Family Fun Time is defined as time that parents and children spend doing enjoyable play and leisure activities together. When interviewed, parents indicate that they value leisure activities for improving communication and strengthening family relationships.1 Another parent goal of family leisure is to promote a healthy lifestyle for their children. Teaching children the value of taking a break from work to play together, do creative activities, and be active are important lessons that can be passed down by having regular family fun time.2

**Family leisure activities generally fall under two categories:**
1. Common, everyday activities that tend to be low-cost, home-based, and require minimal planning. Examples: board games, playing in the yard, watching movies together, going for a walk, and cooking together.
2. Less common, planned leisure activities that provide new experiences for families. Examples: vacations, camping, sporting events, theme parks.

Which is better? Although both types of leisure help promote family functioning, youth consistently indicate that they prefer simple and spontaneous activities.2 Low-cost, easy to implement leisure activities are effective in promoting family bonding and wellbeing.

**Family Rituals**

Family rituals are things you do that are unique to your family. Rituals communicate, ‘This is who we are and what we value’.1 Examples:
- Special things that are only done in your family like code words for things, funny nicknames you have for each other, or ways that you greet each other in the morning or say goodbye
- Traditions surrounding special events like birthdays (e.g. always having helium balloons or a special dinner)
- Rituals surrounding holidays and religious events, like Mothers and Fathers Day, Christmas, Chanukah, or Ramadan (e.g. decorating your house in a particular way, making homemade cards, cooking special foods like homemade pasta)
- Sharing common family interests like watching sports on TV, playing favorite board games, picking apples in the Fall, or playing musical instruments.
- Rituals may be woven into everyday activities, like mealtimes. Families may have special ways of setting the table (e.g. plates for special events, lighting candles), saying grace, repeating funny family stories, and having special foods on certain holidays.

**Why are these activities important?** Family rituals give children a sense of belonging and security. Special things done together build shared memories that last forever. Rituals can help children feel safe and a sense of comfort during stressful times (e.g. when moving; after a traumatic event, like floods or fires).
**Family Game Night:** Choose one night each week or month to play board games or card games. Suggestions: charades, Pictionary, BINGO, Yatzee, scrabble, etc. Have each family member take a turn to pick the game.

**Family Movie Night:** Pick a night to watch a movie at home on TV! Watching something that your child enjoys allows you to learn more about her/his interests while spending quality time together. Make time to talk about the movie.

**Indoor Camping:** Set up a tent or sleep in sleeping bags in the living room! Tell spooky stories and make indoor s’mores.

**Take a Nature Walk:** Go for a walk outside and share your observations of the nature around you. You can even bring a bucket with you and collect items you and your children find interesting, such as rocks, pinecones, or leaves.

**Create a Scavenger Hunt:** Include items that can be found indoors, outdoors, or both! Have your family work together to find all the items on the list.

**Share your Hobbies:** Teach your children how to do arts and crafts, play a favorite sport, or cook a meal together.

**Outdoor Fun:** Play yard games (bocce ball, corn hole, lawn darts, croquet), bubbles, Frisbee, chalk, squirt guns, jump ropes, roller skating.

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### Sample Games

1. **Snow Tag:** Play in snow, sand, or even a cut grass path that you make. Make a circle in the snow/sand with a minimum 15 foot diameter. The path should be at least 8 inches wide but not more than 1 foot. Walk across widest point to widest point and repeat to make a 6 slice pizza. Stay on the paths created! Tagger: Start in the middle of the circle where the “pizza slice” lines all intersect. Ask if everyone is “Ready?” Taggies: Start on the perimeter of the outer circle and respond with “Ready!” to begin. Rules: Tagger and Taggies can only run on the path. Two players cannot pass each other. If a player leaves the path, he/she become ‘it’. If the tagger goes outside of the path they are removed from the game and a new tagger is voted on.

2. **Red Light Green Light:** Select a person to be the Spotlight. Her/his back is turned away from the Runners. Runners start behind a line about 10 yards or more away from the spotlight. Stoplight: Will yell “Green Light!” so that the Runners run towards the stoplight. The Stoplight will yell “Red Light!” and turn around as quickly as possible to catch any Runner that is still moving. If the Runner is still moving they are out. Movers: When you hear “Green Light!”, run as fast as you can towards the Stoplight but stop moving before the stoplight sees you after saying “Red Light!”. The first person to run past the Stoplight wins and becomes the Stoplight for the next round.

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### Resources

1. **Fun Family Activities for Kids: Ideas & Resources.** Unicef KID Power website. Retrieve from [https://unicefkidpower.org/fun-family-activities-resources/#outdooractivities](https://unicefkidpower.org/fun-family-activities-resources/#outdooractivities). This website provides a lot of fun family activities including:
   - Indoor activities: games like Uno, Monopoly, Apples to Apples; indoor planting activities (Venus Flytrap)
   - Outdoor activities: hide and seek; making a sandbox; gardening
   - Daytime activities: Frisbee; flying a kite; red light green light; biking
   - Night activities: Stargazing; baking cookies; listening to nature
2. **Copeland, C. (2016). Family Fun Night: Your Ticket to New Traditions.** Cider Mill Press Book Publisher. This book provides a wealth of family fun activities from traditional board games to family scavenger hunts so that families can rediscover the simple pleasures of being together. Easy-to-read instructions are given with creative suggestions for playing cards, last-minute fun, embracing screen time, outdoor family fun, etc.
3. **Kennedy, R. R. (2005). The Family Fitness Fun Book: Healthy Living for the Whole Family.** Hatherleigh Press. This book provides a large selection of indoor and outdoor play activities from basic tag to relay races and pop bottle ring toss. Simple instructions are provided along with ways to make the games easier or more difficult. This is a ‘go to’ book for keeping kids moving and having fun.

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