

CELEBRATE YOUR FAMILY

“Celebrate Your Family” is intended to help your family develop its strengths. The only two requirements for celebrating your family are a desire to do something that will strengthen the family further, and a family commitment to set aside some time for strength-building activities.

It is possible for every family to grow closer, to develop more cohesiveness, to become stronger. Many individuals and families tend to procrastinate, that is, put off till tomorrow those things that really need to be done today. “Celebrate Your Family” is intended to help you do today what needs to be done. It is designed to encourage and motivate you to begin or continue those family activities that will benefit your entire family. While there is no “money-back guarantee,” it is clear that strong families have similar family activities. They have found, working at strengthening their family pays off. Not only do these families feel stronger, they are stronger.

Families with younger children, especially, must begin early to develop a pattern or habit of spending time and doing things together. Young children growing up in a family that spends time together soon realize that in their family they can have fun. They feel good about being with the members of their family and gradually learn that their brother(s) or sister(s) and parent(s) have much to share with them that enriches their life. Over time a secure feeling develops as a result of being with one another.

It pays to begin early to do things together because as children grow older, their family and what it means to them will continue to be important. Strong families know that “spending time together and doing things together” doesn’t simply happen. Strong families plan family activities that the entire family can do together. Instead of putting off until tomorrow, they do the things they’ve planned.

FAMILY ACTIVITY 1.

Let’s see how we spend our time

A family should know how it spends its time. Each day for seven days the parent writes on the calendar the times family members did things together. There should not be any fuss made over the listing or calendar. Simply

record what the family does normally. You may wish to include the times the parent spent with one child alone, as well as entire family activities. Be certain to include meals eaten together, since these are important family times. Here’s an example:

At the end of the week, assemble the family mem-

	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
MONDAY	<i>Mom read to kids. All kissed Dad before he went to work.</i>	<i>No special activities</i>	<i>We ate together. Dad played cars with Susy. Mom lay down with Johnny.</i>

bers. The parent begins, “For the past seven days I’ve marked on the calendar all the times we did things together.” Give some recent examples, like “Last night we all listened as Dad read Johnny’s favorite story about trains.” The parent may ask an older child to count up the number of times the family did things together. The parent encourages all to look over the calendar. He or she continues, “Each of us did some special things this past week. Tell us one thing you did that was really special.” (Each member should be given the opportunity to tell one thing.) “Tell us why it was special.”

FAMILY ACTIVITY 2.

Let’s plan our family activities

Assemble all the members of the family around the dining table or in the living room. The parent begins, “We have a lot of fun doing things together. (Give one or two examples of activities that the family has had fun doing.) Today, we are going to plan some family activities that we can do together next week. First let’s talk about what we’d

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Calendar for family activity 1.

	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
SUN.			
MON.			
TUE.			
WED.			
THUR.			
FRI.			
SAT.			

like to do together.”

After briefly discussing what family members would like to do (activities might include a picnic, a walk, a visit to Grandma’s house, a short trip, playing a game, etc.), the parent shows the family members the calendar. The parent continues, “Let’s put our planned activities on the calendar.”

After all the activities have been listed on the calendar, the family decides where the calendar should be placed so all the members will see it daily and remember what was planned.

Many strong families, in addition to deciding on some special activities, set aside a short period of time (15 to 30 minutes) every day to do something together as a family. During this time the family might plan a game, read a book, do a craft activity or, if the family has young children, simply play with them as they use their toys.

The family that is committed to doing things that strengthen its life will, each week, take time to plan family activities for the following week.

Calendar for family activity 2.

	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
SUN.			
MON.			
TUE.			
WED.			
THUR.			
FRI.			
SAT.			

The causes of stress can originate outside of the family or with in the family itself. How a family copes largely depends on the family’s ability to develop its strengths. Strong families work hard to plan and protect the time they spend together.

By James E. Van Horn, Extension Specialist, Family Sociology, The Pennsylvania State University.

Reprinted for use in Kansas by Charles A. Smith, Extension Specialist, Human Development.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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