

## More Fun in your Family Life

Family fun is vitally important for healthy living and there's hardly a family expert who would not agree with that message.

**Talk and laugh with your children every day.** If you merely teach children how to cope with problems you haven't taught them how to experience joy. It is important to help children experience joy and pleasure in their everyday surroundings. Here's how to teach this important life skill:

- 1) **Make ordinary things fun.** One great thing about fun is that it doesn't even have to cost anything, and it doesn't even have to take extra time. Psychologists say that happiness is actually just a way of looking at your life and being willing to use any opportunity to laugh is critical.
- 2) **Teach your children the magic of anticipation.** Kids learn from their parents how to look forward to things. It's important to sit down with your children daily and talk about upcoming happy events - to show them how to anticipate good times. It doesn't have to be a major event, like a trip to Disney World or a holiday with tons of presents. Something simple, like talking about next weekend, will do just fine.
- 3) **Help your children be realistic about what's going to happen.** You get your kids in the mood for anticipating the wonderful things about to take place, and suddenly their imagination knows no bounds. You don't want to be a spoiler, but you also don't want to let your child's version of things swing wildly away from what's practical.
- 4) **Get in the habit of savoring the moment.** Children tend to be absorbed in the experience, while adults may step back and reflect on it. Parents should be careful not to push their child in to adopting their analytic style. It's okay to let your child simply experience the wonderment of something, like rolling in a pile of leaves. Don't make her think she has to put a label on what she's feeling.
- 5) **Take plenty of strolls down memory lane.** It's okay to reminisce about old times, to savor things that happened in the past and keep them alive in your child's memory. Taking photographs and gathering souvenirs are two practical ways to share memories. Also, tell stories about things the child has done.

6) **Encourage your children's playful side.** You can show your kids how to be light, how to take pleasure from life, how to be pleased with themselves. When you laugh at your child's jokes - even the early, rudimentary ones like putting his shoes on his ears – you are helping him develop a sense of humor, and when you put your shoes on your ears in response, you are showing your child that you share completely in his sense of fun.

# # #

References:

Bosch, K. (2005). Fun Family Time Together. *NebGuide*. University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension Publication G1589.

Rupured, M., Family Vitality, *Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture*, HE7-140, Retrieved June 1, 2008 from <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/FCS7/FCS7140/FCS7140.pdf>

Schroeder, D. E., (1986). The Effects of the Recession on Cuming County Rural Families, a Thesis for the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Written by Debra Schroeder, Extension Educator  
Reviewed by UNL Extension Educators and Specialists