

Family Time

When you pick up any magazine, it's easy to find an abundance of articles to help you organize your life. Most offer tips for cleaning out the closets, shuffling the papers on the desk, finding ways to organize the kid's toys.

But, here's a different twist. We'd like to help you organize your time to find some precious, extra moments to spend with your family.

Many parents are frantic because there doesn't seem to be enough hours in a day to manage their work, home life, and kid's activities. They're frustrated when they see others who seem to do it all. The number one question parents ask us is, "How can I find more quality time to spend with my kids?"

Stay focused on what's really important.

Do you waste valuable time? Clear the clutter in your life. Do you buy lots of toys and gifts to compensate for your lack of family time? What your kids really want is you, not the latest, greatest toy. How much time is wasted cleaning up the clutter? If the junk has taken over, pitch it.

How much time do you spend carpooling? Do you really need to sign your kids up for another after school dance lesson? Is your cell phone off? Or, are you wasting your time on endless phone conversations while running your kids from one activity to another?

Do you eat dinner together as a family? Are phone calls and other interruptions allowed during dinner? Is the television off?

Let everyone help. Do members of your family share in the household chores and responsibilities? Even the youngest children can help by making their beds, putting away toys, and setting the table. Insist that each task is done before moving on to another activity.

Set small goals and be specific.

Resolutions are made with enthusiasm. But, very often they're forgotten in a month. Making a resolution for the entire year is difficult to keep. Saying that you want to spend more time with your family is too vague. But, promising to spend 1/2 hour each night reading aloud with your children is much more achievable. Start with small goals. They're easier to accomplish.

No one can give you more than 24 hours in a day. But, it's your choice in how you choose to spend that time. Even an extra 10 minutes a day is a worthwhile goal. Once you see the benefits, you'll be motivated to set additional goals.

Winter Comforts

Now that you've set aside a few extra minutes each week, enjoy some of these winter activities with your family.

Start with dinner as a family. Make a new recipe. Let the kids help in the planning. Be sure to include some of their favorite foods.

Make one night a week Eat Dessert First Night.

Dedicate 30 minutes after dinner to family time.

Buy a new board game, set up an ongoing jigsaw puzzle, read a story aloud together.

Bundle up and go on a family walk.

Make snow angels or build a snowman together.

Schedule one Saturday or Sunday a month as family day. Plan an outing. Try hiking, snowboarding, skating, movies, or a museum.

Take a drive in the country and stop for a cup of hot chocolate before the ride home.

Explore nearby towns or historic landmarks. Arm the kids with cameras.

Start a family project to send to relatives next Christmas. Create a family cookbook or photo album.

Set aside an hour to bake a batch of sugar cookies. Pull out all of the sprinkles and decorations.

Dedicate one day as Pajama Day. Let everyone stay in their PJs for the entire day. Build a fire in the fireplace, read books together, watch movies, play board games.

Enjoy your family and your new found time.

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Source: www.familyarticles.net