

## Strengthen Family Bonds throughout the Holiday Season

One of the greatest gifts of the holiday season is the gift of spending time with family and loved ones. Spending time together strengthens couple and family relationships and creates lasting family memories. Families who spend time together are strong families who communicate better and share a collective sense of belonging. The holiday season is a perfect time for families to reflect upon their family values and beliefs. Feelings of thankfulness for home, family, and friends spill over to other activities and to others who sense your gratitude.

Children's growth and development is dependent upon quality, fun activities with their parents. Meaningful activities help children feel important and nurtured, and children will grow to appreciate the memories of these activities and traditions. Making a commitment to spend time with your children strengthens family bonds.

Try a few of these fun, inexpensive activities this holiday season. They are sure to bring your family closer together:

- Hold a family game night. Spend at least one night during the holidays with the TV off and the family gathered together to play a favorite game.
- Hold a family movie night. Rent or watch a favorite holiday movie while enjoying each other's company. Pop some popcorn for a special movie snack.
- Spend time together while shopping at the after Christmas sales.
- Spend time in the kitchen together as a family. Parents and children can do the holiday baking and food preparation as a group. Even the youngest children can wash vegetables, set the table, or ice cookies.
- If you have more than one child, spend some one-on-one time with each child. This provides time to bond with each individual child, and helps him/her gain a sense of belonging and a feeling of importance.
- If grandparents visit during the holidays, spend time sharing family traditions and stories about past generations. Sharing family traditions gives family members a sense of belonging and strengthens values and beliefs.
- Acts of kindness and encouraging words are a great way to express appreciation. A hug or heartfelt "thanks" reinforces your love and support for family members.

Spending quality family time together strengthens family bonds and provides each family member with a sense of belonging. Whatever activities you decide to complete with your family, the memories that you create throughout the holiday season will be special and lasting.

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