Quick, how many clichés about family can you list?

‘The most important time is family time’, ‘Keep family first’, ‘Family time is the best time’, and ‘In a family, love is spelled T-I-M-E’ come to mind for me. These are all fantastic reminders about the critical connection between time and your family. I don’t know about you, but every once in a while I need a reminder and I’m always open to new suggestions on how to improve my relationship with my family.

Even when the stresses on our family are minimal, it can be a challenge to really “BE” with them, even when we are in the same room! We often find ourselves so busy supporting each other by being AT our various events that we sometimes aren’t WITH them. Instead we’re checking emails and texts, taking calls, taking photos or filming the event, or posting it to social media. Even while we’re eating together, we struggle with interruptions tearing at our time.

So, what have I learned? Your immediate family is the most important thing in your world, and extended family is the next best thing. So whether you are a single parent with one child or a couple with a bunch of kiddos, you have the responsibility and power to set the tone for how your family will “BE” with each other. Here are a few suggestions for making quality time happen. Carve out some time to do some of the following with your family:

- **Engage in meaningful conversations.** Have every family member share how their day was and why.
- **Eat at least one meal together** without the TV or any other distraction on.
- **Consider a daily or weekly Gratitude Journal.** List something you’re grateful for since your last entry. *(Pick up a FREE gratitude journal for your family at our office between 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday through Friday!)*
- **Play outside together.** Jump in a pile of leaves, make a fort, go for a hike, try geo-caching, or take a bike ride. *(Need to borrow a bike? Give us a call!)*
- **Pay it forward.** Visit a nursing home, shovel a neighbor’s sidewalk, or serve a meal at the mission together.
- **Read together.** Have you read the *Little House on the Prairie* books yet? Listen to your children read or have your tweens and teens read to younger children.
- **Play inside together** with board games, cards, or puzzles.
- **Cheer wildly** at your child’s next concert, game, or other event!

Feeling a bit overwhelmed by all of the other stressors attacking your family’s time? Contact YFS’ Stronger Family Program at 791-5025. We’re here to help! We can listen, share ideas, offer classes, or develop a customized plan to improve your communication and time together!

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