



Tender Hearts Child Therapy Center

Parent Newsletter

March 2012

Strategies to Build a Stronger Family

With so many parents working full time jobs outside of the home and kid's busy schedules, it's easy to forget to set aside "family time." But our families are just like anything else in life. You have to work to make them stronger. Here are some pointers for parents who want to make their family stronger.

1. **Caring and Appreciation.** Take time to share positive aspects of each other. Even if a family member makes many mistakes, take the time to appreciate the positive things every member of your family does and celebrate their achievements. A simple way to express your caring and appreciation is through love notes. Tuck short notes into your children's lunch boxes or under their pillows. Also, spending quality time with your child is important to show just how much you care about him or her. Eat meals together, watch a movie, take a walk together. Another way to show appreciation for your family is to use and practice good manners. Treat everyone in the household with respect and always compliment good behavior. Thank family members for their efforts. A final fun thing to do to show appreciation to your family is to make gift certificates and follow through with them. Make gift certificates that allow your child to skip out on a chore or pick the family movie are simple things your child will enjoy.
2. **Practice family traditions.** A family tradition gives children a sense of belonging and security. They give children feelings of warmth and closeness to their families. Traditions can be any event that you do regularly and may be as simple as a bedtime story or biscuits and gravy for Saturday morning breakfast.
3. **Work Together.** Strong families make decisions and solve problems together. Parents are the leaders of the family, but children should be allowed to voice their opinions and participate in discussions that affect the whole family. Of course, these discussions should be age appropriate. Let your toddler choose the cereal while grocery shopping. Let your teenager choose something the family does on the family vacation. Letting your children make choices will also help them grow up to be responsible adults who can make good choices on their own. It also helps them feel connected to the family because you are sending the message that what they think is important too.
4. **Be flexible and open to change.** Keeping routines and schedules is important in developing a healthy and stable family, but adhering to those routines without flexibility opens families up to strained relationships. Families who are flexible and open to change are stronger families. Parents can set an example of flexibility by offering to do a nightly chore for a child who has an unusually heavy load of homework. Parents should also be aware that as children get older, their responsibilities and freedoms should change. There are also a number of life changes that families need to adapt to. Divorce, sickness, death, family moves—with all of these events, and more, families who are flexible and adapt to these changes are more likely to remain strong families.