

# Family Uninterrupted

PARENTING

ARTICLE

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It's fast becoming the norm, even at home. Everyone together, but busy with their own electronics, oblivious to everything around them. This article talks about the need to balance our life to create more priceless face-to-face moments.

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Every time you walk into any busy restaurants, chances are you will notice a group of family having their meals together. It warms your heart to see the sights of any family gathering as it somehow brings back the fond memories you had with your own parents and siblings during your growing years. You smile as you recalled the jokes, siblings bantering and lots of laughter while enjoying the food and their company.

You were expecting to see the same joy and happiness from the family in front of you but something seems to be missing. There were no jokes, smiles or cheerfulness. Instead, what you see is many serious faces who are intently staring into something, and it's not the menu. Yes, everyone was holding an electronic gadget each and were busy punching and sliding into their little screens, oblivious to the things going on around them.

Such is the state of a family gathering today. This scenario is fast becoming a normal scene either at home or a public place. Before we start blaming others, let's be honest and admit that all of us are guilty of this "electronic invasion" one way or the other.

## ELECTRONIC INVASION

Yes, electronics have invaded our family lives. There are very few moments when we don't stare into one of their screens. Most of our working hours are spent in front of the PC. Our lives depend so much on it that we don't know what to do when it stops working properly or when the Internet is out. Back home, we spend a few more hours in front of the flat screen television, trying to "clear our minds." Then, our smart phone starts ringing, churning out more messages and e-mails.

So, when do we have some "face time" with our loved ones? Hardly, as many of us

would readily admit. The electronic invasion has robbed us of these valuable times. It's becoming common that a mum in the kitchen would text her daughter upstairs for some help, or a teenage son locked in his room to message his dad in the living room.

Yet, many working parents complain about the lack of time they have with their children. Only if they can track the number of hours they and their kids spend on any one of those screens, I am quite sure that they would realize how much human interactions were sacrificed on the electronic gadgets.



## FAMILY FIRST

There are actually plenty of opportunities to have a family time in a day. In the morning, make it a point to join the kids at the breakfast table, no matter how brief. Take the opportunity to drive them off to school. Pick a nice topic to talk or discuss along the way, focusing on the positive aspects and not on scolding or nagging. In the evening, do your best to join them for dinner on most days, and definitely on weekends.

When you do, please ensure that all electronics such as mobile phones and televisions are off. Make it an electronic-free hour. Enjoy the conversations and tease one another. Encourage them to open up and share on how their day or week has been. Make the interaction positive and interactive. Again, avoid the urge to be judgemental, to scold or to nag. There will be plenty of time for that later.

In doing so, we are effectively tilting back the balance between work and family. That short hour allow us not only to enjoy a delicious dinner but more importantly to reconnect with the other family members. The dining table becomes the place we lovingly tease and joke around. Soon, the yard will be the playground once again. The virtual world of televisions, mobile phones or online contents is no match for the real life experiences.

Best of all, we are putting our family first. We can then be rest assured that we are well on our way to creating many more priceless moments which no electronic devices can provide, no matter how smart they are!

Zaid Mohamad is a Certified Parental Coach and the bestselling author of Smart Parents, Brighter Kids and Smart Parents, Richer Kids. Log on to

[www.SmartParents.com.my](http://www.SmartParents.com.my) or write to him at [zaid@smartparents.com.my](mailto:zaid@smartparents.com.my).

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