

Practical Parenting Tips

Tech-free Family Fun:



A Practical Guide to
Growth & Quality Time

Introduction



Today, our lives often revolve around technology. We use digital devices for school, work, social interaction, and entertainment. While these tools can create more opportunities for interaction with others, they also have the potential to take away from social interaction with our families.



How often do teens text their friends during family movie night? How often does taking the perfect vacation picture take more of our attention than the actual created beauty of the world around us?

Sometimes, it feels like digital technology is the default preference for personal and family fun. Maybe it is time to turn off our screens for a while and think of some creative and engaging ways to have tech-free family fun.



Why Does It Matter?

So why are tech-free activities important for families? Is the internet and digital technology really that bad? Well, it's not that this stuff is bad, exactly. After all, family movie night can bring a family together. The problem is that technology is often used improperly and continuously. No matter how social we are being on social media, our devices often lure us into our own worlds for minutes or hours at a time.



Building good parent/child relationships is important, and good relationships are built through quality time. When we put our phones, tablets, and computers away for a little while, we have more time to focus on building godly and loving relationships with each other. Sometimes, just being with family should be enough. How much time per week do you spend looking at a screen? How much time do you spend enjoying your family tech-free? If the scales tip toward tech, perhaps its time to explore a more balanced approach. But don't worry, we have a few suggestions!



Practical Application

Let's take a look at some practical ways parents can facilitate tech-free family fun. The following activities and practices are easy to implement and can help build relationships and bring families together:



- Read a book together as a family. This can lead to formative conversations about the subjects portrayed in the book.



- Get Outdoors. Go for a hike or take the family on a camping trip. Take time to enjoy the often-ignored beauty of the created world around you.



- Eat meals together. Sit down as a family and eat your meals. Great conversations can happen around the dinner table. Dinner can be your daily chance to spend time together as a family.



- Get the whole family involved with preparing dinner. Working together in this way not only builds a sense of responsibility and team-work, it also teaches life skills.

Practical Application



- Take trips as a family. These may be short day trips to nearby destinations, long road trips, or full vacations. Trips are a great way to bond, have fun, and make lasting memories.



- Support having fun. Cherish humorous family memories and inside jokes. Try to create a light-hearted environment when possible and appropriate.



- Serve together. This could mean saving up money to donate to a cause or volunteering for a family service opportunity. Work as a team to help others.



- Share work, hobbies, and skills. Learn something new as a family and try to complete family projects together. Take on family challenges like learning a new language or building a swing set in the backyard.

Practical Application



- Invest in each other's activities. Take the whole family to watch your son's recital or your daughter's soccer match. Support each other and build each other up.



- Make your faith a family affair. Pray together, read Scripture together, and attend church together. As a parent, be sure to model a good example of your faith to your kids.



- Finally, don't fall into media habits that would concern you if your kids followed suit. If you don't want them to have their nose in a tablet or smartphone when you are trying to talk to them, be sure not to do the same thing to them.

Spiritual Application 1



Read:

Ephesians 6:4 (ESV)

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

&

Colossians 3:21 (ESV)

"Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."

Consider:

1. What does Ephesians 6:4 tell parents to avoid, and what does this verse say to do instead?
2. What does Colossians 3:21 tell parents to avoid, and why?
3. How are these two verses similar, and how are they different?
4. How can parents engage with their children in a way that supports discipline, instruction, and encouragement?

Spiritual Application 2

Read:

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken”

&

Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”

Consider:

1. What do these verses teach us about the support of others?
2. How can family members support one another?
3. How does sharing in fun family activities help families grow closer and stronger?

Spiritual Application 3



Read:

Job 12:7-10 (ESV)

“But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.”

Consider:

1. What do these verses imply about the story that nature tells?
2. What can exploring nature as a family teach your kids about God?
3. Does the digital technology tell a different story than the one nature tell us?

Resources



Best Day Trips: Check out the "Best Day Trips" book series. The books in this series describe destinations and activities that are available in specific states across the country. Search for an edition that covers a state near you on Amazon.com.



The Internet: Use the internet wisely to research more family activities and find more family fun--just don't forget to log off.



License to Parent with Trace Embry: Parents can hear the parenting advice of Trace Embry, Co-founder and Director of Shepherd's Hill Academy, through his weekly podcast and short radio broadcasts. Go to: licensetoparent.org

Closing Prayer

Romans 15:5-6 (ESV)

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

