PART 2

Routines Don’t Have to Be Ruts

Meaningful Habits for Today’s Complicated Families

Discovering Your Family’s Strengths

A ParentFurther webinar series from Search Institute

Based on The American Family Assets Study
Family Strengths Framework

Nurturing RELATIONSHIPS
Establishing ROUTINES
Maintaining EXPECTATIONS
Adapting to CHALLENGES
Connecting to COMMUNITY

www.parentfurther.com/familyassets

Family Strengths Webinar Series

November
Featuring New Research

TODAY

September
Complete Available for Viewing Online

July
Noon Central
July 8, 2014

(Schedule subject to change)
Session Overview

- Why routines matter
- What we learned about family routines
- Enhancing routines in family life
- Strengthening families through routines

POLL

Which word first comes to mind when you think of routines?
1. Boring
2. Tedious
3. Liberating
4. Meaningful
5. Monotonous

If you have another work, write it in the “chat” box
WHY ROUTINES MATTER
(And what they are in the first place)

What a Dictionary Says

**routine**
/roʊˈtɪn/ 🎧

: a regular way of doing things in a particular order
: a boring state or situation in which things are always done the same way
From the Field of Family Studies

### Routines
- Instrumental, practical
- Habitual: Don’t have to think about it
- Repeated, observable behaviors

### Rituals
- Symbolic, affective
- Nurture meaning and coherence in family life
- Shape our story: Who we are and where we fit in the world

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Routines . . .</th>
<th>Rituals . . .</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organize behavior</td>
<td>Foster identity</td>
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</table>


### Common Routines
- Bedtime
- Mealtime
- Chores
- Regular phone contact with relatives
- Watching television

### Common Rituals
- Sunday/Sabbath dinners
- Birthdays, celebrations
- Holidays, festivals
- Vacations, reunions
- Rites of passage
- Funerals, weddings

“Any routine has the potential to become a ritual once it moves from an instrumental to a symbolic act.”

What Routines and Rituals Offer

- Dependable rhythm and structure
- Ease the stress of daily living—free the brain to focus on higher-order tasks
- Rituals connect family to each other, community, traditions, faith, culture
- Particularly important in midst of crisis, change
- Balance: Without flexibility become constraining, pushing family members to detach

Variations Across the Life Course

The significance of rituals varies by life stage:
- Hard to appreciate when kids are little
- More meaningful for parents when kids more actively participate
- Kids may not imbue with meaning until later (e.g., when they become parents)
- Rituals become particularly significant for grandparents, keepers of the stories
BUT Routines and Rituals Can Also . . .

- Take lots of time, energy, resources
- Bring out family conflicts
- Lose meaning if become only instrumental
  - Not enriching relationships
  - Not connecting emotionally (or negative emotions)
- Are not equally valued throughout the life cycle

And . . .

- Unhealthy routines can undermine family life

“When routines are disrupted, it is a hassle. When rituals are disrupted, there is a threat to group cohesion.”

WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT FAMILY ROUTINES
From the American Family Assets Study (2012)

For more on the study, see:
• www.search-institute.org/research/family-strengths
• Webinar: Ordinary Magic of Modern Families
  www.parentfurther.com/webinars/archives

Establishing Routines

- Family Meals: 58%
- Shared Activities: 41%
- Meaningful Traditions: 51%
- Dependability: 27%
The Importance of Shared Meals

Sharing meals contributes to positive outcomes (after controlling for family connectedness):

- Healthier diets
- Greater family cohesion and problem-solving
- Academics, language development
- Reduced risk behaviors

Family Meals: Youth Report

Youth report eating a meal with at least one parent
Nuances about Shared Activities

Associated with higher levels of family satisfaction and well-being. BUT . . .

– Shared leisure time may be particularly powerful in building relationships, cohesion, meaning.

– Productive time (such as homework) and maintenance (such as chores) may not contribute to youth well-being.

– Families value shared time, but feel guilty or disillusioned about living up to an idealized understanding of what this time is or could be

Shared Activities

OVERALL: 41% meet target

Number of days they do this TOGETHER in a typical week (youth report)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>4-5 Days</th>
<th>6-7 Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV or movies</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on homework</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household chores</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise, physical activity</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video or computer games</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4+ days/week

TV or movies: 54%
Work on homework: 40%
Household chores: 30%
Exercise, physical activity: 20%
Video or computer games: 18%
What other shared activities do you think are particularly important for enriching families’ lives?

Write them in the chat box. We’ll summarize them to send to you, and they’ll inform our next survey!

Research on Traditions

• Positive associations with . . .
  – Healthy partner relationships
  – Family members’ health and healing
  – Youth life satisfaction and development

• Family religious or spiritual rituals and practices can play a powerful role in family cohesion and meaning making
Meaningful Traditions

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following about your own family’s traditions? (Strongly agree)

- Traditions are important in my family. 51% (Parent), 37% (Youth)
- Family traditions make me feel closer to my family. 53% (Parent), 37% (Youth)
- Family traditions make me feel closer to my heritage, culture, and/or religion. 44% (Parent), 30% (Youth)

Why Dependability Matters

Can we count on each other?

- Attachment theory: Predictable responsiveness
- If erratic (particularly parent), undermines family health and bonds
- If dependable, cultivates interpersonal trust, which builds self-efficacy and confidence.
Dependability

I never know how he/she will act from one day to the next.

- Strongly Disagree: 11%
- Disagree: 25%
- Agree: 38%
- Strongly Agree: 28%

Lower in families facing most economic stress. Higher for older youth.

Levels of Family Asset Categories

Each category ranges from 0 to 20.
Relationships & Routines (by youth age)


Questions?
ENHANCING YOUR FAMILY’S RITUALS AND ROUTINES

Try to Be More Intentional

“Habits emerge without our permission. Studies indicate that families usually don’t intend to eat fast food on a regular basis. What happens is that a once-a-month pattern slowly becomes once a week, and then twice a week—as the cues and rewards create a habit—until the kids are consuming an unhealthy amount of hamburgers and fries.”

— Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit*
Intentionally Change Routines that Aren’t Working

Make Routines . . . Routine

• Set priorities
  – Reserve your brain power for what’s meaningful
  – Everything doesn’t have to be meaningful
• Talk about what is and isn’t working
  – Refresh old (tell the stories)
  – Try something new (it might stick)
  – Let go of old if they’re not working
• Manage (your own) expectations
Tell Stories that Connect to Larger Family, Cultural, Religious Narratives

“Why is this night different from all other nights?”
— Passover Seder

Find Times for Creative Dislocation

- Take a break from routines, distractions
- Challenge assumptions
- Give space for reflection, imagination
- Experiment with something new
Connect with Others

Integrate with Other Family Strengths

Nurturing RELATIONSHIPS  Establishing ROUTINES  Maintaining EXPECTATION S  Adapting to CHALLENGES  Connecting to COMMUNITY

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Use as Gateway to Other Strengths

- Working on routines can be lower risk
  - Concrete and doable
  - Early “win” (e.g., reduced stress)
  - Tangible entry point to other strengths
  - Family system, not individual behaviors
- Celebrate family stories, rituals, traditions as sources of strength
- Connect routines to family stories, priorities, identity (routines → rituals)
Offer Families’ Shared Experiences

• Introduce them in (low-risk ways) to shared activities that could be meaningful for them
  • Play together
  • Service or civic action together
  • Worship together
  • Celebrate culture together
  • Explore and discover together
  • Learn together

• Structure reflection (practice meaning making)
• Set stage for taking it home

Recognize Cultural Differences

• Understand: Different things have different meanings and significance in different cultures
  – The conversations at mealtimes
  – Extended family gatherings
  – Cultural and religious festivals, practices
  – Traditions and stories that shape identity

• Respect: Help families make them priorities
• Learn: Invite them to share their practices
Support Through Change

• Encourage adapting as kids grow up
  – Shared or shifting roles
  – Experiment
• In crisis, ease routine burden so families can attend to staying connected [hotdish power!]
• Provide more intense support when families need to break destructive routines, patterns

Connect Families to Families

• Families teach/coach each other
  – Managing routines
  – Dealing with crisis, transition
  – Problem solving
• Explore each other’s rituals, traditions
  – Story telling
  – Demonstrating
  – Participating
FEEDBACK

What are some creative things you’ve done (or are thinking of doing) to help enrich the routines in family life (for your family or for others).

Write them in the chat box. We’ll summarize them to send to you.
Parenting Resources

Available at:
www.searchinstitutestore.org

NEW Search Institute Workshops

Discovering Your Family’s Strengths
A workshop for parenting adults

Engaging the New American Family
Relationship-based strategies for nurturing families' strengths

More Info on these and other workshops:
CALL: Mary Shrader: (800) 888-7828 ex. 526
VISIT: www.search-institute.org/presentations-workshops
Discovering Your Family’s Strengths: A Five-Part Webinar Series

Next Webinar: July 8 (noon Central)

Enriching Families’ Community Connections
A Two-Way Street

Gene Roehlkepartain
Hedy Walls,
YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities

Thank you for joining us!

VISIT AND COMMENT:
www.parentfurther.com