FAMILY LIFE FRIDAYS BLOG

Families have changing needs, and the Extension Family Life Team is here to help!

Every other Friday, Dr. Brittney Schrick, Extension Family Life Specialist, and the Family Life Team will post tips, activities, and other ideas for you and your family. Be sure to follow us on Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube @UAEX_FamilyLife!

Unplugged, or Plugged In Together?

by Brittney Schrick

In this digital age, it becomes more and more difficult to compete with screens, social networking, and other digital media for the attention of our children. In attempting to ensure quality family time, it is often suggested that we unplug and interact together without the distraction of screens. This sort of time is necessary, and there are lots of ways a family can be together without screens. Setting limits for screen time, especially for younger children, as well as setting rules for how and when screens are used are important and necessary boundaries. However, all screen time is not created equal. Sometimes, a screen can be helpful in bringing family together; it’s all in how you use it.

Here are some ways to plug in as a family:

Play games together

Do your kids like to play video games? Play with them! Let them teach you how to play. Is your child constantly telling you about Minecraft? Let her show you too. For older children especially, knowing that their parents care enough about them to try something they enjoy is very meaningful. Join in with the Creepers and the Zombies to save...whatever it is that needs saving.

Get active indoors

Play active games like Wii sports or Just Dance together! It can be silly and a lot of fun and many of those games are a great workout. Especially when the weather isn't conducive to being outdoors for long periods, active indoor games are a great way to get moving together. What kid doesn't love watching their parent act silly...especially if their friends can't see them?
Have a family movie night

Sit together and watch a film. Maybe even have a living room or bedroom floor picnic. Make the focus on the shared screen, and keep other screens out of the way (no checking your email or texts while watching!). Any time together is great, and no special supplies are required. If you're someone who likes themes, Pinterest and other sources have some great ideas available for themed movie nights. Do you find it difficult to watch a movie with your child without checking your phone? Try snuggling with your child instead. Child isn't a snuggler? Color or crochet to keep your hands busy. You'll be so glad you plugged in with your family and gave yourself a break from your personal screen.

Use your devices to stay in contact with distant family or friends

Many of us live far away from grandparents, aunts and uncles, or close friends. Use your device to have a family call with someone you love! FaceTime, Skype and similar apps and programs allow distant friends and relatives to see you and your family even when you can't be together in the same room. Seeing the joy and excitement on the face of your child as they describe a school trip to their grandparents is wonderful, and grandparents love it too! Some relatives or friends may need some training on how to use these services, but, often, kids can help with that too.

Unplugged, screen-free time together is an absolute must for families, and screen time (meaning all screens, not just TV) should be limited and controlled. It is essential to go outside and play, take a walk, play a board game, cook a meal, sing silly songs, or just have a conversation *every single day*. All of these ways of being together make families stronger and happier.

To find out more:

- Smart screen time: [http://www.joanganzcooneycenter.org/2014/12/04/can-you-turn-screen-time-into-family-time/](http://www.joanganzcooneycenter.org/2014/12/04/can-you-turn-screen-time-into-family-time/)
- UAEX MPFL Pinterest: [https://www.pinterest.com/UAEXFamilyLife/](https://www.pinterest.com/UAEXFamilyLife/)

Taking Care of the Parent

Make the most of the time you have with your family. Take care of you and you will feel more like giving your best to your family.

Some ideas to take care of yourself.

1. **Be Healthy** –
   a. *Sleep* – Try to get at least 7–8 hours of sleep per night.
   b. *Nutrition* – Choose nutritious foods that provide energy.
   c. *Water* – Drink plenty of water!
   d. *Exercise* – 30 minutes most days of the week.
2. **Keep Learning and Growing** – Don’t get stuck in a rut. Keep your interests alive or try something new. Read an educational book, listen to a speech, attend a health fair, start a new project maybe even with your kids. Plant a garden, take a picture, read a book, memorize a poem, etc.
3. **Build Strong, Healthy Relationships** – Positive relationships with positive people create a wonderful environment for growth and encouragement. Every parent needs a strong support system and trustworthy people to call when help is needed.

Make this healthy, fun recipe with your kids. It is a fast breakfast too!
Sunshine Smoothie

**Ingredients**

- ½ cup orange juice
- ½ cup plain low-fat yogurt
- 1 ripe banana, peeled and sliced
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 ice cubes

**Instructions**

1. Put all the ingredients in the blender.
2. Put the top on tightly. Turn the blender to a medium setting and blend until the ice is chopped and the mixture is smooth, about one minute.

http://www.chopchopmag.org/recipe/sunshine-smoothie#sthash.ri6m3dbP.dpuf

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Research studies recommend that adults and senior adults should perform a minimum of 150 minutes a week of exercise in episodes of at least 10 minutes. This physical activity should include the four main categories exercise: stretching, balance, endurance, and strength.

"Fit in 10" is a research-based exercise program including the "Increasing Physical Activity as We Age" Fact Sheets, posters and an exercise DVD. With this program you can get your exercise in one of two ways: 10-minute chunks throughout the day or all at once.

The research-based Fit In 10 video can be done for 40 minutes or you can pick and choose the segments to create your own exercise experience.


Sincerely,

Trudy G. McManus
County Extension Agent – Family and Consumer Science