier to be good parents in the little time they have at the end of the day, and they need tools that teach them how to parent - in fun, relaxing, whimsical ways - while they interact with their children.

DIZZYBUSY DOZEN

DIZZYBUSY DOZEN helps parents identify some of the ways in which they are wasting time, money, and energy doing things for their children that, instead of helping them, actually prevent them from growing into happy, successful adults. Parents can eliminate some of the daily struggles that consume their time and teach responsibility and respect while getting the house picked up (without nagging), cleaned, and closer to the more peaceful haven they want it to be. Be sure to check out the fun tools offered in the DIZZYBUSY DOZEN ebook: Nag-Tags, Pick-Up Partners, the MOM IS NOT YOUR MAID sign, Twice as Nice Dice, Partners in Peace, Privileges and Responsibilities, and the LIFE DOES NOT REVOLVE AROUND YOU sign.

HAPPY FAMILY HABITS

The HAPPY FAMILY HABITS make it simple for families to get what they need in less time, with less effort and stress. They are based on scientifically proven “protective factors” that help build strong, happy families. They make a big impact on family life by helping us build connections with our loved ones, create wonderful holiday memories, and weave the values that make us strong into our family life. To create the kind of family life we all dream of, parents need to give their children three things: Family Talk, Family Fun, and Family Memories. And we can accomplish all three in just 10 minutes a day. It’s easier than you think. Be sure to check out the HAPPY FAMILY HABITS tools at the end of this ebook: Joy Competition, Candle of Honor, Three Things Conversation Starters, The Family Fun Jar, 3-IN-1 Family Fun Ideas, and Our Favorite Memories.

Talk doesn't create change

People are always looking for ways to make their lives better, and there is certainly no shortage of advice and tips. But talk doesn't create change. No matter how excited we are, how much we want something, or how important it is, we are creatures of habit. We go back to our daily lives — forgetting about the latest, greatest idea in a day or two. What makes 10-MINUTE PARENT unique and effective are the simple, practical tools that make it easier to be a good parent in the little time we have. You get so much more than “excited about an idea.” You get ongoing inspiration and tools that practically do the work for you. You get work/life balance that works in real life.



10-MINUTE PARENT
is
work/life balance
that works in REAL life.

Tools remind us of what's important

Tools are a critical part of 10-MINUTE PARENT because of how they motivate, inspire, add credibility, and create memorable experiences. They motivate us because they are visual reminders of something that we decided was important, something we wanted or needed to do. A set of Conversation Starters sitting on the kitchen counter says, “Hey, remember, you wanted to do this! You thought this would be good for your kids.” Now there’s a very good chance your family will use and enjoy those cards. After a few fun dinners, your children will begin asking for them and, before you know it, you have a new family tradition. That’s all it takes. Great tools take us from inspiration to action and bring our good intentions to life.

Tools make it easy to get started

They make it easy to try something different because the work is already done for us: the research, planning, designing, purchasing, and preparation. We don’t have to think about a thing. Resistance to something new or any kind of change is normal. When your teenagers or preteens give you pushback, stay focused on what you want your child to be capable of when they leave the nest. Tools can strengthen a parent’s confidence, especially when they are designed by knowledgeable experts you trust. A professional product adds credibility, as it is symbolic of the fact that hundreds of thousands of other families are doing the same thing.

Tools encourage participation

Tools make a powerful impact because they encourage participation. There is something physical to see, touch, and focus on. They come to represent the emotions that are attached to the events and memories associated with them. The comment below about a “Family Fun Box” is a great example of how tools can bring an experience alive:

“My children absolutely love the Family Fun Box. It has a permanent place of honor on our dinner table. I cannot begin to describe the anticipation every Friday night as the activity is drawn from the box or the exhilaration of my children when their idea is chosen. This one activity could single-handedly transform a family’s closeness.”

~Julie Lowery~

Ryan's Pumpkins

“We used the paper pumpkins to help Ryan (who just turned 3) understand that his positive actions made us happy, but his negative actions made us sad. If Ryan did something good, he’d get a happy pumpkin to put on the door of our pantry for all to see. If he did something that made us sad, then he would get a sad pumpkin and was told he needed to stop. Ryan loved getting the pumpkins that were happy and would even ask for them if we forgot to hand one out. He would also run away if he saw us coming with a sad pumpkin. He loved running after his older brother with a sad pumpkin just for fun. It was hilarious!

But here is the really funny part... One morning when Ryan’s sister Claire was about 4 months old, I was in the shower while the kids were still sleeping. Ryan came into the bathroom and very sternly, hands on hips, said, “How many does it take to make her stop?” I rushed out of the shower, fearing something not good, and found Claire with 7 sad pumpkins taped all over her body. She was still crying when Ryan entered the bedroom with yet another sad pumpkin. He was so distraught, “I kept giving her sad pumpkins, but she just wouldn’t stop crying.” It was difficult to keep a straight face while explaining why we don’t tape things to the baby. Of course, he asked for his happy pumpkin to hang up.”

~ Jeanette Sampson ~

Chapter

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The Simple Secret



Childhood Memories

It's funny how things happen when they need to happen in our lives. Around the time of my daughter's graduation, I came across a fascinating, yet disturbing, article entitled "Our Favorite Childhood Memories." Our fondest memories, it said, are not the lavish birthday parties, the expensive gifts, or the never-ending stream of sports, classes, and activities we spend so much time and money on. They are the day-to-day rituals, the warm holiday traditions, and the simple family vacations that create the most powerful memories from our childhood. This article was disturbing for me because it was the opposite of what I had been doing with my children for the last twenty years.

Favorite childhood memories

As adults, we look back and smile on the simple family events we repeated over and over again as children: reading by flashlight on the annual summer camping trip, sleeping under the newly decorated Christmas tree, or sharing our “thankfuls” while eating Grandma Rose’s yummy pecan pumpkin pie. We also remember simple rituals: Dad taking us out for ice cream every Friday night or Mom asking us at dinner to share three good things that happened that day. Good smells, good conversations, good feelings... spending time with people who care about us.

We complain, but we love it

These day-to-day rituals, holiday traditions and simple family vacations create powerful memories. Memories that connect us forever. Even if we rolled our eyes, whined, “do I have to?” and did everything we could to get out of participating, we grow up thinking that those were the best of times. The funniest part is that we turn into parents who then insist on sharing those same rituals and traditions with our children and grandchildren. That’s how it works. Think about all of the activities you do now with your children - and how many of those you brought from your childhood.

I thought I knew what I was doing

The article bothered me at first because I realized that, like most of us, I’d been spending time and money doing things that no one would remember, while missing the opportunity to do little things that make all the difference. Planning something different (and I thought special) every holiday was a lot of work. Arranging new places to go on vacation every year was a lot of work. After twenty years of raising kids, I thought I knew what I was doing. Obviously not! The simple secret was right under my nose, but I had missed it. What families really want — and need — are the rituals and traditions that give us comfort, closeness and memories.

This new discovery gave me such a sense of relief! I don’t have to rush around trying to do everything (since they won’t remember it anyway) and I don’t have to try to think of new and different things to do and eat for every family gathering. Traditions make it simple to repeat the same things—the same menus, the same décor, the same activities. How easy is that?



We waste time and money
doing BIG things
no one will remember...



and miss
opportunities to do the
LITTLE things that make
all the difference.

No more drifting

I realized how this information changed my outlook on parenting and family life. I felt RELIEVED from the burden of all that extra work, HOPEFUL for my family's future, CONFIDENT that I now knew what to do and EMPOWERED that I could actually make it happen. No more drifting and hoping it would all turn out the way I wanted it to. That's a great feeling. I wanted to learn more.

During the next three years, while juggling my twins, the three older children and a full-time job, I read everything I could find on the subject of family ties; memories, traditions, values, and keepsakes. I collected wonderful ideas and tips from thousands of families in my search to understand the important things that strong, happy families do to pass on cherished values, honor memories and stay connected. At first, this was a personal quest for information, wisdom I wanted to collect and pass onto my daughter, so I could say: "Here, this is all you need to know, this is what family is all about."

Once Upon A Family

It soon became clear that I needed to share this information and insight with the millions of families everywhere who, like me, are running around doing things that aren't going to matter. But I knew, instinctively, that reading about it wouldn't be enough. Busy parents need tools to make building a happy family life easier in today's fast paced world.

From there came Once Upon a Family, a company that has inspired hundreds of thousands of families - with fun and practical tools - to build loving relationships, instill family values and create happy holiday memories for their loved ones. Parents are teaching life lessons at the dinner table with Conversation Starters, creating a sense of belonging with the Family Fun Box, and writing letters to their children to save for twenty-first birthday gifts. Grandparents are sharing precious life stories with grandchildren, while fathers are taking their daughters on Dates With Dad - to show them how a woman should be treated when a man truly loves her. These families are saying NO to today's pressures and expectations and getting back to the basics of creating a happy family life for their loved ones.

The five realities of family life

There were a lot of things I learned about family life, including why we THINK we can't have the kind of family life we've always dreamed of. The most common is because we're single parents or divorced. We're not really a family. Sometimes we believe it's too late because our children are already teenagers or adults, or we think it takes more money, time and energy than we have. Many people believe it's something that just happens and we can't control it. All of these are myths that we get hung up on. They simply are not true.

It's easier than we think

1

The family rituals and traditions that connect us in such powerful ways also make our lives easier. Children and adults alike look forward to the food, decor and activities they enjoyed before. They don't want us to change it, which means less work for us. We don't have to come up with new and different things to do or eat every time we get together. We can plan the same holiday activities, use the same decorations, and prepare the same food as we did last year, because that is what our family really wants. Can you imagine the fuss if you tried to change the Thanksgiving menu, cancel the Easter egg hunt or replace the Christmas stockings your family has enjoyed for years?

It's never too late to get started

2

It's never too late to get started building a happy family life, even if your children are already grownup. Creating family ties is an ongoing, forever evolving process. There is no beginning and no end. We keep making it better. You can easily start with your grown-up children, your grandchildren, or nieces and nephews. Grandparents, especially, have so much to offer their grandchildren: time, patience, wisdom, and a special kind of love. Establishing family traditions and strengthening family ties, with anyone, at any age, is a wonderful gift.

Families come in all shapes and sizes

3

Some of us are lucky enough to be born into a big extended family, rich in history and tradition. Most of us are not. And we often watch these families with envy, wishing we had one like that. Sometimes we think we can't have it because we are single, divorced, without children, or because we live far from our "real" family. You don't have to be the perfect traditional family to feel like a family. There are single-parent families, and spread-across-the-country families who are very close, and seemingly "perfect" families that are totally disconnected. It's not about "who," it's about "what" you do together.

You can create the family life you want

4

You don't have to drift along, hoping it will happen. There are many things you can do to steer your family in the right direction. Some people think you can't force "these things", and they are right. You can't force it. You can, however, plant the seeds, add water and fertilizer, and nurture it along. It is definitely possible to plan for and create the kind of family you want. You just have to understand how it works. You may not be able to make your children continue a tradition you learned from your grandmother, but you can certainly introduce new ones that suit your family's interests and repeat the ones they seem to enjoy.

You already know what to do

5

Most of us have an instinctive sense about what it takes to create a happy family life. We all take photos...hundreds of photos. We save our children's things, the baby blanket, the worn-out stuffed bear, the school papers, and the baby teeth. No one tells us to do these things. We just do them. We also plan lots of holiday celebrations and family get-togethers and we're always searching for ways to make our loved ones feel special. We simply do these things because we know in our hearts how important they are... just like the instinct we have to create a warm, cozy, inviting home that our family will feel good in.

The best ever birthday party!!

You're probably wondering what "those things" are that I keep referring to. Those things we waste time and money on. Stop and think about all the times you try to make things "perfect" by squeezing in "just one more thing". Does it really need to be done? Will it really make a difference? Some of the biggest culprits are the elaborate birthday parties and overdone holiday festivities. We work ourselves into a frenzy ... and for what?

My good friend Karen shared a story with me years ago that is a perfect example of "those things". Her daughter, Rebecca, decided to have her sixth birthday party at home. She would have been happy with friends and a cake, but Karen's creative side kicked in and she went to work on what would be the best ever Knights and Dragons birthday party for ten children: homemade tunics, complete with a coat of arms, cardboard swords covered in aluminum foil, crowns (each guest got to decorate one upon arrival), a "Pin the Sword on the Dragon" game and an unbelievable homemade cake in the shape of a castle!

The party started with the King (Rebecca's dad) calling on his knights to help him find a dragon causing havoc on the royal grounds. Karen had spread clues throughout the yard, with a final clue leading the ten rampaging girl knights to the dragon, a piñata, which the knights proceeded to slay. They each reaped the rewards from within. It was quite the party!

After everyone left and Rebecca was getting to her new gifts, Karen felt the need for a pat on the back. She was sure Rebecca had loved everything but couldn't resist asking, "Rebecca, what was your favorite part of the party?" Without hesitation, Rebecca replied, "I loved it when my friends sang Happy Birthday to me".

"I had to laugh at the simplicity of her answer compared to all those weeks of creative craziness," Karen said. "It made perfect sense. Singing Happy Birthday was one of our favorite family traditions. We sing it in English, Spanish, French and make up silly verses, too...on everyone's birthday. Since that day, we focus completely on the birthday cake and the Happy Birthday song."

Simple Secret

The surprisingly simple secret
to a great family life is in the
rituals and traditions that connect
us to each other forever.

We all want to feel special

Most of us don't realize that kids, like adults, look forward to a birthday party simply because it's their special day. The food, décor and activities are really there more to treat and entertain the guests. The Happy Birthday song is the one moment at a party when the birthday person is in the limelight — and the focus of family and friends. All those extra "things" may impress people temporarily, but unless there is some emotional connection, the memory is very soon forgotten.

We remember how we feel

Weddings are another great example. You attend an extravagant wedding that took a year to plan and was perfect down to the littlest detail. No doubt, you are impressed, but a year later you won't remember much. If, however, the bride places a handwritten card on each guest's dinner plate, with one simple sentence expressing why that guest was important enough to share this special day with, she will have created an event no one will forget. People don't always remember what you say or what you do, but they never forget how you made them feel. It's not about doing everything. It's about focusing on the important things that make people feel special.

Isn't this what we all want...

Richard Eyre, co-founder of valuesparenting.com, describes his own birthday tradition. It's a wonderful example of how traditions are the basis for memories that connect family members, no matter where they are. "On my birthday in October, we had always raked huge piles of autumn leaves with the kids and then jumped in them, stuffed them in our shirts, threw them in the air, and just generally had a wild time. We thought as the kids got older, their interest in such a frivolous activity would fade. On the contrary, when they were teens, the leaf piles just got bigger. Finally, one year, four of our children were away at school or living abroad. On my birthday, four birthday cards arrived. As I opened the first, a leaf fell out and a note, 'Dad, I honored your birthday tradition. Here's a leaf from my jumping pile. I love you.' Through my tears I opened the other three — and a leaf fell from each."

I doubt if the Eyre children raked together piles of leaves and jumped in them simply to please their dad. I believe they carried on this cherished family tradition because it made them feel closer to their father and connected to everyone else in the family. That is the simple secret of family life.



People don't always
remember what you say
or what you do,
but they never forget how
you make them feel.

Chapter

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Happy Family Habits



Protecting children from the inside out

If Polio existed today, would you follow your kids around saying, “Don’t touch that! Don’t go there! Stay away from those people!”? No, of course not. You would get them the polio vaccination... because it prevents infection from the inside out. It protects them from polio even when you are not there to watch over them. We spend a lot of time running around trying to keep our children from being exposed to people or things that might harm them physically or emotionally. As if that is going to do the job. As if we think that is enough. It is definitely not enough. How do we protect our children and prepare them for today’s world when we can’t be with them every moment of every day? We have to think of protection just like a vaccination: from the inside out. It’s what we build inside ourselves that makes us strong and protects us, not what we build around ourselves.

**The best way to protect our loved ones,
is to instill strong family values and create strong family ties.**

In past generations, homes were fairly well-insulated from outside influences. Today, we must fight the negative elements that invade our homes through TV, the internet, music and smart phones. We are just as busy fighting wars inside our homes as we are outside. Our weapon of choice is rules. We tell our children, “You can’t listen to that music! I don’t want you watching this movie! You can’t go to those websites...” without realizing that shielding them from negative influences will never be enough.

A good family life protects children

Children need a safe and loving environment to learn how to behave in the world and a structure that introduces and reinforces values on a day-to-day basis. When we feel safe, loved and valued for who we are, we are open to learning from those who give us that sense of security. We gain the confidence to stand on our own two feet and make good choices in life. Many parents are unaware of what their older children are seeing, hearing or doing. We’re clueless about what to say and how to start those really tough conversations. How do we create a family structure that will protect our children and increase their chances of becoming happy, responsible adults in the future?

Protective Factors

Family science researchers have studied “protective factors” for many years — those things that inoculate our children from negative influences:

1. Direct and clear communication
2. Intentional quality time spent together
3. Family rituals, traditions and memories
4. Shared values and beliefs
5. Lots of love and affection

What happy families have in common

Strong, happy families talk about what's important and spend time together having fun. They find reasons to celebrate, create memories and build loving connections. These protective factors hold true regardless of family income, social status, race, ethnicity or religion. They hold true for families in urban, suburban and rural areas, within the United States and throughout the world. They hold true for traditional two-parent families, and even more importantly, for single-parent families as well. These protective factors also help families get through little daily hassles and big traumatic events. They produce the kind of family life that we all want to experience, and they create family legacies that live on for generations. Not only do these factors protect children from harm, but they also help them succeed in life. The best part? They are simple to implement.

Strong families internalize strong values

When our children are young, they look to us for answers. Even before they hit adolescence, they begin seeking approval from their peers instead of their parents. This is when the trouble starts. If our children haven't internalized a strong set of values and learned to make good decisions based on those values, they are easily swayed by those around them. There is a huge difference between behaving well because we are afraid of getting caught and behaving well because we know it is the right thing to do. Many parents focus on controlling behavior now instead of thinking of the long-term effects. If all we do is restrict our kids, monitor them and make decisions for them, they appear to behave well for the moment. But the minute they escape our watchful eye, they often go wild and act irresponsibly.

The “why” of good behavior

Our real job is to teach our kids the “why” of good behavior until the “why” becomes a part of who they are. We help them build an internal compass that guides them when we are not there. We do this by giving them opportunities to make simple choices (such as clothes or activities) when they are young. We let them know they are responsible for their choices, and we trust them to learn from their mistakes and make better choices in the future. If we're always rescuing our kids or fixing things for them, they will never learn how to make good choices for themselves.

The internal compass

When people have a good sense of what it means to be honest, responsible, caring and when they have been given the opportunity to learn to trust their own judgment, they will look inside for answers instead of looking outside. The smartest thing you can do to protect your children is to help them develop an internal compass they trust. A strong set of values is like a vaccination for the modern-day world.

It protects them from the inside out.

It protects them when we are not there.

Steering your family in the right direction

Many of us drift through life, assuming and hoping things will happen the way we want them to, but we are often disappointed. Imagine you're in a rowboat, floating down the river of life. You have two choices. You can drift along and go wherever the river takes you, which may or may not be where you want to go. Or you can pick up a paddle and steer yourself and your family in the direction you choose. You can beat the odds. You already have. The fact that you are reading this book means that you are not willing to accept things as they are. You're intentional about looking for solutions. You're already half way there, so pat yourself on the back. Your family won't end up in the middle of those scary statistics. There are some very simple things you can do to create a happy family. We call them the HAPPY FAMILY HABITS.

Relax...we're here to help!

So, now you are probably thinking, "Oh great! Here's one more thing to add to my to-do-list, as if I have time to do anything more." Relax. The purpose of this book is to make life easier, not harder. We have been dealing with the changes in our lives over the last decade by working harder and moving faster — because we don't know what else to do. But looking at what that is doing to our health and well-being, it's obvious that...

We can't work our way out of this problem, and

We can't organize our way out of this problem.



You can drift along,
or pick up a paddle
and steer your family
in the right direction.

Happy Family Habits

We are faced with such high expectations and so many choices in our lives today, that it's hard to know what works and how to get started. Like it or not, we have gotten into the habit of being busy. It's a bad habit because it puts work before family and accomplishments before connections.

HAPPY FAMILY HABITS make it easy for families to get what they need with less effort and less stress. These habits are based on the "protective factors" that protect families from the negative influences that surround us. The HAPPY FAMILY HABITS are activities we can do with our families in just 10 minutes a day, many of which can take place at the dinner table. These habits will give us peace of mind and leave us feeling guilt-free, knowing we have given our loved ones what they need. We can teach our children the value of honesty, respect and responsibility, create a joyful sense of family togetherness, and create traditions and memories that will bring our grown children back home every holiday. The HAPPY FAMILY HABITS make all this possible by helping families understand what to do and when to do it.

Vitamins for the soul

The HAPPY FAMILY HABITS are similar to the habits we need to develop to achieve healthy bodies: exercise three times a week, sleep eight hours, eat six or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Exercise is hard work, and healthy eating isn't always tasty, but the HAPPY FAMILY HABITS are easy, fun and will quickly make you feel better - about yourself, your family and your life. They are the key ingredients to a healthy diet for modern day family life. They protect us and our families from the inside out. They are like vitamins for the soul.

10 minutes a day

You will read about the three HAPPY FAMILY HABITS in the following chapters. They are Family Talk, Family Fun and Family Memories. Choose the one you believe your family could benefit from the most and start with that. Don't try to do everything all at once. Spend 10 minutes a day together talking, having fun or creating memories. If you miss some nights, spend an hour on Friday doing Family Fun Night. We offer tools to make it easy to succeed. Before you know it, you have a habit that you don't need to think about, like brushing your teeth. If we want a happy family life, we need to make it a habit...**because happy families just don't happen.**



The
HAPPY FAMILY HABITS
are like
vitamins for the soul.

Chapter

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FAMILY TALK



Joy Competition

“During the month of May, we began the Joy Competition. This particular year had been challenging for our family and we were having trouble finding joy. So this was a perfect time to introduce the Joy Competition. Each night at the dinner table, whoever shared three joyful things that happened that day got a sticker on the Joy Chart. When the chart was full, we agreed to celebrate joy together with a special Joy Day outing.

One night, during the competition, my husband struggled to come up with things that were truly joyful. He seemed to be trying to sneak in a few weak suggestions just so he could get his stickers. My son and I were not buying it! I then asked my husband to think harder, to really look for joy and suggested that sometimes he might have to actually make joy happen with a smile to a stranger or a random act of kindness.

My son had no problem coming up with joyful things each night: his friend sat by him in circle time at preschool; he got to wear his shark shirt; he went down the fire pole for the first time...So I asked my four-year-old son to tell his daddy what joy feels like. He looked at his father and said, “It feels like my heart is dancin’ in my throat!”

~ Dana Moler ~

Anything and everything

Research indicates that clear communication and shared family time are two of the most important protective factors that will positively influence our children's lives. Eating family meals together combines the power of those two factors. We need to sit down to dinner with our families, and we need to talk — talk about anything and everything. It doesn't matter if we make a home cooked meal, pick up hamburgers, or throw a frozen dinner in the microwave, as long as we eat together and talk. This is the single most important thing we can do for our children. Talk about life.

The family dinner table

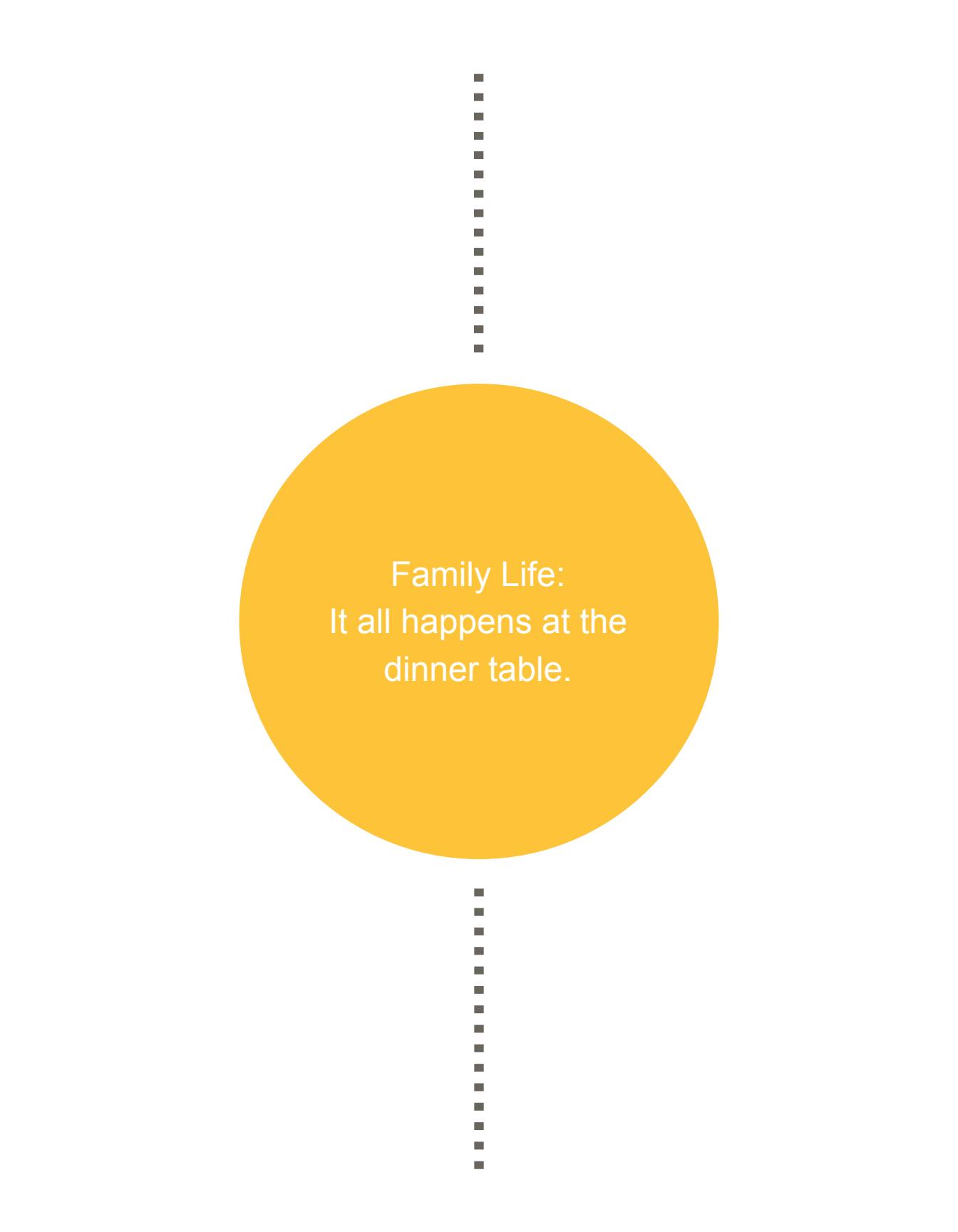
The dinner table is where it all happens. It's a perfect place to connect and learn about what's going on in each other's lives. It's where we can give each other support and help solve problems, where we honor and celebrate our victories and accomplishments. It's where we pass on precious stories and talk about family values and family traditions. Dinner time is our best opportunity to teach our children what we want them to learn about life.

A good friend of mine can tell you, in a second, the three most important values his dad wanted to teach him: honesty, respect and that "family" matters most. He remembers this vividly because his father talked about those three things often at the dinner table. They shaped the man he is today. How many of us could name, within seconds, the three values our parents held closest to their hearts?

Every conversation matters

One night at dinner, when my twins were five, I told them that we were going to go through their toys and choose some to give away to boys and girls who weren't fortunate enough to have so many. I explained that we do this because we have big hearts, and it feels good to help other people. Travis turned to me and said, very matter-of-factly, "We don't give away our toys because we have a big heart, we give them away because we don't like them anymore."

"Touchee!" What could I say? Of course, that led to a discussion about picking at least one toy that they really loved and giving that one away. A whole new conversation! What's important to remember is that it doesn't matter what you talk about. Let conversations go where they naturally go and you'll be surprised where they end up. It's all good, because every conversation matters.



Family Life:
It all happens at the
dinner table.

Fascinating Facts about family dinners

Family dinners have decreased
by 33% over the past 20 years

Teens who do not have frequent family dinners
(3 or more a week) are:
4x more likely to use marijuana
2x as likely to use alcohol

59% of teens are eating dinner at
home alone. Parents claim their teens are too
busy or resistant to come to the dinner table...
yet 84% of teens say they prefer
eating dinner as a family

The benefits of family dinners

How many, and how often, families in America are having dinner together continues to decline simply because our busy lifestyles leave so little time for it. Studies have consistently shown that this lack of connection has a big impact on teenage behavior. The more often families eat together, the less likely their teens are to engage in risky behavior such as alcohol, drugs and casual sex. The more often families eat together, the more likely it is that teens do well in school, eat healthy meals, have a positive self-image, and talk about their problems. Regular family dinners mean less stress and tension in the home because parents and children have time to communicate. Researchers have discovered that family mealtimes positively impact children's:

- sense of belonging
- character development
- health and well being
- communication skills
- positive self-image
- commitment to learning
- resistance to peer pressure

Insist on dinner together

It's interesting to note that parents think their teenage kids don't want to eat dinner with the family. Of course, at the moment they might be texting with friends or enjoying entertainment on the web. That is what they prefer to be doing. But in the long run, they want to be included. They want you to want them there. They just don't want you to know that they want you to want them there! Did you get that? Tricky teenage thinking. This is where good parenting comes in. Dinner together shouldn't be an option. We wouldn't let our children talk us out of getting a vaccination or going to school. This is just as important, so we need to insist. It's natural for teenagers to resist anything we want them to do, especially if they think we might wobble a bit. As you can see from the Fascinating Facts on the previous page, the benefits to teenagers are enormous. And for children of all ages, there is nothing you can do that will make more of an impact than having regular dinners together. Don't be afraid to insist on what you believe is important.

Connections over dinner

When my son Sean was in high school, he had a friend who was at our house many afternoons and evenings, including dinnertime. I always invited this friend to join us for dinner, but he usually declined, saying he wasn't hungry. He stayed in Sean's room while we ate dinner together. I kept inviting him and, after a while, Sean's friend began to join us. At first, he was quiet, but he soon became as engaged as the rest of us in the family conversations.

My twins, who were nine at the time, loved his company. I found out later that this young man was living alone with his dad and that they rarely talked. His hesitation was probably because he was uncomfortable — he wasn't used to dinner conversations, and he didn't know how to participate. He became a welcome regular in our home and I saw him blossom over the years. When we moved from that house (and my son was moving on as well) I could see that he was very sad to lose this family life he had become so attached to. The dinner table is where we really connect.

Technology versus conversation

One of my concerns with today's lifestyle is that the excitement with technology is making it less likely that children learn the art of conversation. Kids rarely answer the phone and communicate purely by text. Grandparents are learning to text just so that they can keep in touch with their grandkids. Technology allows you to think before you write, edit, edit, edit, and delete if needed (which is a good thing). But you miss out on so many aspects of conversation that help people connect. The tone of voice, the timing, the natural and genuine, spontaneous flow. Kids are not learning how to converse in person and are avoiding it altogether if they can. The result is that everyone is frantically trying to connect through technology and social sites, yet they are left feeling disconnected and alone.

Practice makes perfect

The more we eat dinner together, the more comfortable conversation becomes and the more engaged our children become in this activity. The result is lively, interesting dialogues, and those priceless moments that only come when we connect through conversation. We need to be intentional about family dinner conversations...because happy families just don't happen.

Our Family Values

Make a list below of the values you cherish and want to pass on to your children and grandchildren. Put a star next to the top three that you would like loved ones to remember as “Our Family Values.” Talk about them from time to time at the dinner table and, if you really want to make a statement, include them in a collage of family photos you frame and hang on the wall for all to see.

The Key of Kindness

I teach first grade, and the son of a fellow Live Laugh Love Club member (Once Upon A Family) was in my class. One day I noticed he was wearing a “Key of Kindness” on his belt loop. I asked him where he got his “really cool key.” This first grader was so excited that I’d noticed. He beamed with pride, showed the key to me, and went into a lengthy story about how his mom gave it to him because he helped both of his little brothers and generously gave away the “best popsicle.” She wrote about what he did in their Family Values Journal. When the boy saw his mother later that day, he told her that I had noticed the key. She was so happy that I had reinforced something she did and told me it was one of the greatest things she had learned — that something so simple could make such an impact. She wants to buy the other “Keys of Happiness” because her boys are begging to work for their chance to earn each key. What fun!

~ Roxanne Weaver ~

Happy families don't just happen...

Chapter

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FAMILY FUN

8

Sunday Funday

At our house, we call it Sunday Funday: the day we don't do any chores, run errands, or work. I still have to cook, do dishes and make lunches for school on Monday, but Sunday Funday is relaxing compared to every other day of the week. We each pick two things that we want to do that day, and we try to do them all, showing respect for each other's wishes. Of course, I have veto-power. The eight hours of video games my boys wish for every Sunday doesn't make the cut.

We were playing a board game one Sunday afternoon when my 17-year-old, Sean, decided to join us — probably, I suspected, to exert his older brother power and push the 6-year-old twins around a little. Sure enough, within an hour Sean called Dylan a loser, sending him running to my room in tears, where he slid under the bed.

I went after him, lay down beside him and tried to make it better. “He’s just a teenager and he doesn’t really mean it.” I wasn’t helping. Dylan kept repeating, “I’m a loser, Sean said I’m a loser.” Finally, I said “Who are you going to believe, your mother, who is older and knows these things or Sean, who’s still a kid?” Dylan responded, with absolute conviction, “Oh, Sean, of course. He’s taller than you, so he’s smarter than you.”

It's time to press pause

Research shows that strong families spend intentional quality time together. Family fun time is another great opportunity to weave several protective factors into family life: communication, quality time, traditions, shared memories and lots of love. Stop all the hustle and bustle and do something fun together. Put family first by setting aside a day and a time to have fun: board games, bowling, hiking, a craft or cooking project. Protect family time by saying no to television, phones, or work-related interruptions. Friday nights are great since everyone can relax at the close of the week. As my Sean/Dylan Sunday Funday story shows, family time doesn't always go the way we want it to. Just do it anyway. It's the good and the bad all rolled together that makes life so precious. And if we don't slow down and make time to live life, it will surely pass us by, and we will regret it. So, press pause and enjoy.

We all need down time

Since our lives have become so DIZZYBUSY, it's even more important to show our children that we can slow down, stop working and enjoy each other's company. Research shows that our busy lifestyles are negatively affecting our children even more than we thought. The lack of connection with loved ones is causing them to feel anxious, stressed and pessimistic about life. Society has convinced us that more sports, music lessons and chess clubs are going to prepare our kids for a better life. Some of that is great, but all the extra-curricular activities in the world will not make up for the lost opportunity we have to teach our children valuable life lessons and build strong family ties. Be selective. One or two activities per child are all they need and probably all they can handle. Kids need down time, when nothing is planned and when it's quiet enough for imaginations to kick in and spontaneous connections to occur. And so, do we.

Family fun night for all ages

Family fun night is a great opportunity to create a sense of belonging - for all ages. A healthy, happy family is one in which all members have a voice, are respected and believe they matter. So put family fun night on your calendar to make sure it happens. It may cause teenagers to roll their eyes, but you'd be surprised at what they're really thinking. They want to be included, but won't say so. That is why we, as parents, need to insist on what we believe is important and not be deterred by a little teenage resistance.



Regular
FAMILY FUN NIGHTS
become favorite childhood
memories.

The Rolling Stones

When my older children were ages eight, twelve, and sixteen, we used to have family meetings each Sunday evening. The children took turns being the leader, which meant that they ran the meeting, chose the dinner menu, and brought a quote about life to share. We used a big pad of paper for the quote and set it up on an easel for all to see during the week. When it was Sean's turn to run the meeting, I expected him to come to me for help with his quote, since he was only eight. He did not. Without a word, he stood up and wrote, on the pad, the following lyrics from a 60's Rolling Stones song:

“You can’t always get what you want,
but if you try, sometimes,
you get what you need.”

We were all blown away. How did Sean even know this song? I have always been amazed at how people, big and little, step up to the plate when you set the stage for them to do good things.

One moment in particular, from those years of meetings, has stayed with me. One Sunday, my daughter's friend Tarin, who was sixteen, joined us for the evening. She seemed to be happy participating. At one point she blurted out to everyone there, “This is fun. I wish my family did this too.”

Our Family Fun Night

List all the “FAMILY FUN” ideas you can think of that your loved ones might enjoy doing together. Think of activities that make it possible for you to interact and talk — such as playing a board game instead of watching a movie. Add activities that create memories such as making photo albums or preparing a surprise package to send off to grandma. Meaningful projects, such as making cookies for a neighbor can be fun as well.

Making Kindness Fun

“Every evening the kids and I spend time in the front yard either playing baseball or working in the garden. Nolan, an older gentleman of 77, is one of our favorite passersby. He comes by every evening around 6:30 to walk his dogs. He is such a neat man to talk to. A few months ago, I noticed that I had not seen Nolan in quite awhile. Then one evening his wife was out with the dogs. I asked her about Nolan, and she said that he’d had a bad stroke several months ago and was now confined to a wheelchair. She said his outlook on life was grim, and he was having a hard time adjusting to his change of lifestyle.

My boys and I thought it would be nice to do something for Nolan, so we filled our last Once Upon A Family “Compassion Basket” with flowers and bright cheery notes. We rang the bell and left the basket hanging on the doorknob. The boys had fun peeking around the corner, being careful not to be seen. The next day we were out and about and guess who stopped by for a visit? To our surprise it was Nolan! His wife was pushing him in the wheelchair while he held the dog’s leash. He greeted us with the most amazing words. He said, “Erica, I would like to thank you and the boys for the beautiful basket. That was the most precious gift anyone has ever given me. Matter of fact, if it wasn’t for you and the boys, I wouldn’t have left my home.” His eyes were teary, and so were mine.” ~ Erica Oresky ~

Happy families don't just happen...

Chapter

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FAMILY MEMORIES



Home for the Holidays

The moment I really understood the power of traditions was when my daughter Candace was home for the holidays during her first year in college. Every Christmas I made unusual gift baskets for some of our neighbors, close friends and my staff at work. Candace, who is very creative and loves tasks like this, always helped me. We bought unique ornaments, wrapped my famous pumpkin gingerbread loaves with vintage fabric and unique ribbons, made nametags out of tree shaped sugar cookies, and generally had fun. Since we made about forty baskets, it was quite a project.

This year, however, I had five-month-old twins, and I told Candace, “The baskets aren’t happening this year. It’s too much work with the twins. I just can’t do it.” What she said next shocked me, especially since she was never the stay-home-and-do-family-things kind of girl. She was more like the I-can’t-wait-to-get-out-of-the-house-and-party kind of girl. “Mom,” she said, “we have to do the baskets. It wouldn’t be Christmas if we didn’t do the baskets. I’ll do them for you.”

Wow! That’s when I understood what a powerful role traditions play in the life of any family.



Traditions
bring us COMFORT
because they create
PREDICTABILITY in an
unpredictable world.

Family traditions create powerful memories

Ask a thousand people to tell you about their favourite childhood memory and most of them will talk about family holidays, vacations, traditions and rituals — events they repeated over and over: Dying Easter eggs with Mom on the kitchen table, watching dad carve the Halloween pumpkins with his electric mini-saw, or getting a green tongue from green milk and green scrambled eggs on St Patrick's Day.

Children and adults alike cling to traditions because they create predictability in an unpredictable world. We look forward to things we know we will enjoy because we have enjoyed them before. These traditions give us a sense of comfort and security since they are associated with memories of good times with people we love.

And they simplify our lives... the same meals, the same décor, the same activities. The truth is, no one wants us to change the Thanksgiving menu or the Christmas stockings that we have grown to love - no matter how tattered they may be.

The building blocks of happy families

Traditions are truly the building blocks of strong, happy, connected families. They give us reasons to celebrate every month... planning and anticipating something fun to do together. Traditions are consistent celebrations of family life that show us that we belong to a group, and we are an important part of that group. In a simple but powerful way, family traditions create the memories that connect us to each other forever.

Research finds numerous benefits

Family researchers agree that traditions are powerful as they weave many protective factors into family life. Therapists often use family rituals and traditions as homework assignments for troubled families to help build connections. Research shows that children and teens in families that celebrate traditions achieve higher levels academically, are better adjusted emotionally and socially, and exhibit higher self-esteem and positive identity. Family traditions and rituals also help kids learn social competence, feel a sense of security, stability and peace, and develop stronger relationships as adults. Perhaps the most important benefit in our DIZZYBUSY lives is that family rituals and traditions seem to ease the stress of daily living. I want to say that again...



Family
rituals and traditions
EASE the STRESS
of daily living.

Traditions = memories = legacy

Studies on family life also show that preserving a family's story with shared memories and beliefs protects our children and families in the same way traditions do. The family story also connects us to the past and the future, creating a stronger sense of belonging and stability.

Our legacy is made up of the family stories, traditions and values we leave behind and pass on to future generations. We want our children and grandchildren to feel loved and to develop good character, to have wonderful childhood memories and to grow into happy successful adults. But that's not all we want. We want them to love us in return, to enjoy our times together and to look forward to coming home. We also want to be remembered, to believe our lives had purpose and that we made a difference. It's important that who we are, what we believe, and what we have accomplished lives on in the hearts of future generations.

Handing down money vs values

The American Legacy Study by Allianz brought to light a very important trend in America today. Those in a position to pass on large amounts of wealth are questioning the wisdom of simply handing down money. They are much more concerned with passing on their values, traditions, life stories and memories than the more traditional cash assets. Few of us have "large amounts of wealth" to pass down, but we can all learn from those who appear to "have it all." In the end, we are all the same. It is the relationships we cherish and the beliefs we hold dear that truly matter.

Surprising statistics about wealthy people

According to The American Legacies Study, \$73 trillion dollars are going to pass from generation to generation in the next decade or two. Both the generation to pass down money and the generation to receive money are FIVE TIMES more concerned with passing on life lessons, values and traditions than passing on money. Fulfilling last wishes and distributing personal possessions are FIVE TIMES more likely to be the source of conflict during a legacy transfer than transferring financial assets.

When we start a family tradition that celebrates something we value, a part of us lives on and comes to life every time the family talks about or celebrates that tradition. This is the simplest and most powerful thing we can do to pass on our legacy to future generations.

The power of engagement

We all know what it takes to infuse concepts and information permanently into the minds of our children. The simple fact is that talk doesn't create change. Like adults, children remember only 5% of what they hear, 20 % of what they see, 50% of what they discuss, but 75% of what they actually do. Any type of activity that gives them a way to experience what you want them to learn will definitely increase the chances of it sticking.

We also know that if you ask a thousand people to describe their fondest childhood memory, most everyone will think back to a family tradition, and one that probably revolves around a family holiday. That is because those memories are associated with good times spent with the people we love - and because the things we repeat over and over again stick with us. Just like our ABC's and our multiplication tables. Imagine adding the power of traditions to any learning experience: those pleasant activities we do day-after-day, week-after-week or month-after-month.

A unique approach to character building

So, if you want to raise kids with character and make sure that something sticks in a child's mind, like family values, the easiest, most effective way is to weave those important life lessons into cherished holiday traditions. The warm, fuzzy memories associated with those family traditions - yummy smells, festive decor, fun activities - reinforce them, in our hearts and in our minds. They become so important to us that we can't imagine Thanksgiving without saying our "gratefuls" and eating Grandma Rose's pumpkin pie. It doesn't feel like Christmas without delivering homemade cookies and gifts to a family in need. That's the powerful impact these traditions have on us. Why not use that power to teach your children and grandchildren values?

Using the power of traditions

We can lecture our kids about responsibility and respect, but most of it goes in one ear and out the other, especially if we talk about it when they have done something wrong. Now take that 75% retention rate for interactive learning and add the power of traditions associated with the unforgettable memories of family holidays, and you can imagine what happens to the retention rate. It's probably more like 95%. Now, that's a statistic we want on our side when we are working hard to raise kids with character.

Spread joy throughout the year

Think of all the memories that surround the holiday season. And all the activities and projects that you have to make happen to create those memories. Imagine spreading that joy (and work) throughout the year with something fun to plan, celebrate and reminisce about each month. You can even take activities that you now cram into the holiday season and enjoy them at different times of the year, when life is less hectic. Shake it up. Deliver gift baskets in May when it's least expected and most appreciated. Send your holiday cards in July. Make a gingerbread house for Grandparents Day. Make a list below of some of the activities you now do for the winter holidays that you could do at other times of the year.

Your Family Tradition Calendar

List the monthly traditions you now celebrate as a family. Don't forget birthdays and anniversaries. You probably have more traditions than you think. Fill in the empty months with possible new traditions or some of the ones you do in December that could be enjoyed at other times of the year. You might find inspiration in the 3-IN-1 Family Fun ideas at the end of this chapter and in the previous chapter.

JANUARY _____

FEBRUARY _____

MARCH _____

APRIL _____

MAY _____

JUNE _____

JULY _____

AUGUST _____

SEPTEMBER _____

OCTOBER _____

NOVEMBER _____

DECEMBER _____

Christmas Bingo

Meg Cox, author of *The Heart of the Family*, wanted to create a family life rich in tradition. She spent three years researching and interviewing families to find out what they do. Meg collected hundreds of heartwarming stories. The Christmas Eve bingo game is a wonderful example of how a simple, fun tradition pulls a family together and keeps them coming back.

Whenever possible, the Brock family of Oregon travel back to Iowa to participate in their family's annual Christmas bingo game. "The game has been going on for more than forty years, and each year some fifty adults and kids gather to play again, with each family contributing presents for the winners.

Some of the gifts are nice: homemade fudge or attractive picture frames. But a few have been recycled for decades, including a pair of enormous red silk panties: 'My husband and I once hid them in a test tube inserted into a freshly baked loaf of bread,' says Barb. Everybody roars hysterically when the panties reappear each year."

Happy families don't just happen...

Chapter

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10-Minute Parent Plan

10

The 10-Minute Parent Plan

It's really pretty simple. All you need to commit to is the equivalent of 10 minutes a day of pure family time. That means no cell phones, TV going in the background, ipads or other distractions. Just family. Making this commitment tells your children that you believe family is more important than anything else. Your work or your children's activities may make it impossible to have dinner together every evening so you can spread those 10-minute blocks of time into a very doable schedule of family activities.

10-minutes FAMILY TALK: 3-4 days a week.

1

It would be nice to sit down to dinner every night and talk about your day, but it's not realistic with our DIZZYBUSY schedules. Three to four nights would be great. Some families have breakfast together instead, and others work around difficult schedules with something creative like an 8 o'clock "family dessert." The goal is to talk to each other for at least 10 minutes, at least 3 times a week.

20-30 minutes FAMILY FUN: once a week.

2

Take the 10 minute blocks from the days you can't eat together and save them up for a Family Fun Night. Friday night is great, but any time over the weekend works. Go on a bike ride, play a board game, make cookies together, plan upcoming holidays or try some of the 3-IN-1 FAMILY FUN ideas we suggest in the previous chapters. Tell teenagers that roll their eyes: "It's only one half hour a week and family is important. You can do it."

1 FAMILY MEMORY tradition every month.

3

You are going to spend time celebrating holidays and birthdays anyway, so why not make them more memorable with some fun and meaningful family traditions like the 3-IN-1 Family Fun ideas at the end of chapters 8 and 9. Use dinner time to discuss ideas and Family Fun Night to do some of the preparation. Once you have settled on traditions your family enjoys, you can make it easy on yourself and just repeat the same meals, same activities, and same decor every year - because that's what your family really wants.

Words of wisdom

No matter what you do, your children are not going to all turn out the same. They are born with their own personalities. Even though you teach them all the same lessons, they will take what they want from your treasure chest of wisdom and incorporate the things that feel right for them into their own lives.

Some children will behave like angels. Others will test you at every turn and do the opposite of what you want, just for the sake of rebelling. You may have children who breeze through school doing everything they should — without a word from you — and other kids who, no matter what bait you dangle in front of them, are not going to do what they don't feel like doing. The same goes for values you are trying to instill and the sense of family togetherness you are trying to create..

Trust the foundation you create

Trust the fact that the foundation you lay down today will pay off in the end. As long as you communicate clearly what you believe, and you model what you are trying to teach, you have done all you can. You have done your job.

It may seem (for years) like your children don't hear a word you say, and all the effort you put into dinner conversations and family fun night and holiday traditions was for naught. They resist; they complain; they give you "that look." But when it comes time for your children to raise their own children, they will find themselves saying and doing the very things you said and did. The things that they promised themselves they would never say and do. It happens. It's like an old, favorite coat hanging in the back of the closet, forgotten. Later, they stumble across it, remembering how much they loved it, dust off the cobwebs and wear it with pride as if they never took it off.

The NO-REGRETS insurance for your family

We buy insurance to protect our homes, our cars and our health. What about the relationships we cherish and the beliefs we stand for? Wouldn't you love to protect and insure your family against the regrets so many people experience at the end of their lives: strained relationships, loneliness, disappointing adult children with poor values? You can! Weaving Happy Family Habits into your family life is like a NO-REGRETS insurance policy. You can't afford not to, because...

Happy families don't just happen...

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