



HOW TO BUILD FAMILY BONDS THAT LAST

If you ever feel like you're sharing a house with strangers, it's time to prioritise your family.

When families can't find common ground, this can lead them down the path toward family estrangement. However there are a few things you can do to create a supportive and enabling environment that will protect and preserve your family relationships.

STRUCTURED FAMILY TIME



According to Cape Town-based clinical psychologist Dr Ros Veitch, an extremely common complaint from parents is about children 'treating home like a hostel'. Everyone, children included, becomes so busy that months can go by where they just don't interact properly. This can lead to a feeling that you are living with strangers, says Ros. The solution is to ensure that the family purposefully sets aside time to spend together. That means sitting down with calendars and making time in the schedule to create memories as a family.

HAVE FUN TOGETHER

Family time shouldn't only revolve around chores or watching TV together, but rather activities that can build memories. Shared family stories build unity. Nothing does this better than doing activities that are fun. Ideally this should be out of the family routine. It could mean spending time in nature or going to a sporting event together. What's important is that family time feels like something you are doing just to be together.

'Kids also love seeing their parents being vulnerable. Because of this, activities that involve you all learning a new skill is a wonderful way to bond,' she says.



TAKE AN INTEREST IN EACH OTHER



The aim of family time is for each person to really get to know the others as individuals. Every family member is different and really close bonds are built by families who understand and appreciate that. Eating meals together allows for a chat, a catch-up, and the chance to show an interest in one another's lives. 'Parents should share memories and talk to their kids about the things they like doing while asking about their children's hobbies and memories in turn – you are figuring out who they are, watching them grow and sharing in their lives. They will notice,' promises Roz.

TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS

The best way to really understand each other is for parents to speak about feelings with children and teach them, in turn, how to speak about their own feelings. 'It's important that you regularly check in with each other to find out how people are feeling, and how they are coping or managing things,' says Roz. It's important to appreciate each other, take the time to be grateful for one another, to notice the things that others do for you, and to thank them.

Investing time in your family will build a foundation for future togetherness. What's key is to consistently spend time together, and when you look back on the shared meals and special memories, you will be grateful.



If you have a family issue you want to discuss, contact your employee health and wellness programme for professional and confidential counselling.

References

Champion your parenting
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Verywell Family

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Let us stay mindful of caring for one another and ourselves