

# Mental Floss

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## Family – Our Refuge, Our Children’s Nest

By Dr. Gary Calhoun

We all know that a family is more than a collection of people related in some fashion living under one roof. Since we are such a mobile society these days “family” may include people outside our biological family. It takes work to build a family and keep it going through good and bad times. The rewards for your labors will be returned many times over if you put forth the effort. None of us has a perfect family so we have to work with what we have available in our own unique situation.

For adults a strong family offers a refuge where you will always be accepted and can always let your guard down. This is a place of shelter, sharing, learning, and laughing.

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## Building A Strong Family

By Dr. Susan Calhoun

One of the first signs of a strong family is an attitude that “the family comes first”. You must be committed to your family in terms of your time, willingness to make sacrifices, and readily offer forgiveness.

Spending time together is what continues to breathe life into a family. Did you know that families that eat dinner together tend to have less behavior problems with their children? It is truly sad to know that the vast majority of families do not share a meal together in the same room and at the same table on any regular basis.

We often hear that it’s not the amount of time that is important, but the quality of the time spent together. Well, studies on families have never supported this belief. The studies consistently show that quantity and quality are important. Strong families spend a lot of time together. From this time together a family’s history is born. Just think back to your own childhood and notice what you recall. It is the time that we spend together as a family that provides the basis for most of our fondest memories. Try to keep this in mind when prioritizing work, family, personal time, time for others, etc.

Strong families talk to one another. This may seem like stating the obvious, but you may be surprised at how little communicating can go on in a house full of family members. Strong families spend a lot of time talking with one another.

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## Family – Our Refuge, cont’d.

Loyalty is always present in healthy families. Along with loyalty comes the certainty that someone will be there with us in times of trouble and joy. Along with the gift of loyalty comes the responsibility of dependability. Repay loyalty with being dependable and trustworthy.

Families provide us with numerous resources to assist us in our lives. From family members with special skills, areas of knowledge, to those who give loving support our lives are made easier. What do you bring to your family in this regard? Each one of us will bring something of importance that helps to build the strength of a family.

The love and caring from our family may be the glue that holds everything together. Maintaining a loving atmosphere requires us to be honest, patient, slow to anger, and quick to forgive.

Being loyal, contributing, and sharing will all go a long way in helping you strengthen your family.

### **Families and Children:**

Families may be considered the most important school your child will ever attend.

From the family your child learns to work with others, learns to share, and to be cared for with unconditional love.

A family is also where a child learns to struggle and overcome obstacles. Allowing your children to experience the frustrations, trials, and tribulations of overcoming obstacles is one of the greatest gifts they may take away from the family. Too often parents think they are protecting children when they too quickly come to the rescue. While it may be hard to watch your child struggle think of how good they will feel when they overcome the obstacle. This is what prepares them for life when they leave your protection. Give them the gift of perseverance so that they may flourish as adults and parents.

## When Families Divorce

Divorcing families have special needs and challenges. At some level we all know that children are harmed by divorce. Sadly there are times when the pain of divorce is preferable to continuing in a destructive situation.

The good news is that there is a lot parents can do to control and minimize the harm from a divorce.

Start by deciding how you will tell your children. It is best to tell your children as a couple after deciding together what you will say. Reassure your children that neither of you will be out of their lives. It is important to maintain ongoing and consistent contact with your child during and after the divorce.

Don't say negative things about your spouse within earshot of your child. Never use your child to carry messages to your spouse or in any way that puts them in the middle of you and your spouse.

No matter how insecure you may feel, never compete for your child's affection. Build your own relationship with your children.

Expect your children to have difficult times. The best you can provide them is your full and attentive listening.

Even during the worst of times the blow can be softened with patience and understanding.

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Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.  
--Jane Howard (1935-1996) US journalist, writer

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**IN THE NEWS...**

This newsletter is now available online at [www.OnlineLifeCoach.com](http://www.OnlineLifeCoach.com).

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Drs. Gary and Susan will be offering therapy packages, which will consist of a set number of sessions for one price, to all of our Weight Loss Surgery Clients. Look for more information on our website in the coming weeks.

**Building A Strong Family, cont'd.**

Talking with one another helps families stay close and build healthy relationships. Families find their conversations range from the most trivial of matters to the most important of matters. Never underestimate the importance of talking about the trivial. If you have discussed the trivial matters with someone and not felt heard you are not likely to discuss more important matters.

Effective communication is more about listening than talking. The listening part seems to usually need a little more work than the talking part. It is easy to stop talking to one another. Take a look at your own family and ask yourself if you talk with one another. Ask yourself if you create a family environment that welcomes open and honest communication.

It is so easy to take family members for granted. We all want to be appreciated. Studies consistently show that people often place being appreciated above money or power. The ones receiving your words and deeds of appreciation will be grateful. Showing appreciation for one another in a family helps to build a healthy family. Families that express their appreciation for one another have fewer conflicts and want to spend time with one another. How often is it that someone is not truly appreciated until they are gone?

Times of crisis can bring families together or tear them apart. Strong families unite behind one another and rely on one another during times of crisis. A quality of strong families is the ability for everyone to pull together as a team with each member sharing the load. When family members pull together they are strengthened by the combined talents and resources of everyone. In this way no one person has to be responsible for resolving the crisis.

Strong families do not just happen. In order to have a strong family you must devote your time and energy to making it happen. Perhaps most importantly you must understand the need!

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## **Tips For Building A Strong Family**

- Eat meals together at the same time and place as often as possible. This is a perfect time for connecting with one another and keeping in touch with each other's lives.
- Play together as a family as often as you can. This is one of the activities that provide us fond memories of our youth.
- Be open and honest with one another. Learn to listen more than talk. Talk to each other about the most ordinary and extraordinary things in life.
- Show your appreciation every chance you get.
- Say I Love You like you mean it and with frequent regularity.
- Teach your children the value of struggling to overcome obstacles. If you teach them well they may actually grow up, become independent, and not move back home.
- Build and treasure family rituals. This helps a family develop a sense of identity.
- Be loyal and watch out for one another.
- During times of crisis pull together and allow each person to contribute in their own way.
- When faced with a problem band together to attack the problem and not each other.
- Be faithful to your mate.
- Be willing to make sacrifices for the good of the family.
- Nurture the spiritual wellness of your family.

**Practical Psychology Solving Everyday Problems**