

Reconnecting at the family dinner table

April 2016 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.

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 couples and families sit and eat together: to reconnect.

Pick one night a week for family dinner

Family members often have commitments and distractions that can keep dinner from being a relaxing time together. So just try for one night a week for starters.

Take a vote to find a night and time when you can sit down for at least 30 minutes. Once you've agreed to a time, plan an easy dinner. This isn't about a gourmet meal. It's about spending time together.

Turn off all screens and electrical devices

No TV, cellphones, iPods, tablets, laptops or earphones at the table. The best way to connect with 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 from his or her day. This can help you learn more about each other's interests and challenges.

Look around the table and be in the moment

Sure, couples and 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.

Jobs and health can change. Kids grow up and leave the nest. Things vary 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 the person who prepared the meal. Cleaning up can be more fun if you work together, too. Appreciation and help go a long way.

What do you get out of these efforts?

Imagine having a calm, quiet dinnertime one night a week. It can be the start of a happy new tradition. Don't feel defeated if one week slips by and it doesn't happen. Just get back into your new routine the next week.

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