



Ontario Home Economics Association

Ask a Professional Home Economist

For Immediate Release

Making Time for Family

by Mary Carver, P.H.Ec.

Whether you are still waiting for your kids to leave home or rearranging the furniture to make space for their return, consider yourself well-off if you have family to spend time with. Some are envious.

Families have been described as the most basic and important units of our society. Some people say that ‘families that pray together - stay together’, while others maintain that families build character, values and teach love and respect. Some give family time priority over all else. Still others maintain that healthy, happy families create healthy, happy communities.

Gone are the stereotypical families of yesteryear. Once considered typical was the family with two parents of opposite sex living with two children. If the two kids were of opposite sex, they were sometimes dubbed ‘the millionaire’s family’, suggesting idealism. There’s no such limiting definition today.

The Vanier Institute of the Family defines family as “any combination of two or more persons who are bound together over time by ties of mutual consent, birth and/or adoption/placement and who, together, assume responsibilities for variant combinations of some of the following:

- physical maintenance and care of group members;
- addition of new members through procreation or adoption;
- socialization of children;
- social control of children;
- production, consumption and distribution of goods and services; and
- affective nurturance – love.”

Regardless of family definition, it seems that finding time to spend together is more difficult today than ever. That’s a bit hard to understand when we live in an era of time-saving conveniences like fast food, fast cars, flexible work schedules, instant banking, express checkouts and high-speed Internet.

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Today's families face unprecedented demands on their personal time. "The proliferation of technology has created impatience, an intolerance of slowness and expectations of instantaneous response. Contrary to expectations that we would have more leisure, the work ethic has intensified. Families are both caught by, and contribute to, a cult of busyness that seems only to intensify," says Kerry Daly, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition, University of Guelph, in his paper, "*It Keeps Getting Faster: Changing Patterns of Time in Families*".

Premier McGuinty has announced that February 18, 2008 will mark the first official "Family Day" in Ontario. The new holiday will be marked annually on the third Monday of February. Ontario joins Alberta and Saskatchewan and possibly Manitoba in this celebration. Ontario Professional Home Economists who teach Family Studies and work with families and individuals to help them achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life offer the following tips on how to spend family time.

Fun Things to Do on Family Day:

- Spend quality time together - don't make it just another day at the mall.
- Begin a new family tradition that can be continued for years to come.
- Get outdoors and 'play' together - cross-country ski, bird-watch, skate or toboggan.
- Enjoy a walk in the park or in the forest - take along a winter picnic.
- Bake a batch of cookies from scratch - try Grandma's recipe. Celebrate your family's heritage.
- Cook a special meal, allowing every family member to play a role.
- Make hot chocolate. Play a board game. Do a family puzzle. Take a family photo.
- Read a book together, sharing thoughts and feelings about the plot.
- Review photo albums or old videos and reminisce about the good times you've had together.
- Organize photos that you've neglected. Make sorting and labelling a family event.
- Work on building a family tree. Start with what you already know and work backward.
- Build a snow family or a snow house. Gather vacation souvenirs, scrapbook or display them.
- Visit an aging relative or someone who is shut in. Host a family reunion.
- Start a collection - postcards, stamps, recipes or coins, to be valued for generations to come.

The important thing is to be together, embrace laughter and build memories as a family. Family time is all about finding a work and life balance, so seize the opportunity on February 18th. In fact, families are so important that they should be recognized more than just once a year.

- 30 -

Mary Carver is an Ottawa-based Professional Home Economist, public relations consultant, writer, former teacher and member of the Ontario Home Economics Association.

The Ontario Home Economics Association, a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life.

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