

Family and Relationship Tips

1. Balance work and home life. It's not easy balancing your work and home life, but how you manage it can make quite a difference in your relationship with your family. When you have that balance, you feel more in control of your life.

2. Look after yourself. Parents often spend all their time looking after everyone else in the family and forget about themselves. If you don't look after yourself, you can end up feeling miserable and resentful, and unable to give your children the support they need. Admit that you actually have feelings and needs of your own. It's not selfish to treat yourself once in a while!

3. Discipline. Rather than thinking of discipline as punishment, use it to teach your children how to meet their needs without hurting or offending others. While you may be angry, keep calm and teach your child how he or she can handle the situation differently next time.

4. Set boundaries. We often use boundaries to protect children from harm or danger. But it is important to explain why boundaries are there rather than issuing orders. If you pull your child away from an open fire, explain why. Children may be reluctant to follow instructions if parents simply command them. However, an explanation will help your child understand and therefore cooperate.

5. Communicate. Communication is important, during the good and the difficult times. Children often find it hard to put their feelings into words. Knowing that their parents are listening can be enough. Talk about yourself and your daily life. If they feel included in the things you do, they are more likely to see value in including you in the things they do.

6. Spend quality time. Try to organize time together a few times a week – perhaps three meals a week where you sit down as a family. This will give you all a chance to connect and talk about the important issues, as well as fun topics. Ask your children to help you with the chores or run errands. They may protest, but will feel included in your life.

7. Make decisions jointly. It is normal for older children to test boundaries and see what they can get away with. You may need to adapt limits as children grow into teens, and it can help to



involve your child in the negotiation of new boundaries. Too many restrictions will be hard to keep on top of, so decide which are really important to you (such as those involving your child's safety) and which are not worth fighting about.

8. Comfort each other. It is important for a family to be there for each other, especially during the hard times. If there is a family tragedy, or if a family member has a problem, pulling together can really help. Your children will need your help at this time, and it is important to be open and communicate with them.

9. Be flexible. More than anything, children want to spend time with their parents. Impromptu games or an unscheduled trip to the park can be fun and something you and your children will remember fondly. It's good to have a routine, but it's not the end of the world to disrupt it occasionally for spontaneous fun and games. Schedule a few hours every now and then for a lazy afternoon together.

10. Spend quality time with your partner. It can be difficult to find time for you and your partner once you have children, but it is important. After all, children learn about relationships from their parents. Make sure you communicate with your partner frequently about all the day-to-day matters, as well as things you enjoy talking about.



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