

Discovering Your Family's Strengths: A Five-Part Webinar Series



PART 2

Routines Don't Have to Be Ruts

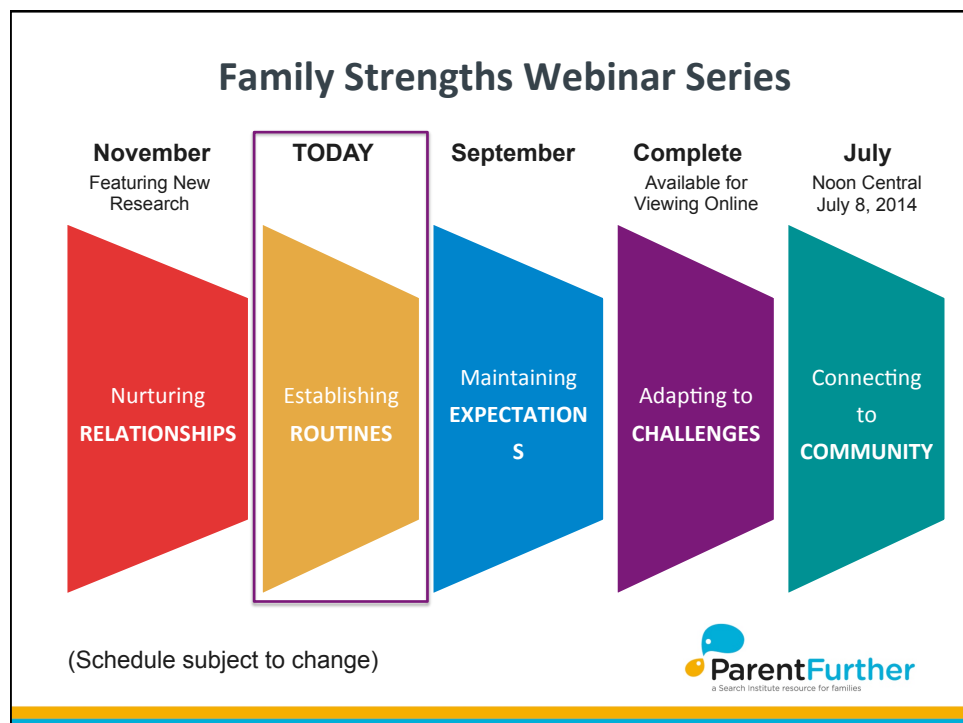
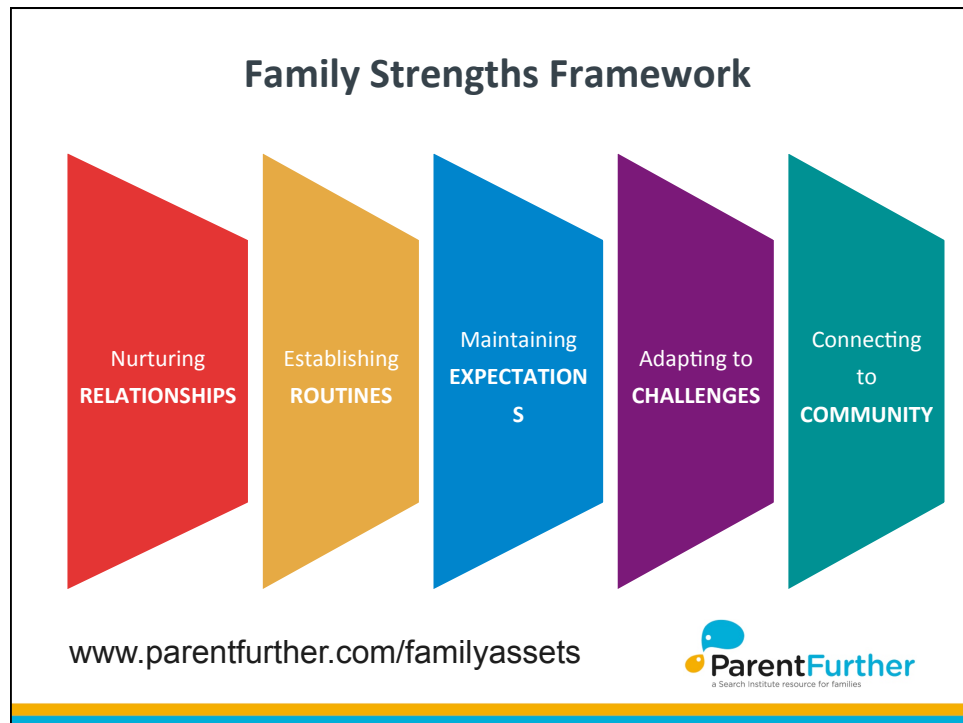
*Meaningful Habits for Today's
Complicated Families*



Discovering Your Family's Strengths

A ParentFurther webinar series from
Search Institute

Based on *The American Family Assets Study*



Session Overview



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



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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 word, write it in the "chat" box

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WHY ROUTINES MATTER

(And what they are in the first place)

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What a Dictionary Says

rou·tine

/rōō'tēn/ 

: a regular way of doing things in a particular order

: a boring state or situation in which things are always done the same way



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From the Field of Family Studies

Routines

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

Routines . . .

Organize behavior

Rituals

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

Rituals . . .

Foster identity

Fiese, B. H., Tomcho, T. J., Douglas, M., Josephs, K., Poltrock, S., & Baker, T. (2002). A review of 50 years of research on naturally occurring family routines and rituals: Cause for celebration? *Journal of Family Psychology*, 16(4), 381-390



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From the Field of Family Studies

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."

Fiese, B. H., Tomcho, T. J., Douglas, M., Josephs, K., Poltrock, S., & Baker, T. (2002). A review of 50 years of research on naturally occurring family routines and rituals: Cause for celebration? *Journal of Family Psychology*, 16(4), 381-390



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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



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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



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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



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

Fiese, B. H., Tomcho, T. J., Douglas, M., Josephs, K., Poltrock, S., & Baker, T. (2002). A review of 50 years of research on naturally occurring family routines and rituals: Cause for celebration? *Journal of Family Psychology*, 16(4), 381-390



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WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT FAMILY ROUTINES

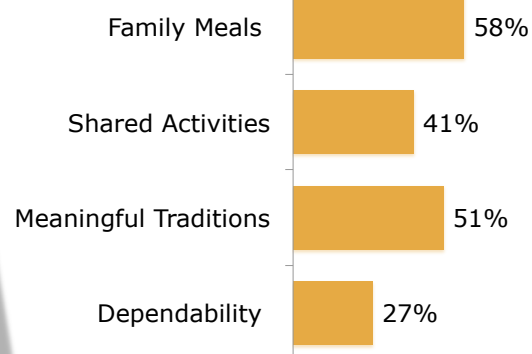
From the *American Family Assets Study* (2012)

For more on the study, see:

- www.search-institute.org/research/family-strengths
- Webinar: Ordinary Magic of Modern Families
www.parentfurther.com/webinars/archives

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Establishing Routines



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The Importance of Shared Meals

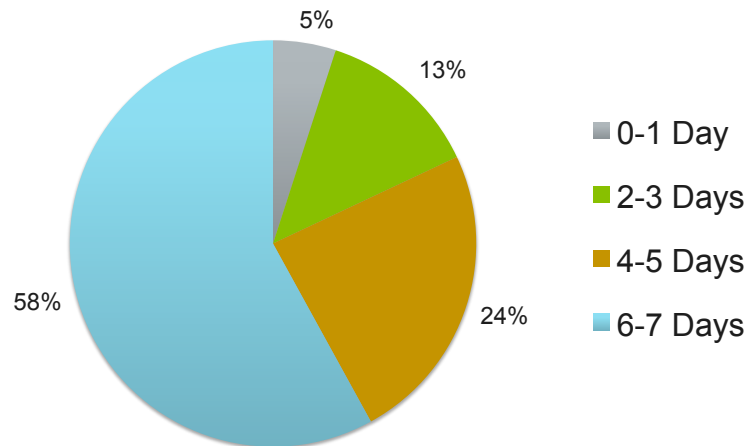
Sharing meals contributes to positive outcomes (after controlling for family connectedness):

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



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Family Meals: Youth Report



Youth report eating a meal with at least one parent



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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

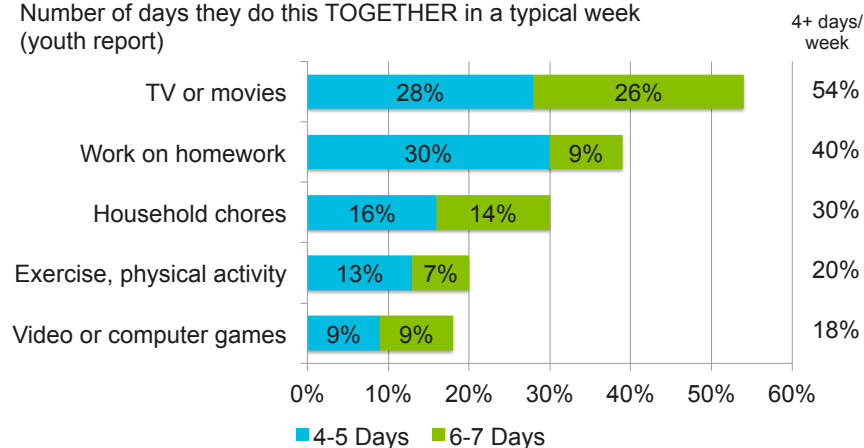


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Shared Activities

OVERALL: 41% meet target

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



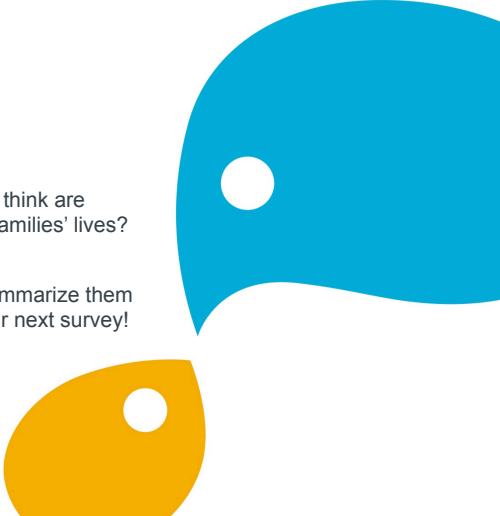
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FEEDBACK

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!



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Research on Traditions

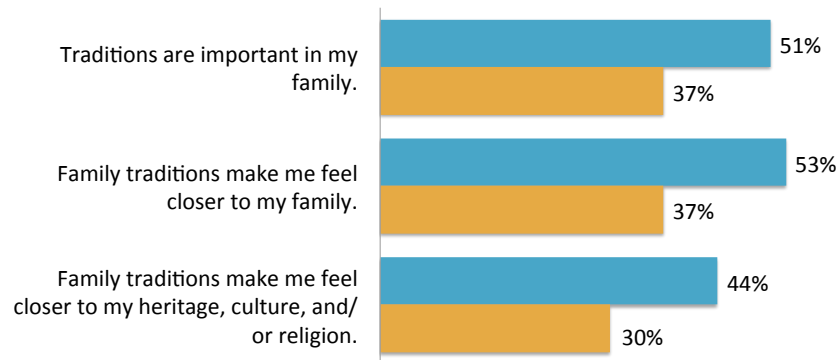
- Positive associations with . . .
 - Healthy partner relationships
 - Family members' health and healing
 - Youth life satisfaction and development
- Family religious or spiritual rituals and practices can play a powerful role in family cohesion and meaning making




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Meaningful Traditions

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



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■ Parent ■ Youth

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Why Dependability Matters

Can we count on each other?

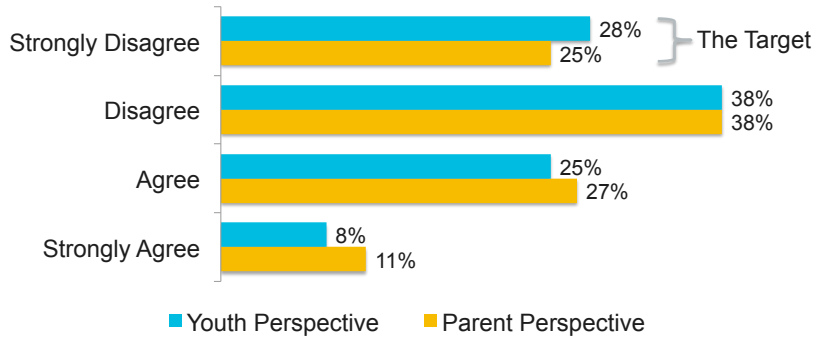
- Attachment theory: Predictable responsiveness
- If erratic (particularly parent), undermines family health and bonds
- If dependable, cultivates interpersonal trust, which builds self-efficacy and confidence.

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Dependability

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



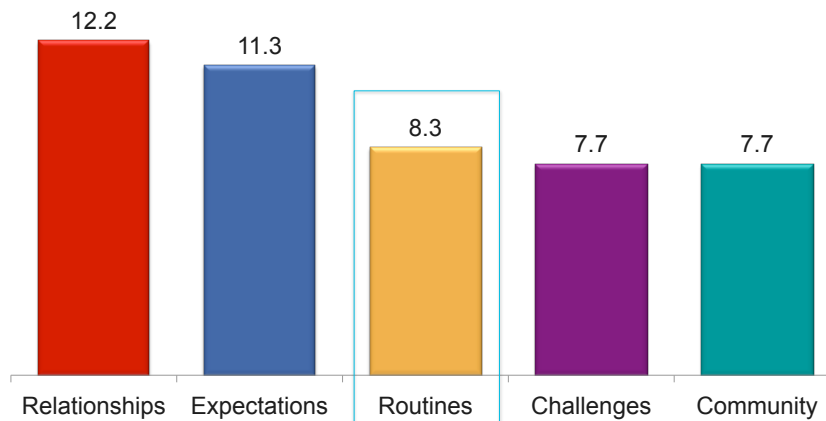
Lower in families facing most economic stress. Higher for older youth.

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Levels of Family Asset Categories



Each category ranges from 0 to 20.

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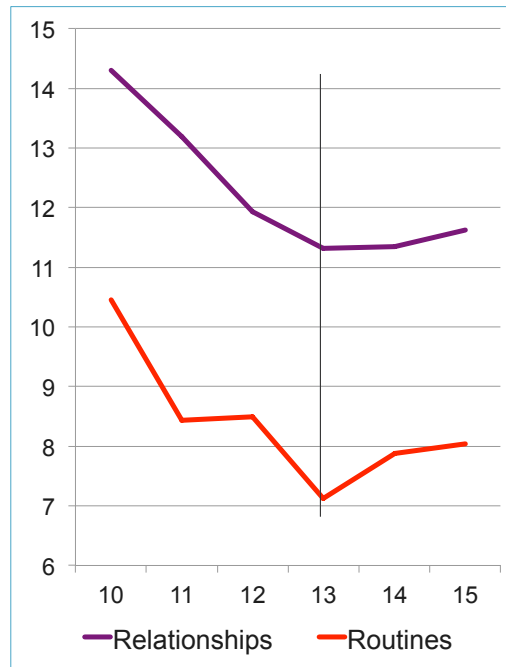
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Relationships & Routines

(by youth age)

SOURCE: American Family
Assets Study, 2012



Questions?



ENHANCING YOUR FAMILY'S RITUALS AND ROUTINES

Insights and Tips

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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.”

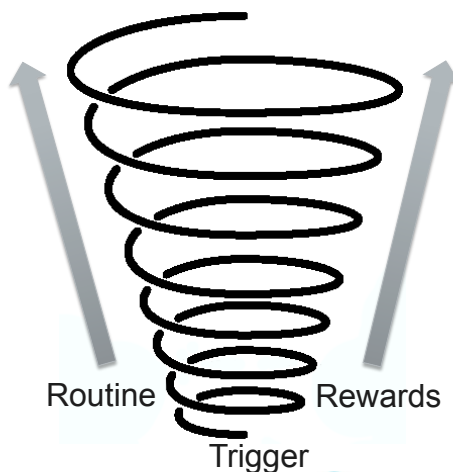
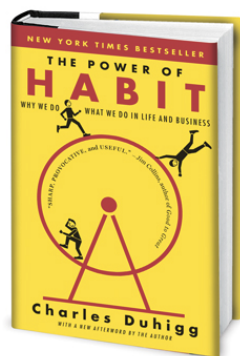


— Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit*



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Intentionally Change Routines that Aren't Working



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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

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Tell Stories that Connect to Larger Family, Cultural, Religious Narratives



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

— Passover Seder



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Find Times for Creative Dislocation

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



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Connect with Others



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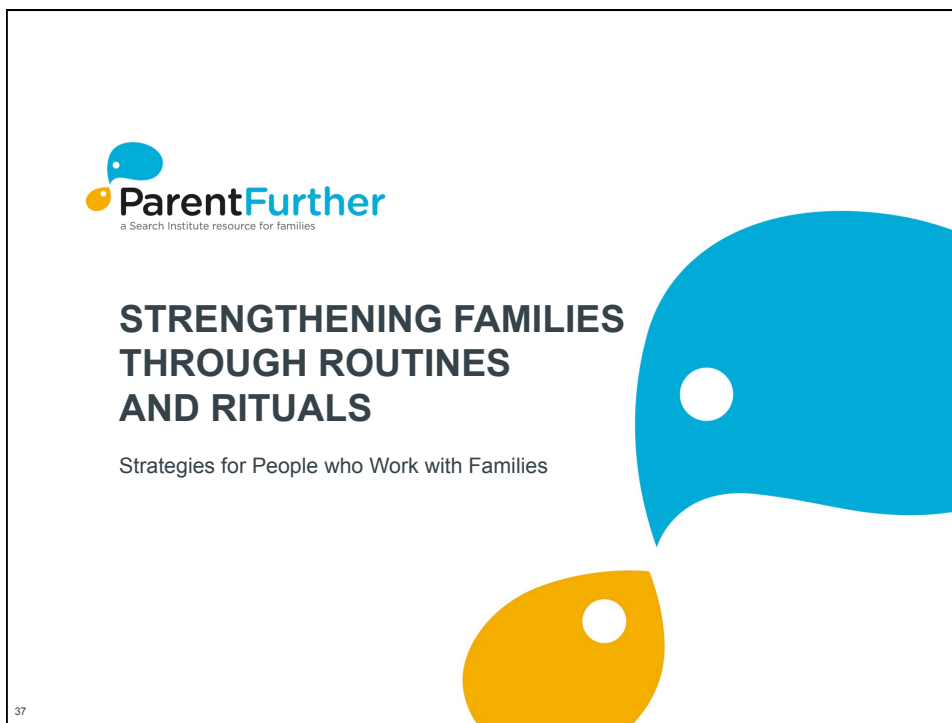
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Integrate with Other Family Strengths



www.parentfurther.com/familyassets

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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



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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



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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



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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



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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.

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Questions?

Parenting Resources



Available at:
www.searchinstitute.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
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Thank you for joining us!

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