

# Reconnecting family ties at the dinner table

April 2014 Newsletter



In many households, dinnertime isn't any different from the rest of the day. Cellphones ring and beep, TVs blare and family members come and go. No one can sit down for more than five minutes or even hear themselves think — much less talk to — anyone else. Seem familiar?

If this sounds like your house, it may be time to bring some “law and order” to dinnertime. It's also time to rediscover one of the basic reasons why families sit and eat together: to reconnect.

## **Pick one night a week for family dinner**

It's a reality that family members have commitments and distractions that can often keep dinners from being relaxing “together time”. So just try for one night a week for starters.

Take a poll to identify a night and time where everyone can sit down for at least 30 minutes. Once you've all agreed to a time, plan an easy dinner. This is not about a gourmet meal. It's about spending time as a family.

## **Turn off all screens and electrical devices**

No TV, cellphones, iPods, tablets, laptops or earphones during the meal. One way to connect to each other is to disconnect from everything else for a little while.

## **Each person takes a turn to share**

Ask each person to share something positive or special from his or her day. This helps you bond with each other and also keeps stress at bay. It can help you all enjoy an oasis from your hectic day.

## **Look around the table and be in the moment**

Sure, families have lots to deal with. But time moves on. Most older people will tell you it moves on much more quickly than you expect.

Kids grow up and leave the nest. Things can change from year to year and day to day. Remind yourself to enjoy the moment because life is always shifting.

## **Compliment the cook and share cleanup time**

Be sure to thank whoever prepared the meal. Appreciation and help go a long way.

## **What do you get out of these efforts?**

If you can have a calm, quiet dinnertime one night a week, you'll be starting a new family tradition. Don't fret if one week slips by and it doesn't happen. Just try hard to go back to your new routine the next week.

Family dinners can help you all feel more connected. Eating together and sharing your stories gives you all nourishment — of body and mind.