



## **Enhancing Family Leisure: A Factsheet for Consumers**

*Family leisure provides the opportunity to connect with members of your family through positive and enjoyable activities, which is essential for sustaining healthy relationships.*

### **The numbers**

- 80.5% of individuals with psychiatric disabilities consider entertaining family friends or visiting family and friends to be important.
- 72% of individuals with psychiatric disabilities consider getting together in the community or attending an event with family or friends to be important.

### **What is family recreation and leisure?**

Family recreation and leisure are activities you and your family may choose to participate in during your free time that are fun while being beneficial to all. Activities include things that you and your family enjoy, and activities that are not work oriented or do not involve life maintenance tasks such as housecleaning or work (paid and unpaid).

### **Why is it important?**

There is a correlation between family leisure participation and healthy family interactions. Increasing positive family relationships can lead to healthy communication patterns, which can develop into a resource for families or individual members to draw upon when they experience stress. Participation can also allow families to develop skills necessary for meeting the needs of stability, cohesion and flexibility when facing challenges.

### **Types of family leisure and recreation and their benefits**

*Core activities*, which are common, everyday activities typically done at home. Examples include: shared meals, gardening, and playing games. Core activities provide you and your family members with the opportunity to:

- Explore & develop individual roles
- Establish communication patterns
- Express emotions in non-threatening environment

*Balance activities*, which occur less frequently, typically involve more planning and take place outside of the home. Examples include family vacations, bowling, trips to fairs, and sporting events. Balance activities provide you and your family members with the opportunity to:

- Develop problem-solving skills and adaptability that can transfer to other situations

### **How to introduce the topic into your life and family**

Often, families take recreation and leisure for granted assuming it will just happen. Creating family traditions and participation patterns takes time and attention. There is no one definition of family. Family members may include your children and your own siblings; your parents and aunts; your brothers and a few close friends. Determine who your family is and identify the roles that are most meaningful to you. For example, you might be a daughter, a sister and an aunt. These different roles or identities provide different opportunities for you to connect and spend time with your family. Think about what type of roles you identify with, and reflect on the importance and influence those identities may have. Explore the value of

relationships within each role. If being an aunt is more meaningful and relevant than being a daughter, consider activities that allow you to connect more with your nieces and nephews.

To introduce the topic of family leisure, consider first expressing value in the relationship. This often opens the line of communication. It may also be beneficial to talk about fun and enjoyable recreation and leisure activities you have previously participated in with the individual. Or simply stating that you enjoy the company of your family and would like to spend time together doing fun things can help get the ball rolling.

### **How to develop a family plan for recreation and leisure**

Once you've opened lines of communication, make plans for both core (home-based) activities and balance (community based) activities. Both play an important role in developing and sustaining family relationships. While it may not seem like you need to plan core activities, life gets busy and it's easy to forget. In all planning, remember to include family members in the process.

#### **Core Activities**

- **How Often:** Aim for at least once/week for family members you see frequently
- **Selecting an Activity:** Activities that don't require special equipment or extensive planning are easier to accomplish
- **Consistency:** Make this a part of your normal schedule and try not to let other activities interfere
- **Include everyone:** If family meals are your core activity, let members contribute to the menu planning
- **Value your family:** Tell your family members how much you enjoy these times together; thank them for participation.

#### **Balance Activities**

- **How Often:** Balance activities can happen as often as weekly, bi-weekly, or even monthly. Set a date and communicate the schedule with everyone who will participate
- **Selecting an Activity:** Balance activities can happen in your local community or activities that are further away.
- **Plan your budget:** Knowing how much you need to spend will help you save money for the event.
- **Plan for success:** Make a list of what you need to bring, alternative plans for rain, etc...
- **Plan to remember:** Make note of your favorite parts and ask family members to share theirs

### **References:**

- Argyle, M. (1996). *The Social Psychology of Leisure*. New York: Penguin Press
- Shaw, S. (1997). Controversies and contradictions in family leisure: An analysis of conflicting paradigms. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 29(1), 98-112
- Salzer, M. S., Brusilovskiy, E., Prvu-Bettger, J., & Kottsieper, P. (2014). Measuring community participation of adults with psychiatric disabilities: Reliability of two modes of data collection. *Rehabilitation psychology*, 59(2), 211.
- Smith, K. M., Freeman, P. A., & Zabriskie, R. B. (2009). An examination of family communication within the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning. *Family Relations*, 58, 79-90.
- Snethen, G. (2010). Preventing female gang involvement: Development of the Joint-Interest Core and Balance Model of Mother/Daughter Leisure Functioning. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 15, 42-48.
- Walsh, F. (2006). *Strengthening family resilience*, 2nd ed. New York: Guilford
- Zabriskie, R. B., & McCormick, B. P. (2001). The influences of family leisure patterns on perceptions of family functioning. *Family Relations*, 50(3), 281-289.