[IMAGE]

3 Tips for a Stress-Free Family Home

By Editorial Staff

What, stress free, you say? But I've got a family; my home's never stress free. This article is for you, so listen up. And if you don't have kids in the house yet (or any more), share these tips with someone you know, because they're likely struggling with these issues (and spending way too much time talking to you about it when you both could be enjoying stress-free time together). OK, here goes: three simple tips for a stress-free (or at least much lower-stress) family home:

1. Don't Sweat the Small Stuff. Let's start with this quick exercise: write down every single thing that stresses you out on an average day involving your home, kids, significant other, etc. Overwhelmed by the very thought of making a list? That's exactly our point. One of the biggest keys to reducing stress in the home is identifying what matters most (rules, responsibilities, schedules, parenting strategy, etc.) and shoving all the rest into the "not worth making a mountain out of a molehill" pile. If you micromanage everything ("Are you doing your homework?" "Stop watching TV!" "Who are you talking to on the phone?" "Stop, stop, stop!", you'll be pulling your hair out all day, stressing everyone to the max, and making your family home stressed out, not stress free.

2. Rules Aren't Rules Unless... While you're not sweating the small stuff, make sure you *are* sweating the big stuff. For families, that boils down to rules ... and consequences. A house without any rules is a house without any structure or foundation; and rules without consequences ... well, they just aren't rules. Make the rules and consequences explicitly clear, even if you've only got four or five (e.g., "Using your phone after lights out = no electronics in your room for a month," "Saying you're going one place, but ending up at another = grounded for two weeks," and so on). Make the rules suit your children's ages and level of responsibility, of course. Then stick to your guns; many parents like to make rules, but aren't so good at enforcing them. Big mistake.

3. Everyone Needs a Little Time on Their Own. No matter how family-centric you are, it can be stressful to force everyone into the family bubble 24/7. Especially as children grow up and enter the teenage years, privacy and "alone time" become important, and conflicting schedules can make parents feel as if they can never get the entire family on the same page for something as simple as a dinner or game night. Embrace the

reality that moments apart are actually great ways for *everyone* to de-stress, reflect and appreciate / anticipate the times when you're together. And by raising children who both value a sense of family and also function well on their own, you're truly raising them to be productive, responsible, well-grounded adults.

One child or four children; toddlers, adolescents or teens; a big house or a small house; working parents or a stay-at-home parent; two parents or a single parent – these tips apply to just about every situation. In fact, they apply even to people who live on their own without kids, if you think about it. *Don't sweat the small stuff. Rules have consequences. Everyone needs some alone time.* Good advice to improve health and wellness in a stressful world.

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