

Families that work well

Family is the most important part of a child's life. A loving, caring family can help create confident, resilient children, while an unhappy family can lead to a range of problems for children.

While there are many different forms of family and styles of parenting, unhelpful ways of doing things can form over time. We may not realise what is making things difficult in our family. Here are some ideas to help your family to work well.

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Make time for:

Talking and listening

- Talk to all family members as often as you can. Talk about what each person has done for the day, and their interests — be excited and encouraging.
- Let family members express a wide range of feelings such as joy, excitement, anger and fear — as long as they do it in a way that is safe for everyone.
- Listen to what children say. Try to understand their thoughts and feelings behind the words.

Family time

- Make time to spend together and have fun as a family
 - go to the beach or park, play or watch sport, play games or do other things together. Family holidays can create special memories.
- Talk together about things that affect the whole family
 - include children. Family meetings can be useful.
- Have meals together if you can. If this is difficult in a busy life try having a meal together, say once a week. Turn off the TV and phones.
- Spend quality time together as a couple. It helps you work well together and this benefits the whole family.



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Be affectionate, caring and kind

- Everyone in the family will feel good when they're encouraged and appreciated.
- Show affection, give hugs, be thoughtful and kind.
- Be quick to praise family members.
- Let your children know that you love them. Tell them all the things you like and love about them. It will make them feel proud.
- Avoid 'put downs', threats, interrogation and blame — they can make children and adults feel bad or hopeless.

Accept differences

- Let it be known that each family member is special in their own way — whatever their differences. Let them feel proud to be themselves.
- Allow each person to be excited about their own interests — show respect and tolerance.
- No one should be left out or made to feel the odd one out in a family.

Share the power and the chores

- Let all family members, including children have a real say in what happens in the family — it's important people feel listened to and valued. Sharing power promotes trust and caring.
- Share the chores among family members — cooking, cleaning, gardening. Young children may be able to help prepare food or set the table. As they get older they can have more responsibility. Couples who support each other around the house help the family run smoothly.
- Have daily routines in the family. This helps children feel secure.
- Use adult power wisely. Use humour and encouragement, no punishment or threats. An ongoing fight for control is not helpful for children. The use of violence or intimidation is destructive and makes all family members unhappy.



Keep in touch with family and friends

- The more your family is linked with others the more likely it is that you will be able to overcome problems.
- Make the effort to catch up with family and friends often. Invite them to your home, visit theirs or meet somewhere. Celebrating special occasions such as birthdays is a chance to do this.

Share problems with family or others that you trust if you think it may help. Don't do this in front of children.

Commitment

- Make the wellbeing of your family a priority. Sometimes work can overtake family life, and children can miss out on time with their parents.
- Be loyal to your family - stick up for each other.
- Pull together to solve problems when there is trouble.

Family rituals and traditions

The little things you do each day and on special occasions help to build your family. Daily rituals can be how you say goodbye, or what you do at mealtimes and bedtime. Families benefit from celebrating special times together, such as birthdays and other special days and having traditions about how this is done.

Strong families have a positive attitude and know they can rely on each other when things are tough.

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