



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Activities to build a strong family network

At FCS Counseling, we believe that the family is the cornerstone in a child's life, providing a child with a framework in which to view themselves, his or her world, and the confidence in which to enter the world independently. In turn, positive family time is paramount to a child's development and future success.

It is also our belief that parents want to spend time with their children and desire a close family connection. However with work, school, meetings, sports and demands at home life can be hectic and make quality family time seem impossible.

Fortunately, quality family time does not have to involve consistent, large quantities of time. With just 15 minutes, 3-5 times per week, great things can happen.

TEN ACTIVITIES TO BRING YOUR FAMILY CLOSER TOGETHER

1. Play a favorite family board/card game. With every play, have each family member share something that happened to them that day/week, or something they're thankful for.

2. With children 6-8 years of age: pretend their back is a dry erase board---clear it off, then trace a simple letter or shape without raising your finger. Ask the child if they can identify it. If not, trace it again. The purpose is not to have the child correctly identify the object, but rather to be connected to the adult and receive some positive/appropriate touch. At the end of each shape, gently "wipe" the area clean again (think child's version of a back massage).

3. Tear up old newspapers together. Spend even just 5 minutes with a pile of old papers and tear through them.

4. Take pieces of torn up newspaper/scrap paper and wad them into balls (2-3 each). Identify a spot on the wall as the "target." Each person takes turns throwing their paper ball against the target and verbalizing things that make them mad. Paper should not harm walls or people no matter how hard it is thrown and despite producing positive endorphin release due to the physical activity, it can become an excellent appropriate emotional expression activity for times when a child is very angry and prone to yell or act out.

5. Make an index card with each family member's name on it. Pass the cards around and have each person write a trait they enjoy/admire about each person. Or share a special memory about the person. Cards can be hung in children's rooms, or placed on the refrigerator.

6. Play "hot potato." Creatively using a rolled up sock or bean bag as the potato is a good option. When the "song" reaches "Seven Potatoes, More," the person holding the "potato" shares something they like about their family or a favorite family memory.

7. Author a story together. It doesn't need to be written down or published! Have the family sit in a circle and someone starts by saying "There was a ____." Move around the circle and have each person add just one sentence to continue the story.

8. Do a family scavenger hunt. Give each person 3-5 minutes to go to their room and collect three things that represent them. Come back together and share. Alternate: Give each person 3-5 minutes to collect three things they would take if stranded on a deserted island. Share.

9. Make a family questions/thanks box. The family can decorate it together---a shoebox and some markers go a long way. Have the family

decide on a centralized/neutral location for the box and during the week, have family members add questions or expressions of thanks to the box. Pick one family meal, or family time, to have the adults read the cards to the family. To deal with any potential private or inappropriate cards, explain to the children that the adults get editing privileges and can address some cards privately with an individual child when appropriate.

10. Walk down memory lane. Have the adults share a favorite family memory they have of growing up. Each child then shares their own favorite memory. They can even be recorded and added to over time. It is also encouraged to have the parents share positive memories about what life was like when each child was born... their anticipation of the child's birth, the naming process, making the nursery ready, etc. If there were significant negative experiences at the time of a child's birth, or if it was particularly stressful, limiting this activity to favorite childhood activities is recommended.

Have FUN! What else could you do with 15 minutes a day to bring your family closer together? For more information on increasing family connections and communication, contact FCS Counseling. We specialize in services for families with children ages two through adult.



Lisa Klein, LPC, NCC has experience as an outpatient clinician for all ages and as a children's community based case manager within a community mental health center. She specializes in aiding clients to identify how thoughts affect feelings, actions and beliefs to reach a healthy level of harmony . Helping clients to reach their maximum potential by identifying current stressors and developing specific strategies to resolve those stressors is Lisa's goal. Her desire to help clients to focus on the present day and accept accountability for themselves helps clients to take control of their own choices in life and reach a healthy level of independence and responsibility. Lisa is passionate about working with teens who have difficulty talking about the issues facing them.

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH LISA OR ONE OF OUR OTHER QUALIFIED CLINICIANS.

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