

# TIPS FOR FAMILIES

## Family Leisure



One of the most important ways for a family to foster strength and resilience is to engage in healthy, fulfilling leisure activities together. Leisure is the use of free time for enjoyment. Some families may feel like they do not have time for leisure activities, but research shows it is important to find time to engage in leisure activities together.

Being involved in and satisfied with family leisure leads to:

- better family communication
- closeness to family members
- ability to handle stressful situations
- satisfaction with family life

In other words, when families enjoy leisure activities together, they tend to feel like their families are closer, stronger, and more satisfying in general.



## Types of Family Leisure

Common, easy, quick, and inexpensive things that families can do together almost every day are called **core leisure activities**. Some examples of core leisure activities include playing cards, watching tv shows or movies, playing catch, or talking about the day. These kinds of activities do not require a lot of set up, planning, time, or money. These core activities are often common ways family members bond with each other.

**Balance leisure activities** are activities that take more effort to engage in and tend to cost more in terms of time and money. These include activities like going to concerts or sporting events or taking road trips for holidays or family reunions. Generally, they are activities that tend to be out of the ordinary or take place in new settings.

Balance leisure activities can also bring people together, but they are different from core activities as they tend to involve new experiences and change—which can sometimes be challenging. For example, a trip to the zoo is fun, but it may require extra planning and

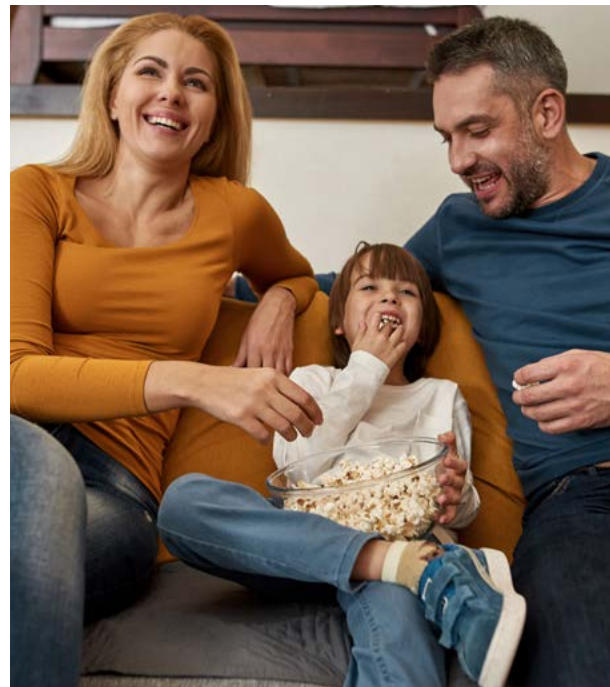
preparation. Considering things like naps, mealtimes, and weather may be important for the activity to be enjoyable for the whole family. Balance leisure activities are helpful for families to learn how to respond well to change, while also strengthening relationships. While both core and balance leisure activities benefit families, research suggests that core leisure activities are particularly important for strong, healthy families.



## Suggestions for Engaging in Healthy Family Leisure

- **Remember that leisure activities do not have to be expensive or extravagant to be meaningful.** Enjoying conversations over dinner, playing a card game, watching a favorite show together, going for a walk, and playing catch can all be positive, beneficial activities for the family that do not require much set up or expense. The important thing is that your family is together and enjoying one another—not that a lot of money was spent.
- **Make time for family leisure.** Being involved in family leisure regularly is important and connected to benefits for individuals and the whole family. Though leisure time should be frequent, how that looks for your family may be different compared to another. Some families may prefer to set aside a regular night each week for activities, while other families may benefit from more flexibility. The important thing is that families are doing leisure activities together regularly.

- **Engage in activities that the whole family will enjoy together.** This may take some trial and error, but that's okay. Try a board game, go for a hike, or cook a meal together, and see how everyone feels about it. The more satisfying the leisure activity is, the more likely it will strengthen family connections. If family members enjoy a variety of activities, take turns letting each other choose the family activity.
- **Identify activities that suit your family's needs.** For example, if your family enjoys nature, then hikes, picnics, and boating may be your preference. However, for those less interested in spending time outside, activities like going to the movies or doing an art project might be more appropriate. The important thing to remember is that families benefit from regular participation in healthy, satisfying leisure activities. It's okay if these leisure activities look different for each family.
- **Technology can be a great way for families to connect but can also interrupt family time.** For example, if your family likes playing video games, choose games where multiple people can work together or compete at the same time. It's also a good idea to pick games that don't require a high level of skill to participate—that way, younger or less skilled players can join in on the fun.





- **Picking an activity that is challenging for the family can be a low-pressure way to help families learn to communicate better.** Examples include working through puzzles and riddles, an obstacle course, or an “escape room.” These kinds of activities may help families learn to adapt to challenges and problem-solve.
  - **Leisure activities should be fun and friendly.** Healthy competition is a natural aspect of some leisure activities (like board games, sports). But it is important that each family member treat the others with respect. Leisure activities are good opportunities for children to learn social skills. For example, younger children can learn how to be a good winner or loser (for example, without bragging or complaining) by watching parents and older siblings model these behaviors.
  - **Remember that leisure activities are about having fun but are also an important way for family members to connect with one another.** Ask questions about what each person enjoyed the most about the activity. Praise effort, problem-solving, and other strengths you see in each family member. Leisure activities are a good way to learn more about each other, including your goals and challenges. When someone misbehaves, use the opportunity to model good communication and problem-solving skills.
- Leisure activities are a vital way that family members connect with one another. Making time to regularly engage in leisure time can benefit the whole family. Talk with your family about how to build in more leisure time, and have fun as a family!

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**Publication 4016** (POD-07-24)

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Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. ANGUS L. CATCHOT JR., Director