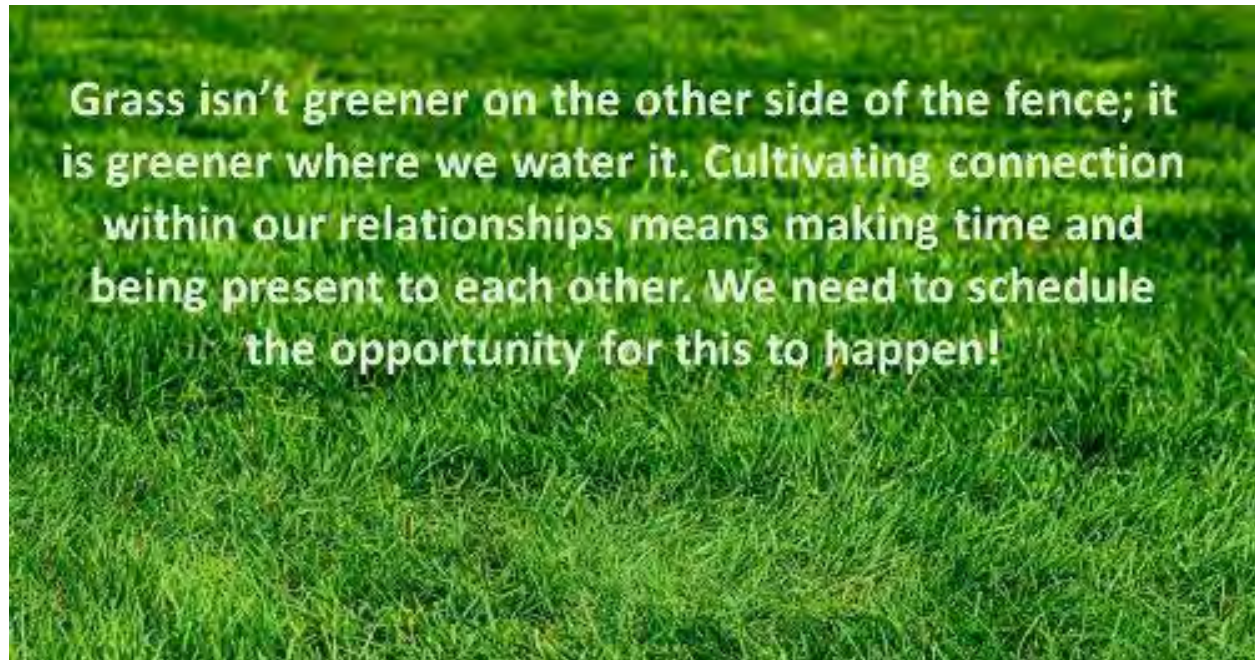


Making Family A Priority

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I am excited to announce that my book is available on Amazon. tinyurl.com/7-Gifts-to-Give-Your-Child

Making Family A Priority

Family is the foundation of society. History confirms it and every nation is built on that foundation. But the many changes and advances that our world has seen over the past 70 years puts enormous stress on family life. In the words of economic visionary Stan M. Davis, "When the infrastructure shifts, everything else rumbles." As parents, we need to reflect deeply on this and look at how we are prioritizing and leading our families in these changing times. I have come to believe that creating a space each week to invest in the family is essential.

Holding weekly family meetings is not a new idea, but it brings together several elements that can strengthen your family and help things run more smoothly. When I was a teacher as well as a part of my church's youth ministry staff, we had regular meetings that were an integral part of the success of the programs.

Every company, organization, and non-profit relies on monthly or weekly meetings to make things function. Similar to any organization, families need to create some order around work and school schedules, church activities, sports, music and dance lessons, doctor appointments, family vacations, summer jobs, household chores, volunteer projects, and more. Meeting together once a week with a family calendar creates the necessary structure needed for harmonious living. In addition, family meetings enable everyone to be engaged in the process of building relationships, solving problems, creating connections, and having fun.

For many families, the first hurdle is simply making time. In our busy lives, we can feel that family time is just one more thing to juggle. But shouldn't this be a worthy challenge for each of us to strive towards? If we want to make our family a priority, finding one hour a week is essential.

Whether you have never established a weekly family gathering or yours needs a little tweaking, I invite

you to take the next step in making this happen. I agree with Stephen R. Covey when he says, "I have come to feel that probably no single structure will help you prioritize your family more than a specific time set aside every week just for the family. You could call it 'family time,' 'family hour,' 'family council' or 'family night'. . . Whatever you call it, the main purpose is to have one time during the week that is focused on being a family."

The purpose of a weekly gathering time is to have one evening each week where the family is the focus and priority. As simple as that sounds, it will not happen unless you reserve the time. Put it on your schedule just like you do with all other appointments. It can include a special meal as well: Chili Tuesday or Pizza Friday.

Family meetings can make an enormous difference. They can become the keystone to a happy, harmonious family life. Families who meet weekly find that siblings fight less, children argue less with their parents, and there is less yelling and nagging! Now, isn't that an hour a week well spent?

Using the four elements that I introduce in the first chapter of my book, tinyurl.com/7-Gifts-to-Give-Your-Child, you can be flexible and creative with family meetings. If your children are young, it may be about establishing a weekly routine without worrying about the various parts. With older children, include them in the planning process for the weekly fun activities and reading/discussion topic. This helps them have input, which can contribute to their level of enthusiasm about the family gatherings. It is also a great skill for their future - learning teamwork, taking on responsibility for the outcome, and experiencing synergy that comes from collaboration.

If your children are adults and maybe have children of their own, find a weekly or monthly time to get together over a meal. Delicious food always enhances connection and making time to enjoy each others company can create opportunities to reminisce about past family adventures and make new memories.

An added benefit to weekly family meetings is that it gives an opportunity to share your values and stimulate conversation about topics like honesty, gratitude, respect, perseverance, friendship, and kindness in a natural way. Read a classic from The Book of Virtues by William J. Bennett or another favorite, and ask open-ended questions. You can Google "Books That Build Character" to find lots of great suggestions.

You might also watch a YouTube video together like "Grateful: A Love Song to the World" and discuss what being grateful looks like in your family. Challenge your kids to find other inspirational videos and TED Talks to share at family meetings. If you have young children, get the book *Have You Filled A Bucket Today?* by Carol McCloud and learn how to be a bucket filler instead of a bucket dipper. Pick a value or virtue for a week or a month, and have the kids create and decorate a poster with the virtue to put around your house to remind everyone. Occasionally, the discussion time could be dedicated to resolving challenges between family members. You can also use the meeting to plan an upcoming family trip or summer vacation to get everyone's input.

Things that we schedule are more likely to happen, and having a regular time both for logistics and for connection as a family will make parenting less stressful and more joyful. Nothing says "I belong" like a family activity that creates laughter and memories. What will your next family meeting look like?

For more information about "7 Gifts to Give Your Child--Parenting That Will Touch Their Future" please visit: www.coachmyrna.org/7-gifts-to-give-your-child.html

If you would like to know more about what I offer as a coach, please visit my website: www.coachmyrna.org/ Find out more about Safe Conversations www.coachmyrna.org/safe-conversations.html.