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# Mental Health for the Whole Family

Family relationships play a key role in supporting mental health. A family approach to mental health not only enhances individual wellbeing but also strengthens the bonds that hold your family together.[1]

**Here are some practical strategies to promote mental wellness for family members of all ages:**

- **Establish Regular Family Meals:** Sharing meals is about more than just eating together; it is an opportunity for connection and communication. Regular family meals can enhance family cohesion, reduce stress, and improve overall mental health. Aim to gather around the table several times a week, where everyone can share their experiences and support one another in a device-free zone.

- **Be Active as a Family:** Exercise is not only beneficial for physical health, but is also important for mental wellbeing. Encourage family members to participate in physical activities together, such as hiking, biking, or even simple walks in the park. Regular physical activity can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression and boost overall mood.

- **Encourage Open Communication:** When children experience poor mental health, so do parents.[2] Foster an environment where family members feel comfortable expressing their concerns and emotions without fear or judgement. Open and honest communication can help identify issues before they escalate and support emotional resilience.

- **Prioritize Quality Time:** Make a conscious effort to spend quality time with your family, free from distractions like work meetings or social media. Engage in activities that everyone enjoys, whether it is playing board games, watching a movie, or simply talking about your day. Quality time strengthens relationships and reinforces family bonds.

- **Seek Professional Support When Needed:** Watch for and address toxic family traits and behaviors like harsh criticism, mocking, belittling, attacking vulnerabilities, and substance use.[3] Recognize that sometimes professional help may be needed, and encourage family members to seek support from professionals if they are struggling. Family counseling may also be beneficial to help resolve conflicts and improve communication.

> **Quality time strengthens relationships and reinforces family bonds.**

By creating a nurturing environment that supports the mental health of your entire family, you can build resilience to overcome life's challenging moments more easily.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Mental health of children and parents —a strong connection." March 8, 2023. Accessed November 9, 2024. https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/features/mental-health-children-and-parents.html
2. Psychology Today. "Mental Health Affects the Whole Family." November 10, 2021. Accessed September 22, 2024. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/whats-parent-do/202111/mental-health-affects-the-whole-family
3. Healthline. "When Family Becomes Toxic." October 25, 2019. Accessed November 9, 2024. https://www.healthline.com/health/toxic-family