



September 18, 2007

Parental Wisdom - Emails

Everyday Should Be Family Day

[National Family Day](#) will be celebrated on Monday, September 24th. This is the day we are encouraged to sit down with our families and have dinner together. Research by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University consistently finds that the more often children eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs. The conversations that go hand-in-hand with dinner will help you learn more about your children's lives and better understand the challenges they face.

I was speaking with a dad recently who explained that his 5th grade daughter was involved in competition cheerleading. Not only would practices be held four nights a week for several hours, but she would also have to fit in gymnastics one night a week, and participate in weekend games. This doesn't even address her academic schedule.

It sounds as if this family is the perfect target audience for National Family Day. Part of the effort behind this movement involves coaches calling off practices, teachers giving up homework assignments, parents not participating in dinner time conference calls, and families planning dinner - if at least for one evening a year.

In the same way an electrical blackout reminds us of the simple pleasure in talking with each other, National Family Day tries to change our rituals back to what they were before the frenetic pace we now live; letting outside influences call the shots on our precious family time.

If you need to rationalize this, ask yourself a few questions:

1. How essential is it that your family members feel valued?
2. Is it important, on a daily basis to stay in touch with your family members in terms of what went on in their day, and what they are thinking and feeling?
3. Does work and outside activities take priority over family?

Despite the overwhelming body of evidence that family dinners and parental involvement are the most effective strategies in preventing substance abuse among youth, we seem hung up on all the reasons why the family dinner *won't* work on a regular basis. No doubt with our incredibly busy schedules we could collectively come up with several dozen excuses.

Yet, I could come up with only one reason why we should - because we matter.

Make every day family day, and here are some ideas to keep it going. Visit Parental Wisdom Free Reports and print out Family Activity Bingo for some ideas to stay connected.

Even better, make up your own game!