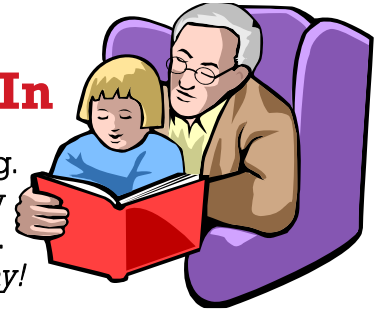


The Great American Family Read-In

Give your children the gift of a love a reading.
The Great American Family Read-In is a wonderful way
to introduce or increase time devoted to reading as a family.
"Resolve to Read" every day!



Discover
the joy of reading
and the magic inside



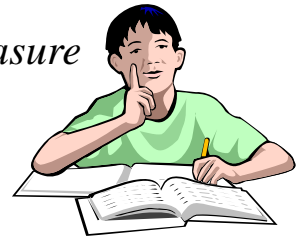
the pages of a book

Prayer Before Reading to a Small Child

Thank you for this bonus, Lord, this moment of intimacy between me and my child. Let me savor the quiet joy we give to one another. Help me to make time to read together again tomorrow because the day after tomorrow he will be reading to himself and will be much too grown up to pull my arm around him and open a story that transports us together to another time and place. And for those families who have never read together, I pray, Lord, that they try it just once. Amen.

Dolores Curran, *Family Prayer/The Complete Guide for Praying Families*. West Mystic, CT. Twenty-third Publications. 1978.

Studies show that children who are read to and who read for pleasure perform significantly better in school than non-readers... and students who enjoy reading are more likely to be motivated to study.



READ, READ, READ!

- ◆ Make frequent visits to the library.
- ◆ Be certain that your children see you reading for pleasure.
- ◆ After dinner gather together with cups of cocoa and take turns reading aloud chapters of a favorite book.
- ◆ Create a family Reading Hour where everyone reads silently.
- ◆ If your child reads independently, have him/her read to you.
- ◆ Read aloud to your children while they wash the dinner dishes.
- ◆ When vacationing, research the area together. Find books set in that location, and read them before or while you are there.
- ◆ Discuss current events from the newspaper or magazines.
- ◆ Read about the same topic: while Mom and Dad research, older children and young readers can enjoy learning from age appropriate books on the same subject.
- ◆ Ask your child's teacher or a local librarian for book recommendations.
- ◆ Invite grandparents to record tapes of favorite books so the little ones can follow along or be "read to" at bedtime.

Many parents stop reading aloud to their children once they begin to read independently. Parents should remain involved with their children's reading, so that they develop a love of reading and the comprehension skills necessary for school success. Reading together as a family can encourage and inspire a child to become a lifelong reader.



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Lessen Your Stress: Make FAMILY TIME a Priority



Carving out family time is guaranteed to lessen stress and enhance communication. Parents' work schedules, children's school and extracurricular activities, and other obligations make meaningful family time a precious and rare commodity. Some families find it helpful to set aside a "Family Night."

Check out these web sites for tips and strategies to aid in your success:

www.familyfirst.net (Family First provides articles and links on Marriage, Parenting, Family Life and Fatherhood).

www.readysetrelax.org ("Ready, Set, Relax! Night" began as a community initiative by enlisting the cooperation of local schools, sports councils and religious leaders for an evening of "No Homework, No Sports Practices, No Scheduled Activities." Their web site offers planning tips and resources to raise awareness of the impact on families of over-scheduling).

www.familylife1st.org (Putting Family First offers practical advice and encouragement).

www.mediafamily.org (National Institute on the Media and the Family, provides media "grade cards" and strategies to maximize benefits and minimize harm of media).

No matter where you begin, committing to your family is sure to bear great rewards... *start now to make "FAMILY TIME" a priority!*

Family Connectivity

Ask any parent if they'd like to raise kind, honorable children who remain connected to their families and their spirit and the answer would be a resounding "Yes!"

Here are some tips on staying "connected":

- ✓ Schedule a time when you gather for fun—at least weekly
- ✓ Eat at least one meal together on most days
- ✓ Strive to live your spiritual beliefs
- ✓ Laugh together
- ✓ Develop favorite bedtime rituals
- ✓ Disallow "put-downs" and mean-spirited teasing
- ✓ Discuss family rules and consequences; evaluate appropriateness every six months or so
- ✓ Have predictable times for each family member to be heard—family meetings, during dinner, carpool conversations.
- ✓ Talk about family traditions and ancestry
- ✓ Minimize TV viewing and computer use

Mimi Doe is the author of *10 Principles for Spiritual Parenting—Nurturing Your Child's Soul* (Harper Collins). Her online newsletter, "Spiritual Parenting Thought for the Week," has thousands of subscribers from around the world.

The *family* has a special vocation to be a place where people are loved not for what they do or what they have, but simply because they *are*.

- "To Live in Christ Jesus," Pastoral Letter of US Bishops

Time, Love and Tenderness

Winter is deepening. My cats spend more time curled up by the wood stove and less time outside. When I'm getting ready for work in the mornings, they stretch their paws toward me when I walk by, but they know they will not get any serious patting until evening. Sometimes on weekends I find myself very busy with indoor and outdoor chores and my cats are unforgiving. They thread themselves through and around my feet when I'm carrying loads of wood and piles of laundry. In their best language they are asking me to make a lap for them.

When my children were young they learned that I had no lap at certain times of the day. They too, reached their arms toward me, knowing that the best they could get was a pat on the back or a kiss on the cheek. And just as my cats are doing now, my children found ways to let me know when they weren't entirely satisfied with these quick signs of love and affection. In their very best language they too, were asking me to make a lap for them.

Give yourself the time to hold and be with your children in ways that please each of you. Dance silly to a song on the radio. Knead bread together, bumping elbows. Curl up on the sofa and tell stories. Read nursery rhymes. Tell riddles. Try making a lap at least once a day. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at how lovely it feels.

By Marsha Cherington, Family Information Services. January 2004 ©