



# Family Life

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|---|---|--|--|---|
| <p><b>We don't really know what kind of family we are</b></p>               |    | <p><b>My partner is always in motion; can we talk about our family life?</b></p>   |    |    |
| <p><b>I don't think about my ideal family - I'm just too busy</b></p>       |   |  | <p><b>We do have clear expectations of our children</b></p>                          |   |
| <p><b>I don't expect much so I am glad when things turn out alright</b></p> |  | <p><b>I just want a family that is not like the one I grew up in</b></p>           |  |  |
| <p><b>They want the children involved in everything; - why?</b></p>         |  | <p><b>They are my favorite person on some days, but on others...</b></p>           |  | <p><b>We <u>are</u> a family - isn't that enough?</b></p>                             |

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**We join together in this adventure.**

**Living** as a family is an action-process, not a picture on the wall. It has activity and relationships that react to changes and challenges in particular ways.

**How does your family react?**

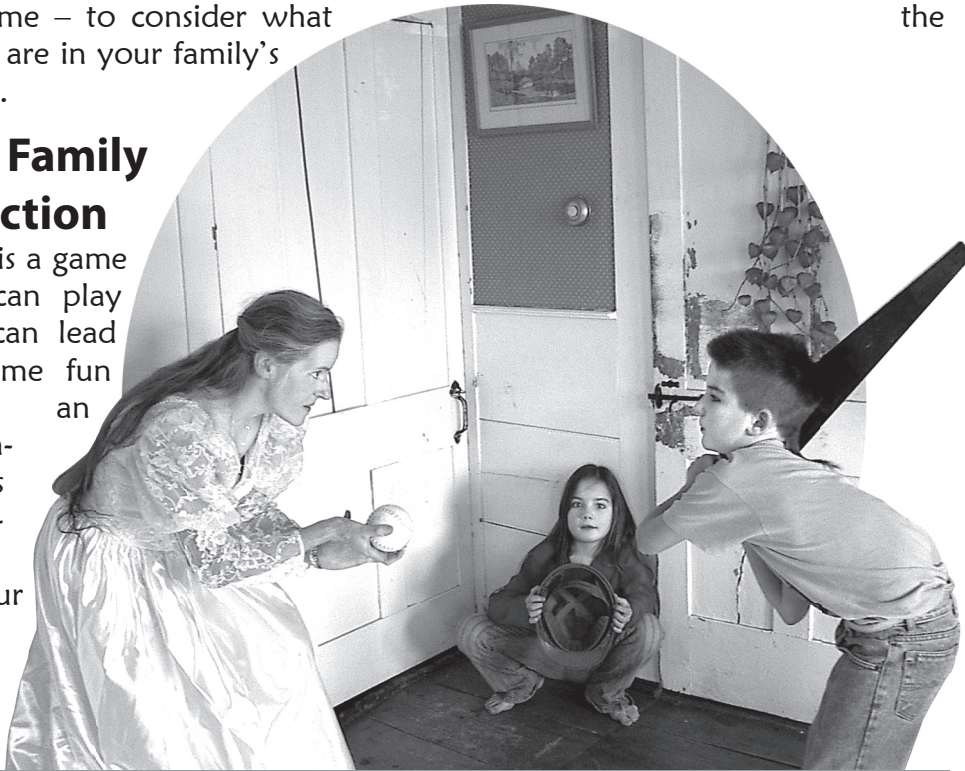
**How would you like it to?**

Many of us do have a family ideal in our heads. We try to keep this image going, but when life's demands happen, do we fulfill our image? Or do we still act by reflex when surprised by inconveniences and trouble? Are we happy with how the story goes? It really is possible to bring your family closer to its ideal, but you will need to have a common vision to aspire to.

Having a vision for your family life is both an inner and an interpersonal activity. It can be very helpful – especially if you are making changes at home – to consider what the ideals are in your family's vision.

## The Family in Action

Here is a game you can play that can lead to some fun and an adventurous recognition of your own family's self-



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image. Take an evening at home or a car ride to try it out.

Have someone be the scribe so you can remember your answers, and use them to launch more elaborate considerations later on as you plan the projects to improve your home.

Bring this book, or copy the game from the book and take it with you. Be sure to take some notes as you tell the story.

As you practice talking about your family ideal, you will of course face limitations in yourself and your spouse. None of us achieves an ideal. But holding the commonly shared ideal in your mind at the same time as you practice loving acceptance will give you two competing mental tasks. Stick with it even if it is a little wobbly. Just love the family while you do it, and keep up the momentum. Forward movement is good here. Inspire each other along.

Now, as you consider the process of renovation, imagine the family from that story-trip and how you wish to have them face the uncertainties together. How will the adults teach the young ones about facing new challenges? How will they instill an attitude of support and helpfulness? How will they correct each other? How will they model their values of thrift and resourcefulness? Really – we don't have to be perfect, but taking some time to see our movements through this family lens can sometimes give us opportunities to really impact who we become as a family. Our attitudes about our ideal and about each other will influence how all of us view our projects – as hindrances or as helps for our home life.

## An exploration game: Swiss Family Robinson

*Here is a fun game that helps us explore our family's own values. Sit down with your partner and do some imagining together. Find a nice cozy spot and snuggle awake and talk as thoughts come, or take turns. (This is like a kid's game: remember when you would take turns completing a story all around the room and it would become quite interesting? Well, here's your chance to sit by the campfire and tell a story to yourselves.)*

*You don't have to include the kids in this, but can talk their parts for them if you like. Even if the kids are invited, it can be fun to guess lines for each other several times. (Everywhere there is a blank or ". . ." just fill it in and elaborate on the story for a bit, then return to the next section.)*

**One day**, the \_\_\_\_\_ family set out on a trip.

They rented a \_\_\_\_ (boat/RV/airplane/spaceship <now called "the pod">) and had a mighty fine trip planned to go to the wedding of a fun & distant cousin whom they longed to see.

So, Dad \_\_\_\_\_, Mom \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ all got packed and settled into the pod, and began their wonderful trip.

They took with them . . . (And also name each person and what they took)

They got pretty excited to be on this trip, and many stories were told and questions asked. "Where are we going?" "Why are we going there instead of Disney World?" And, "When are we going to get there?"

Mom answered. . .

And Dad answered. . .

Well, the kids settled down and they were making pretty good progress across the miles when they suddenly realized that the gas gauge had not been working properly, and they ran out of gas.

Dad said, . . .

Mom said . . .

Kids said . . .

When the pod stopped working, they then . . .

Next, Mom did . . .

And Dad did . . .

Kids did . . .

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Yet none of these things worked, and they found themselves in a strange foreign land.

As it turned out, one of the children had been studying this foreign language in school and was able to translate.

They needed food so, . . .

They needed to sleep in a warm dry place, so . . .

They needed to have some fun so they . . .

As they met people, they learned new things.

One of the favorite things Mom learned was . . .

And that Dad learned was . . .

And (each child) . . .

But as much fun as they had enjoying this new place, they wanted to return home.

They had to discover how to do that so they. . .

And they asked . . .

And they found . . .

And they invented . . .

Finally they were able to return home. Although they never made it to the cousin's wedding, on their trip back home they talked about what they were thankful for.

Dad said he was thankful that . . .

Mom said . . .

(And each kid) . . .

*Now, take all of your answers and consider your family's story. How did it seem to play this game? Any surprises? Share your feelings together. Let yourselves tease & laugh.*

*What did you learn about your family? Ask - if you liked how the family did things? Would you prefer to have a different outcome? Talk about it and what it means about how you all are and how you want to become.*

*It is kind of like a reality show - artificial circumstances that reveal our priorities. Think about them - talk about them with your **Home Team**. You are renovating your family - so, who do you want to become?*



- Now that you completed the story – consider how you characterized your family.
- Is this the way you would like your family to handle such an adventure?
- Would you like to change anything? What? How?
- Talk about this with your partner and why you like the things that you prefer.
- You are likely to find many areas of agreement and some funny truths. We might find that, in our ideals, we want more than we see now. That is fine; and each one may have a bit more to add to the vision until it becomes a blend of dreams and personalities.

### ***Your Family's Ideal***

Now then, the result of that conversation is your family ideal. It may seem a bit scattered, but with some discussion, you may get some ideas crystalized into words. But for now, it might be mostly a collection of wishes. No problem. Let yourselves develop your ideal over time.

Each family should have an ideal; and fully achieving it is not required. But without a dream to shoot for, we won't know where to aim. The goal of this exercise is to clarify your target.

As you spend any time talking with your partner about these types of things, you will focus more and more closely on your goal and find it easier to visualize and make it happen.



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## Some considerations for larger or longer projects

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| <b>Gathering times &amp; places for family</b>   | <p>You will need to find some substitute places, times, and activities. Try some word games or board games. Set up a card table and hang out there and invite the kids in. You can <u>make</u> them try it a few times. They'll be surprised at how much they like it.</p> <hr/> <p>Teens need to be able to talk privately and parents do too. Try creating some new ways to honor each other's privacy by creating signals (yes - communication is good) that you will respect such as letting your teenager talk on the phone alone in your room for a while when they use a certain hand or word signal and you affirm consent. You can make temporary rules to keep people from being intruded upon, such as expecting a whistle or knock before entering the private space.</p> <hr/> <p>Try setting up some hours for free play in the common spaces, and give ample warnings and assistance to pick up when the time is over. Then help redirect them to cooperative activities – either chores or family recreation.</p> <hr/> <p>It is important to maintain a good diet and drink lots of cleansing water. So, try going "dry" during your renovation and these family challenges. You may be very surprised at how responsive you are to others' needs, and more able to lead the family closer to your ideal. You will need your wits about you, even after you put your hammer down; you are still at the helm of your pod, and can have a very positive impact on helping your whole family enjoy their fun relaxation after a good day of hard work.</p> |
| <p>If the family usually eats together or watches TV together, and these spots are demolished during renovation...</p>   |  |
| <b>Privacy</b>   |  |
| <p>Removing doors &amp; walls can leave folks feeling awkward. You can put up privacy barriers like curtains, or move furniture as a temporary wall.</p>   |  |
| <b>Recreation</b>  |  |
| <p>If the kids' play area has been removed, they can find it hard to have fun and may end up cranky and underfoot.</p>   |  |
| <b>Substances</b>  |  |
| <p>You may be exposed to all sorts of substances in your renovation. Drinking alcohol is considered by many to be essential for the end of a hard day, yet it cuts down on the mind's ability to adapt to new surroundings, to problem-solve, and to think well in the context of your relationships. These are subtle impairments that are not obvious to the one drinking.</p> |  |

## Notes from Family Life

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**So, with your partner - go ahead and play the game in the chapter.**

### **Let's consider what it is all about**

**What did you learn about your family's ~**

about their likes and dislikes?

about the ways you handle stress?

about facing life's challenges

### **Consider some things over the next few weeks**

Take a couple of times to consider how your family's day has gone in light of the ideals you have learned about your family

### **Some lessons**

*Think about it:*

**What can you do to promote folks in the family to get closer to that ideal you have discovered for your family?**

*Then talk with your partner at the Communication Table*

**Sort through your observations and desires, talk about it together**

Give yourselves a chance to talk about the ideal that can never be reached but is worth picturing together

**Remember to hold your partner and the Home Team in this positive light as you encourage each other over the following weeks**