

**THE TOP 6 WAYS TO  
GUARANTEE YOUR  
BUSY FAMILY  
FEELS CLOSER  
THAN EVER**

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"Family is not an important thing.  
It's everything." - Michael J. Fox

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***“I wish my kids and I were closer.”***

***“I feel like times together are either too tense or too boring. What can I do?”***

***“My two teens are either out of the house or out of touch. How can I keep them involved with the family?”***

Have you ever felt this way?



**34 minutes.**

According to a recent study, that's the average time a family spends together each day!

As a parent, you feel it's important to have a close bond with your kids and for siblings to feel just as close, the kind of family that sticks together through thick and thin.

But things ARE different for families today.

Doesn't it sometimes feel like modern family life conspires against togetherness?

Parents are stressed by working harder than ever.

Kids are so connected with their friends through texts they seem lost to another universe.

The teens who are striving to get into good colleges are spending hours on homework and more hours in extracurricular activities to build up their resumes.

Parents can be equally guilty of contributing to the distance that appears to be increasing in families.

They are often wrapped up checking their mobile phone, email, or watching TV, when they could be talking to, playing with, or generally connecting with their children.

The fact is that family life has changed in the last generation quite apart from the rise of technology.

Because everyone is so busy with work, school, and extracurricular activities, there's less time for families to spend together. Add technology to the mix and it only gets worse.

The computers, TVs and smart phones beckon to everyone in the family. It's gotten to the point where it seems like parents and children are emailing and texting each other more than they're talking—even when they're at home together!

The family home is 50% bigger than a generation ago - meaning it's easier for each member to retreat to their own corner of the house.

What can a parent do to combat the ever-present electronics and the siren calls of the peer group?

With less and less time together, how can we make sure our kids feel safe within their family and make sure they understand that no one in the world can comfort them like their family?

After all, making sure they feel close to their family is a way to ensure they have the confidence to go out and conquer the world.

Let's count down the six ways to make sure your family feels close and stays close.

## **Number 6**

### **LIMIT PRIVATE AND TECHNOLOGY TIME**

Don't get me wrong, we ALL need private time. Parents and kids alike need

time to be by themselves, to read a book or watch TV alone.

But too much alone time creates distance.

That's why it's a good idea to periodically make sure that the family does things together - even if it's everyone crawling under a blanket and watching a movie.

How can you make this happen more often?

- As they get older, take your kids' phones away, take iPads away, and have them present in the now and with the family and put away your own phones, too!
- Take an interest in the things they like doing. If they love laser tag, it's time to suit up and go play
- Talk with your child. Instead of asking how their day was, ask them about their friends, what's the worst thing that happened, and what they did at recess
- Has your child been talking about a movie for weeks? Take him and go see it with him. Plan a periodic "date night" with each of your children.

And the best part of spending more time interacting as a family?

**Staying close as a family means less arguments and fights.**

Study after study has shown that the family is the biggest contributing factor to a child's happiness, confidence, and security.

By taking this step to ensure your family stays close, you'll be able to give them the boost they need to succeed in the world.



## Number 5

### HAVE MEALS TOGETHER

Growing up, my mom had dinner on the table at 5:00 sharp every night. It became the family joke as we all made fun of how dinner HAD to be at 5:00 - EVERY DAY!

I admit, I am more lax, even eating dinner in front of the TV but I try my best to remember that sitting around the dinner table was one of my fondest memories and something I could count on day in and day out, just like I learned to count on my family.

It's a nice reminder that giving our children the time where we share a meal with each other is one of the easiest memories we can give them.

We are teaching them to take the time to talk about what happened during the day and what they are looking forward to (and not) for the next day.

And eating dinner is not the only way to strengthen those family bonds -- ***why not make meals together?***

Instead of mom feeling stressed and hurriedly preparing something quickly, why not use this daily ritual to bond as a family? Often the best part of the meal is making it.

One kid can make the salad while another sets the table. As kids get older, they can be involved in creating the whole meal. Be generous with praise and appreciation. Demonstrate cooking techniques and shortcuts.

Not only will you get togetherness, but the kids will eventually leave home knowing how to get a meal on the table. After all, working together often is what fosters liking and respect.

Soon, your family will enjoy feeling like a team that's all on the same side

**Make a commitment to have dinner together, as a family,** eating at the same time around the same table at least three or four times a week.

Research shows that kids who share dinnertime with their families on a regular basis do better in school, get along better with others, and generally do better in life.

And you don't have to stop at dinner time. **Create times to work and talk together** on something, almost anything.

Cleaning the garage or doing yard work can become a positive experience instead of an odious task. Don't just direct the kids to do it. Get in there and be an active coach.

Play to different people's strengths. Give them encouragement. Express appreciation.

Find activities that require different strengths and different skills. Just as people on a team have different jobs in order to reach a mutual goal, there are family activities that can accommodate everyone's age and skill level.

**Going on a trip?** Ask one kid to research things to do at the destination, ask another to keep a family blog, another to track mileage and expenses, another to be in charge of taking family photos, etc.

At the end of the trip, you can work together to make a family album or to update the family website.

**Planning the grocery shopping for the week?** Get everyone involved with meal planning and with looking for coupons.

Kids who have had an investment in what they're going to eat are less likely to balk at what's for dinner.

If you want the members of your family to be closer to one another, keep the three T's of **time, talk and teamwork** in mind and build them into every week.

Togetherness naturally follows.



#### **Number 4**

### **CLOSE THE DISTANCE WITH THE “ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE” RULE**

Most families' days can get pretty busy. Soccer, dance, and various clubs that fill days and evenings have become a basic element of modern family life.

That often means everyone going off in a separate direction, creating distance in your family that can be hard to overcome. To combat that, one family introduced the "One for all and all for one" rule.

Basically how this rule works is: If one kid has soccer, the rest of the family are all going to the soccer field that evening.

Sure this doesn't apply if the baby is sick, but by bringing a blanket to watch and/or tackle homework or play in the park while the littlest member of your family is cheered on, family bonds can be strengthened.

During ballet class, think how much it will mean to your daughter when she can look up and see her big brother and sister smiling at her and giving her a thumbs up.

It may mean keeping an extra eye on a couple of more kids, but keeping everyone together while at different activities helps keep them close and supportive of each other.



### **Number 3**

## **MAKE TIME TOGETHER - MAKE TIME TO TALK**

**Time:** A group of people can't be a family unless they spend time together.

Parents have the right and obligation to make demands for together time, even if kids whine, complain, and otherwise object.

If you place a value on family time through action as well as words, the kids will eventually accept it and value it too.

**Take charge of planning and following through on a family activity once a week.** That can be a family game night, a hike together, playing an outdoor sport or an indoor Wii, or going to a local event and talking about it afterward.

As long as you are doing it as a family instead of as individuals you are supporting “familyness.”

**Talk:** In order for a group of individuals to be a family, they need to really know each other. Knowing comes from sharing information and stories.

Be interested in what interests your teen. It doesn't matter if you are interested in the subject. What matters is that you are interested in your teen.

You think their taste in music is appalling?

Rather than passing judgment, ask your teen to explain it to you.

Who are the bands she likes?

What makes their music so compelling?

What does he think the songwriter is trying to tell us all about the world?

Engage in conversation, not criticism. Same goes for choice of friends, activities, and dreams.



## Number 2

### **WANT A CLOSE-KNIT FAMILY? MAKE TIME FOR SHARED LIFE EXPERIENCES**

One recent study examined the closest families and found that the key reason most often given for their family being so close was:

**They maximized their togetherness and minimized their times apart**, disciplining themselves as a family to organize times when they were all together.

For example, often a certain night each week is family night when the kids are home.

Visit friends' homes together as a family.

Share the entire summer together. Invite your entire family if you have to travel for work and plan some fun times together.

Regularly make plans to spend some of the time you have off for vacation together as a family instead of always going away on your own as a couple.

Taking weekends for various special activities throughout the year shows your family you value them as your top priority.

Think back to your fondest childhood memories of having fun as a family.

Didn't they involve times when you were all together?

Those experiences, along with many others, did something for you as a family. Being together provides the basis for shared experiences that become precious memories. Even facing difficulties draws a family much closer together.

The memories of being together on vacation, whether things go right or when things go wrong, become a shared adventure that knits the family together.



**AND the number ONE way to Guarantee Your Busy Family Feels Closer Than Ever?**



## Number 1

### **HAVE ARTWORK OF YOUR FAMILY DISPLAYED ON THE WALLS OF YOUR HOME!**

Press pause in your busy schedule – Get gorgeous family portraits that LIVE on the walls of your home as art!

But why? So you can tell your family story like this recent client...

One of the things I loved about working with Mindy & Joriana was the custom nature of the products and how personal the service was. It was specialized and custom to fit my needs and desires.

I didn't want to just get one large single image; I loved so many of the images that I wanted a grouping to tell a story. They worked with me to choose images that complemented each other. I love enjoying the art on my walls every day.

I look forward to being photographed again to document the next stage of my son's life, hopefully with my parents.

~Deveney Shea Wall, Virginia

Why would having family portraits GUARANTEE that your family would feel closer than ever?

After all you ARE busy – and it would take time to get everyone together.

Because it doesn't just tell your family how important they are – **it shows them!**

When you are busy and you push everything aside to make time for the ones you love – ***they will feel loved.***

When you spend time getting clothes ready, talking with your kids about how much fun the session will be and asking their opinion on where in your home this most treasured heirloom should go – ***they will feel valued.***

During the session, you will have fun and play just like normal – when they see how much you cherish the result, ***they will feel cherished too...***just like the Fontaine kids did!

I went in with very high expectations and they were absolutely met and then some! You guys were fantastic with my kids and really able to capture them at their finest.

The whole shoot was fun and even the reluctant children admitted it wasn't so bad. The photos of my husband and I especially were really beautiful.

It's not often we are both in the pictures together and the most frequent comment I have gotten about it was how great the photograph captured how Greg and I feel about each other and how we interact with each other. That's exactly what I was going for.

The end result - absolutely fabulous! I will treasure these photographs for the rest of my life, truly.

Thank you guys so much!  
~ Barbara Fontaine, Virginia

Adults who value art most often were once children who had parents that displayed beautiful art on the walls of their home. If you as an adult display art ***of your family*** on the walls of your home, what are you teaching your kids to value?

After all, if the TV on your wall is bigger than your family portrait, what message does it send?"

On the occasion that you have to work late and aren't there when they get home from school, they will have a touchstone in their home to the love you feel for them... a gorgeous ***Family Portrait that will show them every day how loved and valued the family is.***

Wall Art showcasing your family will show them how precious time together as a family really is and how precious THEY are to you.



When they look up from their homework they will FEEL the love you show them, remember the fun they had during the session, and the moments of love they felt as part of the family.

They will feel loved and connected to your family...

**Every. Single. Day.**

**WANT TO  
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BUSY FAMILY  
FEELS CLOSER  
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