

## ***Making Time for Family Time***

“The family is one of nature’s masterpieces.”—George Santayana, American philosopher

American pianist Michael Levine says, “Having children makes you no more a parent than having a piano makes you a pianist.” To be an asset-building parent *and* an asset-building family, you need to spend time together as a family. A number of families have found creative ways to do this so that they can connect in meaningful, positive ways. Consider some of these ideas.

### ***Try it...***

#### ***For all parents***

- Designate a regular family time as part of your routine. Some families have a weekly family night. Others have a monthly family outing. Others have a daily family check-in during dinner or before bed. Figure out a routine that works for you and your family.
- Have fun together. Do activities that make you laugh, and enjoy being together. Some families play sports together. Others tell knock-knock jokes. Others have tickle fests.
- Get your kids’ input on how to spend family time. You may be surprised to learn that they want your family to get out more—or stay home more. Kids often have good ideas.
- If you attend a congregation, go to worship services together as a family. Participate in family-friendly congregational events, such as family volunteering.
- Eat meals together as a family. For discussion starters, visit [Make Mealtimes Family Time](#).
- Your family often will bond more if you can get out of the house and do something together where you don’t know other people. Take a trip to another city, suburb, or county and discover what’s there. Go to a sporting event, a museum, or a play.

#### ***For parents with children ages birth to 5***

- Choose short activities that your children enjoy doing. Spend family time at a playground, a park, or at the library.
- Get down on the floor and hang out with your child. Ask your child what he or she wants to play and join in.
- Keep family time stress-free by following a routine where family members get enough rest, alone time, and together time. Parenting young children can be intense and exhausting, so pacing yourself is essential to enjoying each other’s company

more.

### ***For parents with children ages 6 - 9***

- Continue to expand your child's world by visiting places as a family that your child has never seen before, such as a train depot, a radio station, or a park where people go canoeing and kayaking.
- Encourage your kids to make up new rules for familiar games. Kids at this age love creating new twists on old favorites.
- Do something active together. It's too easy to have a weekly family TV night where you watch a show together. Mix it up. Play hopscotch outside. Go for a bike ride. Go swimming at a local pool. For more ideas on how to be active together, check out these [Family Time Activities](#).
- Sometimes include grandparents and other extended family members in your family time. Show how your family includes not only your nuclear family but your extended family as well.

### ***For parents with children ages 10 - 15***

- Follow your child's interests and do family activities around what they want to do. (Take turns between family members so that you're not doing the same thing over and over.) Some young teenagers enjoy sports, art, music, or visiting a certain store. As kids get older, they hear about places and activities from their friends that they'd like to explore.
- Encourage your child to invite a friend when your child begins to resist spending time with your family. Expand your family to include friends.
- Kids at this age sometimes get interested in activities such as cooking, gardening, tinkering with a car, and woodworking. Teach them the skills they're interested in and do these activities together as a family.
- Consider getting the resource: [Conversations on the Go: Clever Questions to Keep Teens and Grown-Ups Talking](#).

### ***For parents with children ages 16 - 18***

- Continue to invite your teenager to family activities, but don't expect them to attend every one. In some cultures, teenagers are becoming more individualistic, and it's important not to stifle their independence. If your culture encourages a strong sense of community, be aware that the mainstream culture may cause conflict with your own traditions, making your teenager question what it means to be part of a family.
- Help your teenager find and nurture the balance between self-interest and family interest. For example, if your teenager refuses to participate in many family activities, be clear that certain family times are non-negotiable, such as attending certain holidays, the birthdays of family members, or some other activity like a wedding or funeral of an extended family member. Teenagers grow by following their own interests *and* by participating in family activities and traditions.
- Ask your teenager what he or she wishes your family would do together. You may be surprised at what your teenager suggests. One teenager surprised his family by saying he had always wanted to go on an archaeological dig, so the family planned an outing together and had a great time—even though no one had ever gone on a

dig before.