



TO BE A MORE
EFFECTIVE PARENT
AND ENJOY A CLOSER
FAMILY RELATIONSHIP,
YOU NEED TO SPEND
QUALITY FAMILY TIME
TOGETHER.

TIME



STRATEGY:

EAT TOGETHER AT LEAST 5 TIMES A WEEK



To be a more effective parent and enjoy a closer family relationship, you need to spend quality family time together.

Research shows that teens do better when their families eat together at least 5 times a week. It doesn't have to be only dinners – it could include shared breakfast or lunch on the weekends.

The key is to do it together.

Teens who share regular meals with their family are:-

- more likely to do better at school,
- less likely to smoke or abuse alcohol or other drugs,
- less likely to become obese or overweight,
- less likely to have suicidal thoughts or behaviours,
- feel better about themselves, and
- feel more connected to their parents and whanau.

MEAL TIMES PROVIDE A GREAT CHANCE TO CONNECT AS A FAMILY. IT'S YOUR CHANCE TO TALK WITH YOUR KIDS - TO DISCUSS THEIR DAY – THEIR HIGHS AND LOWS, THEIR PLANS AND GOALS.

- Make shared family meals the priority. Focus on being together, rather than creating an elaborate meal that everyone will enjoy. Let everyone know when the meal is served and when they must be home.
- If the family is not used to eating together regularly, start small. At first, get used to eating together two or three times a week, before increasing to more regular meals together.
- Get everyone involved with the meal. Helping with the shopping, picking vegetables from the garden, finding a recipe, cooking, serving the food, setting or clearing the table – are all things that can get the whole family involved.
- Make it a habit to turn off the TV, iPods and cell phones while you eat. The important thing is to be together without distraction.
- Encourage good table manners, but try not to make them an issue or cause tension. It's more important to appreciate one another's company and your time together.
- Don't let the talk get out of hand and allow family members to criticise each other. Keep it light and fun.
- Use the time you have together to connect. Talk about your day. Ask your kids about school or their friends and their plans for the week or weekend.
- Avoid growling at kids or correcting them when they share things during meals.



STRATEGY: FIND TIME TO SPEND TOGETHER ON A REGULAR BASIS



"Well, you know when we're teens, we're so busy pushing our parents away that when we want them, it's hard to ask."

TEENS REALLY WANT ADULTS TO HELP SHAPE THEIR VIEWS ABOUT THE WORLD. THEY WANT ADULTS TO SPEND TIME WITH THEM AND TO TELL THEM ABOUT THE WORLD AND HOW IT WORKS.

It's a fact - teens don't want to end their relationships with their parents as they grow older. They just want them to change as they grow. Spending quality time with their parents is one of teens' biggest priorities - but they can't do it alone.

It is really easy as a parent to get caught up in work issues, money issues and everything else that parents and families have to deal with on a daily basis. It is important, however, to remember to spend quality time with your teen and have meaningful conversations.

Be involved in something that your teen is involved in, even if it is just being a **fan at their games**. This will give you a common topic to talk about. Also, families that never spend any time together have a harder time communicating with each other. Get creative about scheduling family time.

MAKE SPENDING TIME WITH YOUR TEEN ONE OF YOUR BIGGEST PRIORITIES.

You can:

Take 15 ... or 20. Give 15 or 20 minutes a day to your teen. Give her all of your attention - and let her choose what you do. She may want to talk about something that's bothering her. Try having a cuppa, reading a magazine together, or going for a walk. The important thing is that you focus on them.

Show an interest. Talking about what your teens are doing at school is a great first step. Attend their games and performances. Go to the parent-teacher conference. Being there shows them how important they are to you more than your words can.

Be friendly. Make an effort to get to know your teen's friends and their parents. Offer to drive a group of teens to the movies or to town. Make your home a place where they can feel comfortable "hanging out." You will get to know the people important to your teen - and be able to know she's in a safe place.

Make a plan. Lots of parents have grand plans for family time together - the rituals and traditions they'd like to establish, or the things they always dreamed they'd do with their families. The difference between families who dream about it and families who experience it is in the making of a plan. Write it down, block it out on the calendar, and talk it up in the days leading up to it. Being deliberate about family time shows our kids the value we place upon it and them.





Routines offer parents and teens a sense of security in their daily lives. When you establish a routine of communicating with your teen - it can be as simple as saying good-night at the end of the day - you are strengthening their sense of security.

“My kids usually share with me right at bedtime, either mine or theirs. I think it is because they are starting to relax and want my view on things that are going on so that they can work through it. Sometimes it’s really late but they seem to be thinking most at that time. Sometimes I’ve wanted to use tooth-picks to keep my eyes open because I’m so tired ... but I always listen to what they have to say.”

DADS - ONE ON ONE

Dads in the teenage years are particularly important. Fathers often spend less time with their kids than mothers – so dad’s need to consciously plan and spend more time. Supporting them in their hobby is a great way for dad to be involved, or finding some common ground where you can have one on one time together. For many teens, this could include learning to drive or helping with a project around the house. More simply, it might just mean asking them to come with you when you go out, or asking for their opinion on something that you are thinking about.



**MOST THINGS ABOUT
THEIR WORLD ARE
CHANGING.**

**DON'T LET YOUR LOVE
BE ONE OF THEM.**

BOUNDARIES