

10 Secret Ingredients for a Happy Family Life



Did you grow up watching TV shows like the Brady Bunch, the Cosby Show, Family Ties or Happy Days?

I still remember laughing when Bill in the Cosby Show said to his son Theo 'I brought you into this world, I can take you out!' (in a light-hearted way, of course).

Even though these families had their occasional dramas, they always seemed to find ways to pull together and make things work.

I was surprised and chuffed the other day to see my son Jake help his sister Holly tie up her ballet skirt. It was only a little gesture, but it was so cute and made my heart swell.

Here are 10 tips to help make your family life a happy one:

1. **Love and accept each other:** Loving one another, warts and all, is one of the key ingredients for a happy family life. Sometimes it's difficult to do, but consciously accepting your family members for who they are and what they stand for and what makes their hearts sing enables us all to feel comfortable in our own skins and be ourselves. Tell each other 'I love you' often. Greet each other with a hug and kiss. Make your home a safe haven for all, so coming home and seeing each other is a happy event.
2. **Eat together:** Whenever possible, share meals and quality time together. And, no iPads, iPhones or other devices allowed at the table! Make this personal time for sharing each other's company. Aim for at least 4 - 5 meals a week. If evenings aren't easy due to work or after-school commitments, have breakfast together. Weekends are also a great time to either go out for breakfast, lunch or dinner as a family and make a special occasion of it or, you might choose to make a particular meal time a family ritual, like Saturday breakfast or Sunday dinner.
3. **Enjoy being in each other's company:** No matter what you're doing, whether just pottering around at home, doing some shopping, watching a football game on TV or, better still, going to the game together - enjoy being with each other. Find opportunities to laugh and have fun together.
4. **Share stories about your day:** Dinner time or evenings in general are great times for getting together and sharing what's happening in your world. Allow each person to know no-one in the family has a life that's more important in any way to anyone else's - we're all important. Take an interest in each other and ask open questions about their day, like 'What did you like about your school excursion today?' 'How did your meeting go with your new client?' 'What did you get up to today?' Open questions allow people to share something special you might not have thought to ask them about or expected to hear.
5. **Demonstrate your love for each other as 'a couple':** Couples can fall into the trap of attending to work, home responsibilities and other outside commitments and forget to prioritise spending enjoyable time together as a couple. Remember to always nurture your connection and relationship and share your love with your partner, no matter how busy life gets. Better still, scale back on how much you do so your life never gets too busy for what matters most to you. It's important for your relationship and it also teaches your children, if you have them, about love and togetherness.



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- Put limits on your work hours as well as after-school activities for your kids and share family activities:** Family time is an important part of life and shouldn't be secondary to work. Not many people die saying 'I wish I'd spent more time working', but they do say 'I wish I'd devoted more time to relationships with my children, mum, dad or a sibling'. Put boundaries around work time and disconnect from work when you're with your family. Be present to the people you're with and activities you're doing. Children can internalise feelings of insecurity and feel they're not valued when a parent or both parents work excessive hours and are home late or out in the evenings a lot of the time. Similarly, excessive amounts of after-school activities turn parents into taxi services and result in kids rarely being at home with their siblings and they miss out on the opportunity to enjoy quiet time at home with family members.
- Encourage harmony not rivalry between siblings:** Rivalry between kids can be divisive. Encourage kids to get along and find ways to enjoy themselves together. I find diffusing Young Living's essential oils Peace and Calming, Orange or Harmony works a treat when things get heated between my kids, especially in the evenings on school nights. A few drops in their bath water sets them up for a great sleep too!
- Create a stable environment at home:** Children thrive in a safe and settled home environment. Enforce house rules and by all means have consequences for breaking them, but don't lose control and yell or scream to get a point across. It only teaches kids to do the same thing when they don't feel in control of what's happening and want to be heard. If you need to argue, keep it away from your kids. But if they do hear it, apologise afterwards and tell them 'We're sorry we were arguing. We just had a disagreement, but everything is OK now.'
- Be flexible and open to changes:** Children grow up and change and so do we as parents. Couples' priorities change too. Be open to what shows up in life and be willing to change with the times, to make or accept different lifestyle choices of family members as well as new additions to your family unit.
- Communicate openly:** Create an atmosphere of safety, so everyone within the family feels they can speak openly about anything they need to without feeling awkward. Be a good listener too without dishing out advice or solutions. Allow the person who's speaking to think through their own best solutions with you just being there as a sounding board for them. Sometimes feeling heard and valued is the most important thing.

For more business and life coaching tips to help you achieve your goals and create and live the life you've always wanted, visit www.blueskycoaching.com.au. To find out more about how you can work with me personally, call me on 0411 471 941 or (08) 8338 3134 or e-mail tania@blueskycoaching.com.au.



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