

# **CO-OPERATION**

"What makes a family happy?" That question was recently asked of 1,500 school children. The most common answer was "doing things together." It's what we do with our children that creates closeness, not simply what we do for them.

The whole attitude of a family changes when its members co-operate. It's no longer, "Me first," and "My turn." Now it's "You first," and "Let's do it together."

This value can be taught very early. A four-year old can help dust the furniture. Oh yes, it will take longer. But the benefit is an understanding of the value of cooperation.

The games in this section make co-operation fun; and that's as it should be.

## **1) FAMILY NEWS SERVICE**

**Materials:** One newspaper.

**Method:** Divide the paper up among the family, each person getting one or two sections. To prevent arguing over sections, you may want to draw names from a kitchen bowl, allowing each person to choose a section when his or her name is drawn.

Explain to the family that they will become "reporters" for the sections they've chosen. Spend about 15 minutes looking over the sections of the paper. Then take turns describing one story from each section.

Discuss the story if it seems appropriate and interesting: "What would you do if that happened to you?" "How can that problem be solved?" If time allows, choose new sections and repeat the process.

## **2) CONSTRUCTION COMPANY**

**Materials:** An ordinary set of building blocks or various sizes boxes (cereal, pizza, tea...) and bottle tops (things you would normally recycle).

**Method:** The blocks/ boxes are dumped in the middle of the floor or table. The family discusses how they will co-operate in building a house with the blocks. Discuss the building process in great detail.

Do not touch the blocks/ boxes while you're planning your house. Then build the house without talking to each other. Nobody must say a word until the house is completed. Then talk about what happened as you built.

### **3) THE TRADING POST**

**Materials:** Small pad of paper and pencils.

**Method:** Co-operation requires that each family member share in the chores and duties around the house. This game offers people a chance to see what others have to do, and to learn how they feel about their chores.

Ask each person to write down all the chores they do around the house. Put each individual chore on a separate piece of paper. Then announce that people may trade chores with someone else, if both people agree. Chores may be traded for a limited time period, such as a week or a month. The importance of negotiation and co-operation will become clear very quickly!

### **4) FAMILY DECALOGUE**

**Materials:** Crayons or paint, paper, old magazines, and glue.

**Method:** This game will result in five to ten family rules. Everyone gets a chance to contribute. Go around the circle asking each person to suggest one rule. Discuss each suggestion. If there's a general consensus, write it down.

Continue the process until you have agreed on five to ten rules. Examples: You shouldn't interrupt another person who is speaking. You should be honest and truthful. No shouting in the house.

After you've agreed on the rules, create an artistic display to be hung in a prominent place. Figure out some way for each person to contribute to the display. Use crayons or paint, or old pictures from magazines to help illustrate the rules.

This game can easily result in a set of rules by which your family runs. Take lots of time with this game and the discussion will reward you.

## **5) DREAMS**

**Materials:** Plenty of old magazines and the internet.

**Method:** Invite the family to look through the magazines or the internet for pictures they can cut out or print, of things they'd like to do as a family. After a few minutes, ask each person to share the pictures that illustrate what he or she would like to do.

Take each suggestion seriously. Talk about what would be required if this activity were to happen. Some suggestions may not require much money, and still be fun!

## **6) CHAIN STORIES**

**Materials:** None.

**Method:** Choose someone to begin making up a story. Tell only the first sentence and stop. The next person must add to the story by creating the next sentence. Continue around the circle for a predetermined number of times. The last person must stop the story and say "The End."

Examples of ways to start the story:

"Once upon a time there was a large gorilla."

"Dr. Smith opened the door to his office one day and received the shock of his life."

"Jimmy came home from school very sad."

The game works only if each person co-operates in the storytelling process.

## **7) DIRECTIONS**

**Materials:** Pad of paper and pencils.

**Method:** Ask each person to write down a goal for the family. The goal may deal with relationships, location of the family home, jobs, or anything else you choose.

Take turns reading the goals that are written down. Take each goal seriously. Ask each person to comment on what he or she would have to do if this goal were to be reached.

This game helps you decide what you really want to be as a family.