

## Healthful Leisure

### A Little Leisure Might Be Just What Your Family Needs.

Families today are bombarded by potentially stress-provoking situations. Parents may juggle jobs, chores, child care, care of older parents and much more, so it's not surprising that many people don't make time for leisure. Yet even a little leisure time can be one of the most healing remedies for emotionally drained families.

### Leisure: Different Things to Different People

Leisure is personal time during which you are free from obligations. This freedom from any "must do" activity results in a choice—a personal decision about how to spend your time.

Leisure reinforces emotional well-being. The idea is to fill your free time doing something you like—not only recreation, but activities such as reading, spending time with friends, writing letters, playing a musical instrument or simply spending time alone.

The options are limitless. What all leisure choices have in common is an opportunity to enhance the value of being a human being through personal choice and decision making.

### Why Is Leisure Important?

*Leisure provides many benefits:*

- An opportunity to examine personal values, to focus on what is important to you. It gives you the balance you need to deal with your non-leisure activities.
- Relief from stress and boredom. It can help promote not only better emotional health but physical health as well.
- A feeling of control. Job or school demands might not give us that freedom.
- Enhanced communication skills and self-esteem. Shy or introverted people can benefit from group activities that are based on shared interests.
- Wider horizons. You can meet new people, learn new things and gain valuable perspective.
- A positive teaching model for children, who often learn better by example than by words alone. Your own behavior in group or family activities helps teach your children about:
  - Communication with others.
  - Relationships with all kinds of people.
  - Socially acceptable behavior.
  - Negotiation and cooperation.
  - Feelings and emotions.
  - Listening.
  - Playing.
  - Reading habits.
  - Your values.

### Adding Leisure Time Can Be Difficult



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If you and your family are not in the habit of spending time together for fun, don't try to change overnight. Start with easy things.

*Parents, you can start first:*

Let your children see that leisure is important to you. Do something for yourself.

- Take a nap if you're tired.
- If it's a nice day, go outside instead of doing a chore in the house.
- Say "no" to outside commitments once in a while.
- Read a book.

Take a look at how you handle time conflicts.

- Do you always do what others expect of you, even if it deprives you of time you need for yourself and your family?
- Are there shortcuts you could find to things you do? Can weekly chores be done every other week?
- Can you find anyone with whom you can share your responsibilities? If you both need some freedom, take turns covering for each other.
- Do you over-plan family activities, putting more stress on yourself? Do you insist on a spotless house before you ask friends over? Does it really matter?
- Do you manage your time at work so that you don't have to bring work home with you?

*Once you make the commitment, encourage other family members to do the same:*

- If you want family members to be interested in doing things together, then everyone's ideas should be included.
- Involving children in the planning gives you an opportunity to communicate with them. You can learn about your children's feelings, fears and frustrations in the process.
- Use the discussion to get to know your child better and to reinforce the value of his or her ideas. By gradually teaching how to make good decisions and then allowing your child to make them, you prepare your child for adulthood.

### **Focus On Things You Can Do**

Try not to focus on obstacles. Although there are often barriers such as money, time, transportation, lack of awareness and fear, there are also alternatives.

For example, if you want to exercise and meet people but can't afford to join a health club, you can begin by walking. Then look into no-cost walking clubs.

If you are trying to make friends, it helps to use a hobby or special interest as a starting point.

Places for ideas include:

- Local newspaper listings
- Town bulletin boards
- YMCAs, departments of parks and recreation
- Your children's schools
- Churches
- Libraries

- Social clubs, sports clubs, scouting organizations

### **Professional Help Can Get You Started**

Family habits are formed over many years. You might one day realize that your family expectations aren't met. It can seem like an impossible task to change things.

Don't despair. Most family problems are normal. However, if you feel helpless or overwhelmed, you can call Bradley Hospital anytime. Bradley's professionals can help with individual or family counseling. Expert help can prevent manageable problems from becoming obstacles to a well-balanced life.

**Call Bradley anytime: 401-432-1000.**