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Have fun with your children

In One Family we would like to encourage each family to celebrate life as a family in today's busy world. One simple way is to have regular activities which acknowledge how good it is to be part of a family. Here are some ideas:

Spend quality time together as a family. This helps to mend any broken bridges and you will all communicate much better after spending a positive week together where all your energy is focused on what is working.

Have a family meal together – where everyone helps decide what you will cook and then everyone plays a part in preparing the meal. Even the youngest child can be given a task. You can tell each other why you like being part of this family.

Take out the old photo albums and look back at things you have done together as a family. Remember the challenges as well as the good times. Now look at where you are today. Take some new photos for the album.

For one day try to notice what you like about family members and tell them. Often we are so caught up in everyday life and what drives us crazy about each other that we forget to notice what we like about each other.

If your children are older, have mum or dad's day off and ask the children to pamper you.

Then, it's your turn to pamper the children – think of what each of your children really love to do and plan a fun evening of surprises. Research has shown that one of the best ways to engage the mind of a young child is through play, especially 'messy' play. Interacting with your child during play not only shows them the joy that comes from playing, but also helps them to develop their social skills. It is also a good idea to have some fun activities to do when your children are bored! Here are some ideas:

Make Playdough

This is a great way to play with your child. It is an inexpensive, quick activity that will keep your child entertained for hours.

Recipe:

2 parts flour

1 part salt

water

*2-3 drops food colouring

*2-3 drops essence for smell

**These items are not necessary if you don't have access to them.*

Mix the flour and salt, and add food colouring and essence if you want (if using food colouring, you may want to wear gloves to keep the dye off your hands, although it will wash off within a day). Gradually mix in water little by little until it reaches a doughy consistency (it should not be too dry or sticky – if it becomes too sticky add more flour). You can use jars, rolling pins or butter knives to cut the dough into shapes. When done playing, you can store the playdough in a plastic bag in the fridge for up to a week.

Dress up

Why not clear out those wardrobes and make a dress up box. Every child loves dressing up, so the more old clothes, jewellery, hats and shoes you can collect, the more fun it will be for your children. This is also a great excuse to tidy up the wardrobe and make some space for yourself.

Baking

Children learn a lot from baking such as weighing, measuring and pouring. They get to use all their hand muscles stirring and rolling. They also get to see how food is made and the changes that take place in cooking foods.

Why not make some ginger bread men or fairy cakes. Recipes are easy to follow and the ingredients are relatively cheap. If you really don't like cooking – just buy ready mix and follow the instructions! Find recipes at: www.odlums.ie