

## Financial Struggles Are Strengthening Family Ties

The current state of the economy and job layoffs have caused many people to change their priorities, focusing more on decreasing their spending habits, downsizing their expensive recreational activities and spending more time at home with family. During these stressful times people are beginning to think more about what would make them happier and more fulfilled in their lives and ways to strengthen the bonds within their families.

I have noticed my clients and members of the community beginning to re-evaluate the amount of time they spend with their families. Yes, due to financial constraints people are home more with their children and families, but there seems to be more of a desire to build and strengthen family bonds than in the recent past. Families have reinstated “Family Fun Night” and are having more dinners together at home and talking about their day. Shutting off the television is a great way for families to promote discussion and interaction. This change in priorities is also encompassing a desire to help others. Family togetherness can also be strengthened when everyone becomes active in a volunteer project such as Habitat for Humanity, a local soup kitchen or a humane society.

Due to financial constraints people are looking for ways to reconnect with their families and engage in recreational activities on a budget. There are many low or no-cost activities that are fun and build family cohesiveness: Have lunch at a park or a town beach and bring a kite or bikes. Explore local museums and libraries and learn about the history of your town. Check out the walking and hiking trails that are available through open space in your community. Camping out in the backyard is a great way to experience being a part of nature and still be close to home. Start a new tradition or hobby with your children... this could bring years of enjoyment and give your children skills that they can pass on to future generations. Create a garden and watch the excitement in your children’s eyes when they see something grow that they planted and cared for. Get involved in local sports teams or town organizations.

As you can see the possibilities for family fun and reconnecting with your children are only limited by your creativity. People who are engaging in these types of activities are finding more happiness and fulfillment in their days and feel closer to their families. Everyone benefits from these experiences. Once you start these activities it is important to make them a part of your routine. With every family activity you are building memories for years to come.

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