Take Back Your Family Time

Overscheduled children, under connected families, and the erosion of family time are significant issues for parents and communities. Reclaiming family time is a topic communities need to increase awareness about and initiate strategies to help families to connect and slow down.

Current research shows:
- children have lost large amounts of free time. They play less, and their unstructured time has declined significantly.
- children’s structured sports time has doubled.
- time spent “on the sideline” watching siblings and others play has increased five-fold.
- children on average spend 50 percent more time studying than they did twenty years ago, with little to show in overall academic gains.
- the time children spend eating at home has declined by 10 percent.
- their time in religious participation has declined by 40 percent.
- household conversations (talking together as a family, with no other activity going on) have declined from infrequent to non-existent, on average.

Other changes in family time since the mid 1970’s include:
1. Family vacations have declined by 28 percent.
2. Family dinners have declined by one-third, based on the number of families who report that their whole family usually eats dinner together.
3. Although TV watching has increased in American homes, watching TV as a family has declined by nearly 25 percent. TV has become a more solitary activity.

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What can families do?

- Families can begin to have family meals together at home. If your schedule doesn’t allow but one night a week for a sit down meal, try to make that night “Family night”. Have kids take turns planning the family meal. Have them choose the menu, help with the preparation and choose topics for discussion.
- Families can also schedule time for other family activities. Moms can plan a special mother/daughter day or dad’s a father/son fishing adventure. Be creative. Turn off the TV and play games, actually talking to each other.
- Parents can prioritize and allow children only one extra activity to participate in during the school year.
- Grandparents can help by sharing stories of growing up and family life while spending time with their grandkids. They can also help parents by encouraging and supporting their choices for staying home.

What can communities do?

- Employers can sponsor family picnics or outings encouraging family members to attend and participate.
- Neighborhoods can host family events geared toward families and their children.

When families are involved with one another, their children will get better grades and test scores, are more likely to go on to higher education, are better behaved and have a more positive attitude about life.

Building Healthy Families

Managing Your Stress

Stress is the human response to changes that occur as a part of daily living, according to Hans Selye, pioneer researcher in human stress reaction. Some changes are small and rather insignificant, but they nevertheless produce a stress response within us. In fact, recent studies have determined that daily hassles can have a greater negative impact on us than the larger, more traumatic events of life.

In every family there are times of trouble. No one comes through life without stress. It is a part of every activity. Many of our thought processes involve stress reactions. Stressful events are situations that make us tense or “uptight” because these events place heavy or conflicting demands upon us.

Some stress is helpful. For example, we get excited about an interesting and important task and as a result we are able to do a more effective job. A stressful event is positive if it motivates, drives, challenges, and gives us a sense of purpose. A new baby in a family or a job promotion are examples of stressful events that may be seen as positive.

A negative stressful event is more easily identified because it is represented by sudden or disagreeable changes that occur in our lives. The loss of a loved one through death, separation, or divorce is normally considered stressful. Job changes, money problems, an illness, or injury are other life changes which are associated with negative stress.

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Take action to reduce stress. When stressful events occur, you do not have to be a helpless victim. Usually, at least one of four steps can be taken. By taking one or more of these steps, you will not eliminate all the stress but you may be able to reduce its negative impact on you and your family.

1. **Check to see if you can control the events.** You can control at least some of the events in your life by: planning ahead, setting priorities, making your family a high priority, anticipating strains of the family, and simplifying your life.

2. **Try to change your attitude about a stressful event** by learning to be adaptable, having realistic expectations, looking at the big picture, looking at the challenge within your crisis, allowing yourself to be human and being flexible.

3. **When possible, try to change your responses** by opening communication channels, having regular “one-on-one” time with each family member, taking good care of yourself, taking time out from your anger, keeping your work in perspective, learning to relax, and pampering yourself and allowing other family member to do so.

4. **Another important way of taking positive action in confronting stress is to recognize and use available resources** by reaching out for help, developing coping tools, and being willing to learn and practice them.

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**Fostering Resiliency for Families in Transition**

**Scam ALERT - Bogus Charities**

Bogus charities may use names that mimic those of well known organizations.

A fake charity claiming to help disadvantaged children got nearly $1,200 from an elderly donor in Florida. After she gave her bank account number to a telemarketer, at least three withdrawals—the smallest for $316—were made over three weeks. The donor said, “they called saying they’re trying to help poor, sick children and I wanted to be nice.” The Florida based scam collected 5 million dollars and only $110,000 went to the needy.

**To protect against phony charities:**

- Get printed materials before donating. Material is no guarantee of legitimacy, but organizations that don’t or won’t send them are more likely to be bogus.
- Never provide a credit card or bank account number unless you initiate the phone call.
- Never respond to e-mail solicitations.
- Be aware that bogus charities may use names that mimic those of well-known organizations. Go to [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org) to identify legitimate charities or visit [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org) for information on nonprofit organizations. The nonprofit charity Navigator says “better charities typically spend less than 25 percent of all donations on fundraising and administrative costs”. To verify a charity’s legitimacy, visit the website [www.give.org](http://www.give.org).

Contact your state attorney general or secretary of state to learn which charities are allowed to operate in your state and to report suspicious activity.

*Source-Scam-Proof Your Life-Sid Kirchheimer- AARP/Sterling Publishing.*
Washing Hands is the Easiest Way to Combat Germs

Infectious diseases spread in many ways, but you can take a few simple steps to decrease the spread of these diseases. Your everyday life is full of potential infectious hazards - from raw chicken on your cutting board, to those pesky mosquitoes. With germs so common and seemingly everywhere, the question is, how do you get around them?

Knowing how germs spread can help you stop them in their tracks. Infectious diseases spread through direct contact, the air and vectors such as animals (mosquitoes, fleas, lice and ticks).

The easiest way to catch most infectious diseases is by coming in direct contact with someone who has one. This can be person to person, animal to person, or mother to unborn child. Disease-causing organisms can also be passed along by indirect contact. Many germs can linger on objects such as tabletops, doorknobs, or faucet handles. When you touch the same object by someone ill with the flu or a cold, for example, you can pick up the germs left behind. If you then touch your eyes, mouth or nose before washing your hands, you may become infected. Infectious diseases also spread through the air.

Germs can infect people through contaminated or improperly prepared food and water. For example, the E. coli bacterium is present in certain foods such as undercooked hamburgers or unwashed fruits and vegetables and can give people diarrhea.

With proper precautions, you can avoid infectious diseases and keep from spreading them.

Follow these simple suggestions to decrease your risk of infecting yourself and others:

* Wash hands often
* Get vaccinated
* Use antibiotics as prescribed by you doctor
* Stay at home if you have signs and symptoms of an infection
* Be smart about food preparation
* Disinfect your kitchen and bathroom often using a diluted bleach solution
* Don’t share personal items or eating utensils
* Travel wisely: talk to your doctor about any special immunizations you may need depending on where you travel.
* Keep your pets healthy and up to date on vaccines

Source - Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Proper Handwashing Procedure

- Wet your hands with running water as hot as you can comfortably stand.
- Apply soap.
- Rub hands together, front and back, between fingers and under nails for ten to fifteen seconds.
- Rinse thoroughly under running water.
- Dry hands with a clean paper towel.
- Turn off water with used paper towel.

Source: ServSafe Essentials/Fourth Edition