

Making Family Life Fun

For many of us, fun stopped becoming spontaneous and automatic around the time that we decided we had to be responsible adults. But if we want our families to be happier, we need to find ways to make family life FUN!

Here are 5 ways to make fun a habit:

1. Smile more

Imagine a child whose every interaction with their parent is met with a look of serious concentration or contemplation—they are not angry or annoyed, simply preoccupied. Now, imagine that when that same child looks at their parent, they receive warm smiles and gentle, approving eye contact. Which would have the most positive influence on the child's wellbeing?

Smiles improve relationships, and they seem to make life more fun. Let your face know you feel great. Smile!

2. Learn new things together

Most children are naturally inquisitive and deeply curious. They love to learn new things. Learning is both fun and potentially profound when we do it together. We can have fun helping our children explore a topic they are interested in; we can plant a garden, learn new sports, and do crafts.

Exploration, learning, and curiosity are fun and make families happy. It simply requires that we are willing to be creative, explore ideas, and respond to our children's questions with enthusiasm and interest.

3. Just add treats

I don't know of any family activity that can't be enhanced with treats. If you are having a family meeting or a working bee in the garden, include popcorn, ice cream, brownies, or, if you don't do processed sugars, a big bowl of strawberries or freshly chopped watermelon.

This approach is best used randomly and for fun, rather than as a bribe. Treats are fun! But they should be offered unconditionally and to everyone, rather than only on conditions being met and only to those who meet the conditions. Otherwise, it stops being fun for everyone.

4. Celebrate—whatever!

Our lives are full of reasons to celebrate, from a child's small success to a big achievement. Celebrate in varied ways: a hug, high-five, ice cream, movie outing, special date, or a family dinner. For best results, make celebrations spontaneous and unexpected, not used as bribes.

We don't need to make our children's minor experiences into front-page news, but we can have fun when they do well. Do something more than nod 'well done' while chopping carrots for dinner. Pause. Get into the moment. Respond actively and constructively. Celebrate!

5. Five minutes of fun

If your children are demanding your attention, give it to them. We can all afford 5 minutes to become engrossed in some fun with our children. This can be unstructured play, like rolling around on the floor or dancing to a favourite tune, or it can be structured play, like a game of UNO or charades.

These micro-moments of positive engagement show that we are involved and available to our children. They teach our children that they are worthy, and they promote a sense of family cohesion and togetherness. They give us moments to be grateful for, to reflect upon, and to savour.

So today, find something to smile about. Drop your agenda and have some fun. Find something new to learn about or explore with your children. Cook treats, buy treats, or just eat treats. And find something—anything—to celebrate. Then, do it again, maybe a little differently, tomorrow.



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