



Family Ties

Family and Consumer Science

Human Development

Celebrate National Family Week 2007

National Family Week is an annual event sponsored by the National Alliance for Children during the week of Thanksgiving. This year, National Family Week is observed November 18 – 25. Organizers of National Family Week believe that “Children live better lives when their families are strong, and families are strong when they live in communities that connect them to economic opportunities, social networks, and services.”



Many local and national agencies and organizations host events during National Family Week to promote strong families and strong communities. You can check to see if your community is hosting an event by visiting the Website at www.nationalfamilyweek.org. Even if your community does not have an event planned, there are some things you can do with your family to celebrate this special week in your community:

- Eat a meal with your family in addition to Thanksgiving dinner.
- Meet and get to know your neighbors.
- Plan a neighborhood supper.
- Select an issue that can improve your community. Work with local officials or organizations to bring about change.
- Organize or participate in a school meeting about improving your child's education.
- Write a thank-you note to someone who helps your family or your community.
- Encourage employers to consider family-friendly work options such as flexible hours and time off to attend school functions.
- Volunteer with a nonprofit organization on projects that benefit your community.

If you don't have time to do your activity during National Family Week, don't worry. You can do the activity at some other time. Just use this special week to think about what you want to do and spend time with your family. Then, get to work on your idea and make the whole next year a celebration of your family and community. Happy Thanksgiving and Happy National Family Week!

By: Denise J. Brandon, Ph.D
Extension Specialist - Family Relations

Christmas, Teens and Parents



Want to know the secret to having your teens look forward to spending time with mom and dad? Instead of treating them like “little children” treat them as if they are already adults. When you recognize that your teens are no longer “little children” and you began to bring them to the level of adults, you create a friendly meeting ground.

The Gift of Good Conversation

Holidays can be tricky business for parents and teens due to differing expectations. While we each want to feel loved and accepted for who we are, we have our own ideas about how that ought to occur.

Below are seven ways to help you enjoy your teenage children.

- 1. Be Interested.** Show your interest by completely hearing what your teens have to say. Listen without speaking. Give occasional encouraging nods and sounds. Resist the impulse to dismiss feelings or give unsolicited advice. Be interested in their lives without taking over.
- 2. Be Involved.** Check in periodically with your teen and talk about what's on his or her mind. Initiate, but don't force it; leave the door open to take advantage of those times when teens are ready to open up. Talking to them right then, whenever possible, will show them that you really do care. This will strengthen your bond.
- 3. Be Respectful.** Teens, like most individuals, want parents to respect their views, even if their parents don't agree with them. Realize that you can acknowledge another's viewpoint without making it right or wrong. With acknowledgment it's much more likely that your son or daughter will want to hear your ideas.
- 4. Be Reasonable.** Help your teen understand the reasoning behind your requests. Stay away from commands. Make sure your rules are age-appropriate. Offer choices and be willing to negotiate based on each child's maturity level and the specific situation at hand. One size does not fit all.
- 5. Be Understanding.** If your kids want to spend part of their holiday time with their friends, let them. Your teen's friends are as important to him or her as your friends are to you. There's no need for feeling competitive; don't take it personal. It isn't!
- 6. Be Appreciative.** Stay focused on what you like about your teens. Make meaningful appreciative statements. It doesn't have to be something BIG. Say something like, "Even though you had a lot on your mind, you took the time to call. I really appreciate that." Make sure you mean it; kids can spot when you're being phony.
- 7. Be Supportive.** Comment on what is being said without evaluating everything. If you begin to feel uncomfortable, say "Uh-huh," and keep listening. Don't get furious, get curious. Use a collaborative approach with your teen. Your support allows your son or daughter to stop and think things through more clearly.

By: Judy Berryhill, MS
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Toy Safety At Christmas

Toy safety is not something most of us think about too much -- until we hear of a toy safety related accident that might have been prevented.

And according to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, there are about 150,000 of those every year -- many of which could have been prevented.

Every year, about 5000 new toys come to market, and by Christmas time, there could be in excess of 100,000 different kinds of toys for sale across the country.

Toy safety is important at any time of year, but at Christmas, it's even more so.

Since 1970, toy safety has been legislated, and over 1500 toys banned from the consumer market. In spite of this, individual toys may still be unsafe for various reasons. Some things to look out for include:

- Sharp edges and points, especially if a toy gets broken.
- Tiny parts that could be swallowed, or end up in ears, nose or eyes.
- Toys that make so much loud noise that they damage eardrums.
- Anything that can be propelled or create a projectile.
- Electric toys that can burn or shock a child if something goes wrong.

Here are eight tips to help you focus on toy safety in your home:

1. When you are buying toys, get into the habit of reading the labels. Many toys have age-appropriate recommendations. In addition, you may not want to give a small child a toy with a label that says, "Stuffing material may be toxic."

2. Look for name brands that are known to have quality construction and solid design principles. Plastic is usually the best choice for material, then wood, and finally metals.



3. If you are buying anything electrical, make sure it has the 'Underwriters Laboratories' (UL) seal on it, indicating that electrical parts have been tested and deemed safe.

4. Read the instructions yourself, and make sure the child understands how to play with, and care for, the toy. Talk in general terms with your children about toy safety -- not to alarm, but to inform.

5. Check your children's toy box on a regular basis for 'preventive medicine.' Throw away anything that's suspect!

6. Make sure the toy storage method is age appropriate and safe, too. For example, check shelving units from time to time to make sure they are sturdy. Make sure a toy box lid is lightweight and can be opened and closed easily, etc. Check to see if heavy toys are stacked on top of others.

7. Teach children to routinely put toys away appropriately so they won't be stepped on or tripped over. (Stressing the toy safety aspect may make it easier to gain their cooperation in this regard -- but don't hold your breath.) ;-)

8. If you have a baby or toddler, remember that everything automatically goes into the mouth. Make sure the child isn't playing with anything with detachable parts, or pieces that are too small.

By: Matt Devereaux, Ph.D
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Divorce and the Extended Family During the Holidays



Divorce is difficult for everyone involved, especially the children, but the problems may be magnified during the holidays. Family gatherings are often awkward events where family members may come face-to-face with former in-laws and extended family members. They may have bad feelings toward these former in-laws related to the divorce. These events can become a nightmare for everyone involved, especially the children. This situation can be avoided by laying out some ground rules in advance.

If the divorced couple is able to work together for the sakes of their children, they will go far in helping their children feel secure and loved during the holidays and throughout the year. However, sometimes extended family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins) may not think about the damage their offhand remarks can do to the children of the divorced or divorcing couple. Extended family members may also engage in a competition to buy the child's loyalty through providing expensive gifts or seeing who can get the most time with the child during the holidays. These actions will not only make family gatherings uncomfortable for everyone, but they may do permanent damage to the children.

Divorced or divorcing parents need to do some advance preparation before either parent takes their children to a family gathering. This means laying some ground rules for how family members should behave during the event. Here are some suggested ground rules for extended family members:

- If you have a problem with one or both of the divorced or divorcing parents, talk directly to them—not to the children about the problem;
- Do not talk negatively about either parent in front of the children or with other family members;
- Don't ask prying questions about money or try to use money or gifts as a bribe to gain children's or grandchildren's favor;
- Don't ask children prying questions about their parents or family members from the other side of the family; and
- Encourage the children's time with both parents and extended family members, when it is safe for the child.

Divorced or divorcing parents need to talk frankly with both sets of family members before holiday gatherings to set the ground rules. Make sure family members know that you want them to be involved with the children. However, if they cannot abide by your rules, their time with the children will be limited. They need to understand you are doing this to protect the children—not to punish the extended family members. Also, remember to reserve some time of your own with your children.

Preparing family members in advance can lead to a more peaceful and enjoyable holiday season and can protect children from additional conflicts that can harm them for a long time to come.

By: Denise J. Brandon, PhD
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The Truth About Teen Blogging

Four million teens are blogging! What's a blog you ask? A blog (web + log) is an online journal often hosted free of charge by such companies as MySpace.com, Live Journal, and FaceBook.com.

Blogging is quickly becoming the "teen" pastime of choice. It has huge appeal because it's fast and easy; if you can write, you can blog. It's a place that allows free self expression and it's interactive; young people post their replies to individual blogs. It's also social; kids can connect and share their ideas with other young people.

All of these reasons perfectly fit the needs of the Atari generation: kids born in the early 80s who grew up with video games. These kids are wired differently; they have unique characteristics and have a strong need for attention, close connection, and a fast feedback loop.

Blogging at its best can build social skills, enhance writing ability, and provide opportunities for asserting personal views and concerns to millions on the net.

At worst, blogging can turn negative. The illusion of privacy and typing into your computer within your own four walls can lead to dangerous consequences, including a rise in Internet stalking and cyber bullying.

Often the need for attention and self-identity is so great that teens post provocative pictures and outrageous descriptions that can get them in trouble. Blogging may FEEL like its private, but it's public! Plus, posting information that is deemed harmful to a person's reputation can result in legal action.

IF you are concerned about your teen's blog, you can do a search on Google (www.blogsearch.google.com). Use keywords (your child's name or email address). You can also go directly to the popular teen sites listed above and enter your search information.

Should you read your child's blog? Given the public nature of blogs, why not? Just make sure that you don't over react if you find something disturbing. Turn it into a teaching opportunity instead.

Consider this: You can't help your teens if you're uninformed.

Source: Barbara McRae, www.teenfrontier.com



Eight Gifts that Don't Cost A Cent

1. **THE GIFT OF LISTENING...**

But, you must REALLY listen. No interrupting, no daydreaming, no planning your response. Just listening.

2. **THE GIFT OF AFFECTION...**

Be generous with appropriate hugs, kisses, pats on the back and handholds. Let these small actions demonstrate the love you have for family and friends.

3. **THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER...**

Clip cartoons. Share articles and funny stories. Your gift will say, "I love to laugh with you."

4. **THE GIFT OF A WRITTEN NOTE...**

It can be a simple "Thanks for the help" note or a full sonnet. A brief, handwritten note may be remembered for a lifetime, and may even change a life.

5. **THE GIFT OF A COMPLIMENT...**

A simple and sincere, "You look great in red," "You did a super job" or "That was a wonderful meal" can make someone's day.

6. **THE GIFT OF A FAVOR...**

Every day, go out of your way to do something kind.

7. **THE GIFT OF SOLITUDE...**

There are times when we want nothing better than to be left alone. Be sensitive to those times and give the gift of solitude to others.

8. **THE GIFT OF A CHEERFUL DISPOSITION...**

The easiest way to feel good is to extend a kind word to someone, really it's not that hard to say, "Hello" or "Thank You".

Friends are a very rare jewel, indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear, they share a word of praise, and they always want to open their hearts to us. Show your friends how much you care.

