

Keeping the Family Strong
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In today's society, busy lives mean less time at home, more activities that limit shared family time, and less involvement in the lives of the other members of our families. When the nest empties, distance and other commitments further limit time shared and opportunity for communication with the extended family. If you struggle with building and maintaining strong family ties because of the pressures and stresses and activities of today's world, you are not alone!

The good news is that relationships can be maintained, strengthened, and even restored by committing ourselves to a few good habits. Why not begin today to demonstrate your commitment to your family?

1. **Talk** with your family every day.

Family members in a home need to talk everyday. Take time to talk. Schedule "talk time"—at the dinner table, or in family devotionals, or in other shared activities. In today's world of email and cell phones, daily communication is possible. Even when nights away from home are necessary, commit to communication and sharing care and concern.

Empty nest parents don't have to think the family has been disbanded. Communicate regularly with your children and grandchildren, with parents, and extended family members. When my family and I lived in Michigan a long way from my mother in Kansas, I called her every Sunday morning.

2. **Listen** to your family every day.

Talking is easier than listening. Listening is a communication skill—without it, communication is blocked. Listening is a love language. Listening keeps us in touch.

3. **Affirm** your family every day.

What should we talk about? Everything, anything. In the midst of the talking, offer affirmation and affection. Meaningful affirmation provides the atmosphere in which we thrive. Paying attention to the actions of others, affirming positive and good things takes time, but is worth it.

4. Give your family **affection** every day.

Affection is the oil of smooth relationships. Learn affection! Affection is displayed in lots of different ways—loving words, affirmation, encouragement, gifts, touching.

5. **Attend** to your family every day.

What comes to your mind when you think "attendance"? Be there! Connections come in the quantity time. Quality is the result of quantity, passing the little moments helps us be present when the big moments come. Presence is an indication of affirmation and affection. Presence provides security. Presence communicates worth.