



Suggestions for Family Dialogue

One of the really excellent ways to involve yourselves with your children, and also involve your children in the joy and happiness that you feel as a result of your dialogue, is to dialogue as a family. This can be a very rewarding experience, especially as your children grow in confidence and learn, through your example, that being lovers, being family, being church, ... can be fun.

Your children have surely noticed that something happened to you on your weekend. Usually, they are excited and happy about the "new you." They will also have noticed that what you do differently now is to dialogue. Share with them the joy and fulfillment you get from your daily dialogue and offer to share some of this feeling with them. Explain how much better you have come to know each other and how much closer you have become. Tell them of your need to be closer to them as well.

You will have to lay a little groundwork first as was done for you on your weekend. First, explain to your children that feelings are their spontaneous reactions to people, places, and situations around them. They have no control over feelings and therefore, feelings are neither right nor wrong nor can they be argued with. Your children should also understand that they are valuable for themselves and that you love them. Anything they express as a feeling will not really hurt other family members but will be accepted as their feeling and neither right nor wrong. They need the feeling of confidence that comes from making one's self-vulnerable and having their feeling accepted, so it is best if you go first.

Children will enjoy having their own notebooks. Even small children who are not yet able to write can join in. You will be amazed at the depth of feeling they can convey by drawing a picture about how they feel and then describing the picture. Small children, who haven't yet been jaded by the modern world, are especially open and can dialogue beautifully. Teenagers may feel threatened by the thought of sharing feelings. It is important that the initial dialogues be as reassuring as possible. The choice of question can help here. Such as: "What is my favorite spot in our home? HDIF when I'm there?" and "HDIF when I can't go somewhere (like the movies) when I really wanted to go?" Parents write on "HDIF when I have to tell you you can't go?" Family dialogue is particularly appropriate for family raps or family hours. Here are some suggestions for making your family dialogue more meaningful.

PICK QUESTIONS THAT THE WHOLE FAMILY CAN RELATE TO. LET EVERYONE WRITE/DRAW FOR ABOUT TEN MINUTES BUT BE FLEXIBLE - ALLOW MORE TIME WHEN NEEDED. LET EACH PERSON READ HIS LETTER OR EXPLAIN HIS DRAWING WHILE THE OTHERS LISTEN QUIETLY. ALL FAMILY MEMBERS THEN JOIN IN A SHORT DIALOGUE TO DRAW OUT AND HELP IDENTIFY THE FEELING. "IS IT LIKE THE TIME YOU AND I ...", ETC.. MAINTAIN THE DISCIPLINE OF NOT ARGUING WITH OR CHALLENGING FEELINGS.

Some questions for the parents:

Are we mirroring our children's lovability?
HDMAMMF?

Do we see God's image reflected in our children? HDMAMMF?

Do our children think they have to earn our love--or that they have it anyway?
HDMAMMF?

Is my (our) poor self-image reflected to our children? HDMAMMF?

As a family are we a visible sign of God's love? HDMAMMF?

Some questions for the parents and children:

How do I feel when mommy and daddy go out?

How do I feel when I do a good deed?

How do I feel when I share at the dinner table?

How do I feel when I say I'm sorry?

How do I feel when you say you're sorry?

How do I feel when we reach out to others?

How do I feel when we've dialogued as a family?

How do I feel when we attend church as a family?

How do I feel when I keep you waiting?

How do I feel when I am alone?

How do I feel when you say you love me?

How do I feel when I say I love you?

How do I feel when you praise me?

How do I feel when you show confidence in me?

How do I feel when you tell me how to do something?

How do I feel when relatives or friends visit?

How do I feel when we pray together?

What are my feelings about our family and HDMAMMF?

What am I most thankful to God for and HDMAMMF?

How has mommy and daddy making a Marriage Encounter changed our lives and HDMAMMF?

What do I value most in life and HDMAMMF?

What is your best quality and HDIMMF?

What is my best quality and HDIMMF?

What do I like best about mommy, daddy, (name each member of the family)

What is my favorite place in our home and HDIF when I'm there?

HDMAMMF? How Does My Answer Make Me Feel?

HDIMMF? How Does It Make Me feel?

HDIF? How Do I Feel?