

Adoption



Foster Care

The mission of Children's Aid Society is to identify and provide services to improve the lives of children and their families.

Post-Permanency Newsletter
Spring 2021

8 Easy Ways to Celebrate Earth Day as a Family

by: Lindsay Hutton

Explore the beauty of nature with your children and teach them the importance of caring for our planet with these simple and meaningful ways to celebrate Earth Day.

Read a Nature-Inspired Book
Read about all things green, from the importance of recycling to how to plant your own tree.

Up-cycle Trash into an Eco-Friendly Craft
Create a craft made from recycled materials that you can find at home or in nature. Take it a step further and make your own craft supplies, too. They're easy to make, better for the environment than store-bought supplies, and save you a ton of money to boot!

Take a Bike Ride
According to the U.S. Department of Energy, highway vehicles release about 1.5 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere each year. Take a family bike ride to one of the day's destinations, and ask your children if they can think of any other environmentally-friendly modes of



transportation. You can get the conversation started by mentioning skateboards, rollerblades, or even your own two feet!

Feed the Birds
Even if you don't have time to build a bird feeder, simply scattering some seeds or bread crumbs in your back yard will help feed your feathered friends. Ask your child to point out all the different birds that come to feast.

Open Your Windows
According to the EPA, air pollutants in the home can be 2-5 times higher than outdoor air pollutants. Throw open your windows and let the fresh spring air in! While you're at it, encourage your kids to listen for nature sounds and write down what they hear.

Get Outside
Picking up trash in your neighborhood, going on a scavenger hunt, or planting some flowers are all great ways to enjoy the outdoors and celebrate Earth Day.

Cook with Local Produce
Local produce doesn't need to be shipped long distance, and therefore helps to promote energy conservation by reducing the use of fossil fuels and packaging. It also helps to support the environment by offering a habitat to local wildlife and preserving open space.

Conduct a Science Experiment
Afterwards, talk about different ways they can reduce their impact on the environment.



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March 27 @ Children's Aid Society

10 a.m. - 12 p.m. (Pre-registered.)

Ages 8 and under

Each child will receive a treat bag!

Join Us for our Easter Bunny Debut!



How to Strengthen Family Bonds Bring Your Family Closer and Build a Firm Foundation

By Denise Witmer

Spending time together is one of the greatest gifts families can give to one another. Not only does quality time strengthen and build family bonds, but it also provides a sense of belonging and security for everyone in the family. In fact, research has shown that when families enjoy activities together, children not only learn important social skills but also have higher self-esteem. Strong family bonds also encourage better behavior in children, improve academic performance, strengthen parent-child communication, and teach your child how to be a good friend.

As a parent, you play a key role in cultivating and protecting these family bonds. But, building strong family connections doesn't always happen naturally. In our hectic day-to-day lives, it can take a concerted effort to carve out time for your family.

If you want to make this firm foundation a reality in your family, commit to these 10 essential practices.

Schedule Family Time. Whether you have school-age children or teens, it takes planning to set aside family time. Some ways that you can do this:

Set Aside Time for Family. Look at everyone's schedule to see if there are any blocks of time that can be designated family time. Try to select a regular night, maybe once a week, when the entire family gets together for a fun activity. By keeping this night on a regular schedule, everyone will know that they need to keep that night clear for family time.

Plan Small Vacations Together. Another way to incorporate family time into your schedule is to plan regular day trips. If this is something that sounds fun for your family, try to plan the trip at least one month in advance. Post it on the family calendar and make sure that everyone is aware of the plan.

Make and Maintain Some New Traditions. You also can use this time to create family traditions like carving pumpkins every Halloween or picking the first strawberries of the summer season together. Some families enjoy attending the same local festival every year or entering a 5K walk or run together.

The options for creating family traditions are endless. Look for things that your entire family would enjoy.

Eat Meals Together. Choose a few nights during the week when you expect everyone to gather around the dinner table. Don't allow phones or other electronics. Just eat a meal and have a conversation together.

Studies have shown that eating meals together has positive effects on children's physical and mental well-being. It can also reinforce communication and strengthen

family bonds.

If you're unable to get together for dinner as a family because of busy schedules, try breakfast. The key is that you come together and enjoy a meal free of distractions.

Do Chores as a Family. Make cleaning your home or caring for the yard a responsibility for the whole family. Create a list of chores and have everyone sign up. Then set up a time during the week or on the weekend when everyone can tackle their chores at the same time.

If your teens have a demanding schedule and need a little more flexibility, give them a deadline to have their chores completed. But, remind them that doing chores together makes the job go much faster than doing them alone.

What's more, doing chores together also can foster a sense of teamwork, especially if someone gets done early and is willing to help another family member complete their tasks. To make doing chores more rewarding, plan a small reward for when the work is done like getting ice cream together, watching a movie, or playing a board game.

Create a Mission Statement. When most parents think about mission statements, they think of non-profit organizations and businesses. But these documents work well for families, too. Though it may seem a little corny or too business-like, putting together a family mission statement can establish your families' priorities.

A family mission statement also can remind everyone about your family's core values or what you love most about each other. It is simple and fun to develop as a family. In fact, it is a great project for family night. Once completed, display your mission statement in a predominant place in your home. Read it, refer to it, and talk about it often. It helps solidify what is important to your family.

Have Family Meetings. Family meetings are a good time for everyone to check in with each other, air grievances, or discuss future plans. For instance, a family meeting is a good time to talk about an upcoming day trip, family vacation, or how you plan to complete the chores next weekend.

These meetings can be scheduled events on your family calendar; or you can make them impromptu and allow any member of the family to call a meeting if they feel the need. Family meetings also can be used to set family goals.

Start each of these meetings by reading your family mission statement. If you have a large family, begin by asking if anyone has an issue or an item for the agenda. Write down what everyone wants to talk about and go through them one-by-one.

You may need to establish some guidelines for the meeting, like setting a time limit for each agenda item and implementing a "no talking rule" when someone else has the floor.

Emphasize, too, the need to be kind, considerate, and respectful. The goal is that these meetings allow you to solve family issues in a productive way.

Encourage Support. Feeling supported by your family is one of the most important elements of building strong family bonds. Bonds like these will last your kids a lifetime. They will enjoy these strong bonds when they are your age and even after you are gone.

To create a sense of support, encourage everyone to learn what things are important to their family members and to do their best to support each other through the good and the bad times. Everyone in the family should feel empowered to share their good news as well as share their bad news.

The goal is that everyone in the family will rejoice together when things go well. And that they commiserate together when things do not go as planned like a poor grade, getting cut from the team, or losing the science fair competition. When families feel supported, getting through hard times becomes much easier.

Schedule Some Downtime. While family time is an important part of everyday life, there also is a need for some downtime, too. Not only should you encourage your kids to spend some quiet time alone to recharge, but you also need to carve out time for yourself.

Parenting is a huge responsibility that can take a toll on you. As a result, never feel bad about taking a break. Even the U.S. Department of Labor requires companies to give employees breaks throughout the workday. So, be sure you are taking a little time to yourself.

The reality is that you will be a better parent when you take care of yourself. Take a break and read a chapter in a book, go to the salon, ride your bike, spend time with friends, or play a round of golf. The key is that you do something you enjoy, even if only for a few minutes.

Volunteer Together. Research has shown that the more we give, the happier and more grateful we feel in our own lives. What's more, giving your time and energy to make someone else's life better is always a powerful learning experience.

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How to Strengthen Family Bonds Bring Your Family Closer and Build a Firm Foundation

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When your family shares in these learning experiences together, it will strengthen your relationships. For instance, spending a day at the local food bank or taking a weekend to build a home for charity are valuable experiences you can share throughout your life.

What's more, volunteering can expose kids to lots of different people and increase their appreciation for those who are different from them. It also teaches children to be more empathetic and less self-centered.

Volunteering has also been linked to a number of other improved health outcomes including better physical and mental health, increased life satisfaction, higher self-esteem and decreased depressive symptoms.

Overall, volunteering as a family is almost always a positive experience for the entire family.

Get Involved in Your Child's Interests.

Strong families support their family members' passions. Whether it involves attending their soccer games, reading a book series they love, or helping them collect Marvel figurines, it is important that you support your child's interests.

If your child is passionate about NBA basketball, watch a game together. Or, if your child loves reading Harry Potter, read the series and then talk about it. If your child is in

sports, band, Scouts, or another school activity, provide support in some way.

You don't have to take on a huge leadership role. Find a way to show your kids that you support what they are doing and want to assist them with their pursuits, whatever those may be. If you are unsure of where you can help, ask your kids for their thoughts. Asking demonstrates that you care about the things they are interested in.

Join Other Families. No one lives in a bubble. We are all part of a community, so be sure your family is building relationships with other families. Whether this is within your neighborhood, your school system, your church, or some other avenue, it is important that you spend time with other families as well.

Doing things together, with other families, will strengthen your own family bonds and help you see how your family members interact with others.

Remember that your children and teens learn by example. The best way to set a positive example for them is by placing high value on the family. When you set aside special time for family fun and activities, you are demonstrating not only that you value the family, but that you value them individually as well. There is no greater gift that you can give your family—and no better way to strengthen

your family bonds—than by making your family a priority.



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SWAN Post-Permanency Services



**statewide
adoption and
permanency
network**

These services are available to any family who has adopted and lives in Pennsylvania, whether or not they adopted their child from foster care, and to those families who have provided permanency to children from the foster care system through permanent legal custodianship or formal kinship care.

Families self-refer by calling the SWAN Helpline (800-585-SWAN) to request these services. The services are part of a continuum of services that strengthen and support families and assist in strengthening the special needs adoption community at the local level.

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