

# 5 Weekly Habits To Build The Family You Want—For A Lifetime

OVERVIEW: Every one dreams of having a close-knit family that lasts a lifetime. That kind of family relationship doesn't come automatically—but is available to those who commit to a few weekly habits. These are the “big rocks” that made the biggest impact in producing the relationships and culture our family enjoys today. None of these activities are necessarily profound but don't underestimate the net potential. The power is not in doing once—it's doing them hundreds of times, week after week, consistently.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Opening Comments

1. In this session, going to talk with you about **5 Weekly Habits To Build The Family You Want—For A Lifetime.**

- a. These are the “big rocks” that we've determined made the biggest impact of getting us the relationships and family culture we enjoy today. None of these activities are particularly profound—but don't underestimate. The power is not is doing once but hundreds of times, week after week, consistently.
- b. These are the habits I help young leaders form today in my coaching.

2. The 5 weekly habits are:

- Couch Time
- Meal Time
- Family Time
- Special Time
- Date Time

## II. 5 WEEKLY HABITS TO BUILD THE FAMILY YOU WANT—FOR A LIFETIME

### A. Habit #1: **Couch Time**

1. Overview: **Use the first 15 minutes at the end of the workday for undistracted conversation with your spouse.**
2. You can't maintain closeness in any relationship without ongoing conversation.
3. To keep romantic love going the long haul, you'll need to have a lot of meaningful conversation. To stay updated on info important to both; to discuss challenges and feelings.
4. If a married couple is the core of the family, then you owe it to each other and your kids to make time for meaningful conversation.
  - a. That's where "couch time" comes in.
5. From Gary Ezzo of Growing Kids God's Way.
  - a. The idea is to spend 15-30 minutes at the end of the workday when both get home, to have some undistracted time to talk on the couch.
6. The "couch" isn't sacred. Could be kitchen table, patio, or while preparing dinner.
  - a. What is sacred is the undistracted time.
  - b. Greet your kids when you come home from work, then set them up somewhere else to stay occupied while you and your spouse talk.
  - c. Train them that this is your time and not to be interrupted unless someone is hurt or is an immediate, unresolvable issue.
7. You and your spouse give each other your undivided attention.
  - Ask about each other.
  - Discuss the notable events of the day.
  - Celebrate the wins and absorb the bumps of the day together.

- May have to discuss more later but use this time to process the day and reconnect.
8. This isn't going to provide you with all the time you need during the week but it's a great start! It makes sure you have time each day and it reminds you of how important time together is—and sends a powerful message to kids also!
    - a. Kids may complain but they really love it! Builds great security in them.

B. Habit #2: **Meal Time**

1. Overview: **Eat at least one meal together as a family each day.**
  - a. Sit down at a table, no tv or phones, eat together, and talk!
2. Numerous studies show that when kids eat frequently with their parents, they...
  - are healthier,
  - perform better in school,
  - have less trouble with drugs and alcohol, and
  - enjoy a closer relationship with their parents.

These are only a few of the many benefits.

3. Steps to take:
  - a. Have a set meal time.
  - b. Sit together at a table.
  - c. You may enjoy some non-distractive background music. Other than that, ban all electronics during the meal!
  - d. Facilitate good conversation. Keep it positive and let everyone have a chance to talk.
  - e. No one leaves the table until excused by a parent.
  - f. Everyone helps with cleanup.

## 4. Other practical tips...

- a. Make it a priority. Have a set time so everyone is prepared and teens can plan.
- b. Promote good conversation
  - give each child an opportunity to talk
  - ask leading questions
  - don't judge what they say. If important to them, that's ok.
  - Use a chance to cheer or encourage each other
  - Sometimes it helps to pass an object to signify that person's time to talk.
- c. Pray, stay, excuzay
  - Pray: official start to meal
  - Stay: for conversation
  - Excuzay: nobody gets up without permission

5. The real win from this is the time together and conversation. Eating is just the backdrop.

C. Habit #3: **Family Time**

1. Overview: **Spend two hours doing something fun together as a family each week.**
2. Building memories around fun times together will cement a family together.
3. The basics:
  - a. Plan a set time each week when you can all be together for at least a couple hours.
  - b. Each week, take turns with a family member choosing what will do.  
  
2 rules: everyone involved and doesn't cost any money!  
  
No griping from others! They can have their turn soon.
  - c. No phones!

- d. Finish the time hanging out with a snack, reliving any of the highlights of your time together — the unexpected; the funny; each person's favorite part of the activity; etc.
  - e. Journal. The person who plans it, makes the entry or at least signs it.
  - f. Repeat. Make this set time sacred in everyone's weekly schedule! If have to reschedule, call family conference.
4. Every time will be fun—some more than others.
- a. But the big payoff is the cumulative result of hundreds of family times together.

D. Habit #4: **Special Time**

1. Overview: **Spend one hour each week in 1-on-1 time with one of your children on a rotating basis.**
2. Belonging to a family is essential for kids. But each child needs to be recognized, affirmed, and mentored individually.
  - a. In a family with more than one child, a child can feel lost in the shuffle.
  - b. He needs to know he is special enough to warrant your undivided attention.
  - c. It keeps you connected to what is going on in his life.
3. How we made this work:
  - a. Schedule at least an hour each week doing something special with a child. This is different from other times you may spend together throughout the day.
  - b. If you have more than one child, each gets his turn on a rotating basis, one child per week. It will keep it sustainable for busy parents and make it more special when a child looks forward to his turn.
  - c. Do something together that allows for conversation. It can be as simple as doing a household project or running

an errand together. Make sure it's something that allows for conversation — don't use the time watching a TV show or movie.

- d. Like family time, it doesn't have to cost any money!
4. The biggest benefit is the trust built over hours of time together which makes a way for deeper conversations.
- a. Quality time happens through quantity of time.
  - b. After hanging out together, your child may surprise you with something like, "Hey Dad/Mom, I've been wanting to ask you about...".

You can't plan that. Can only create the context and trust.

#### E. Habit #5: **Date Time**

1. Overview: **Set aside time once a week for a date with just your spouse.**
2. Never stop dating. Making time to be together doing something you both enjoy.
  - a. Preferably something that allows for conversation.
3. This is the habit that gets put off more than most of the others. It takes some effort. It's just too easy to say, "Let's skip this week."
4. Dates don't have to cost a lot of money, if any. And there are creative ways around the sitter.
  - Swap sitting with a friend
  - Sitting co-op
  - Have younger kids in bed and older kids paid to stay in room and watch movie
  - Date time at home after all kids in bed
5. A few recommendations:
  - a. Plan your date earlier in the week. Don't wait until last minute. Can look forward to.

- b. Husbands, wives love it if you do the planning! Major bonus points if husbands arrange for the sitter.
- c. Let kids know in advance. Help them to see as something important.
- d. Don't save up heavy discussions or conflict resolution for dates. Do that another time.

