

## Keeping Your Family Unity Going Strong



The other day I asked my friend why she and her husband of 20 years always dress alike when they go out together. Her reply was, “We’ve been doing that ever since we were 18.”

This is an example of the unique culture that all families create that instills the patterns of how the family members see and do things. Good or bad, right or wrong, these are the common threads that weave the fabric of a family.

My friend’s response got me thinking about what my husband and I do to keep our family unity going strong, and how that affects our children.

It was important to our parents for the whole family to eat dinner together, which is why my husband and I do this with our family. We may not have consciously set out to have family dinners with our children, but for him and I, sitting at the dinner table is “what we’ve always done.” It is part of our family culture.

As family leaders, my husband and I recognize that what we do today will affect our children and grandchildren in the future as they become family leaders themselves. If we want a thriving family in the future, we must strive to be mindful, thoughtful, and intentional with what we do and how we speak with our family members.

If you want this too, here are 3 helpful tips to begin your quest:

### **1. Being Able to Observe Yourself**

A family leader must be able to observe themselves and see how they are impacting the rest of the family. They must be responsible and set an example

for the family to follow. Furthermore, they must be able to recognize what they are saying, how they are saying it, how their family members receive what they are saying, and how that affects their family.

Here are some questions a family leader can ask themselves to see where they are at and how they can improve in this area:

1. Do I embrace the unique abilities and talents that each family member contributes that make us unique?
2. What should I say to build up my family members?
3. What emotional triggers and non-verbal responses do I have that can affect our family?
4. How can I improve what I say and do to bridge family relationships and unity?

## **2. Encourage Open Discussions with Family Members**

A family leader can influence the family dynamics and rhythm of a family's communication pattern by engaging in frequent family meetings to listen and understand the challenges the members have with each other, discuss what can be done to overcome those challenges, and share accolades when they overcome them.

## **3. Develop Emotional Awareness**

An effective family leader should strive to be aware of how they react during a conflict. Before they react, they should try to fully understand the other person's point of view by asking them to clarify until the family leader can fully understand the other person's perspective and feelings. Then the family leader will share their perspective and how they feel. In doing so, the family leader should keep in mind that the relationship, each other's emotions, and future interactions may be impacted by their response and, therefore, they should try to set a good example for others to follow.

Although the family may be treating each other with more kindness and respect as the family leader shapes the culture of the family, there will still be times of conflict and misunderstanding. Yet, it is in those times that a family can grow even closer. The family members who take responsibility for their own emotional responses and actions, respect everyone's opinions, and above all, communicate care with each other will be contributing to the family's overall growth. But it all begins with the family leader.