

# Top 10 Essential Family Values

The first day of the New Year is Global Family Day and is obviously dedicated to family values in every conceivable sense. And today is the right day to share with you a blog by Sherri Kruger that appeared last year in [www.zenfamilyhabits.net](http://www.zenfamilyhabits.net).

How do you define family values? In our home family values are rules or ideals that, as a family, we agree to live by and stay true to. The list of essential family values would be a mile long no doubt and the top 10 lists for each family would be as unique as the one that came up with it.

Having strong well defined family values helps solidify the foundation for a strong, tight knit family. When cultivated long enough this closeness provides a soft place to fall when life doesn't go according to plan. Strong and consistent family values are important in building trust and confidence in each family member.

Here are my top 10 essential family values.

1. **Belonging.** It is important that each member of my family feel that they are loved, that they belong and that they matter. Being a cohesive family could mean that you spend every spare minute together doing family activities but keep in mind that everyone is different. Creating a strong family unit is great but each person should be allowed the space and freedom to explore the activities they think they may enjoy. People are more courageous and more willing to take chances if they know they have a safe place to come back to when things don't quite work out. Coming together for special occasions and holidays and just spending time together as a family is what helps build that sense of belonging.
2. **Flexibility.** I'm all for order, schedules and structure in my family to help maintain some level of sanity. But too much structure and the unwillingness to give a little can result in a lot of unhappiness and resentment. The more flexibility you have in decision making, for example, the happier your family will be for it. Imagine one member of the family always thinking they are right and enforcing their way of

doing things. This certainly wouldn't lead to much happiness within the family unit.

3. **Respect.** This is a bit more difficult to define. For my family, to respect each other is to take feelings, thoughts, needs, and preferences in to account when making decisions. It also means acknowledging and valuing everyone's thoughts, feelings and contributions to the family as a whole. Respect is indeed earned and there is a very fine line between it and fear. The only way to earn and keep someone's respect is to first show them respect yourself. Respect as an important family value will extend out of the home and into school, work or other social settings.
4. **Honesty.** This is the foundation of any relationships that are meant to last. Mother-daughter, husband-wife, sister-brother. Without honesty a deeper connection will not form and certainly won't last. Encourage honesty by practicing understanding and respect when someone tells you of their wrong doings. If we lose it and get angry when we're told what has happened the other person will be more likely to hide it from you next time simply to avoid the disrespect.
5. **Forgiveness.** Forgiving people who have wronged you is an important choice to make. Yes, forgiveness is a choice. It is not some feeling that randomly washes over you when you feel the other person has "suffered" enough. This can be tough since a lot of us tend to equate forgiveness with saying what you did was okay. They are **not** the same thing. Holding a grudge, is not conducive to a close family with mutual respect. Keep in mind that everyone makes mistakes, we all occasionally say things we wish we hadn't and none of us are perfect. Refer to value 3 communication. Get issues out in the open, gain some understanding and move on. Life is too short.
6. **Generosity.** Giving without thinking "what's in it for me" is an important value for anyone wanting to be a responsible, contributing member to society. Through generosity we build empathy since we tend to think more about what people want or need. Being generous doesn't mean simply handing over money to someone in need. It can also include giving your time, love, attention or even some of your possessions.

7. **Curiosity.** Children have a natural curiosity. If you've ever watched a toddler even for a couple of minutes you'd see that quality shine through. For some that curiosity wanes. I think it's important to encourage and push our kids and even ourselves to be curious about things. Rarely should we ever just take someone's word for it. How do we spark our curiosity? Ask questions. Lots of them. Read about a topic you know very little about and don't be afraid to say you don't know. Critical thinking is an important skill that can be learned and developed through exploring your own curiosity.
  
8. **Communication.** Communication is as much an art as it is a science. A failure to communicate will likely lead to unhappiness and misunderstandings. Small issues grow into larger ones and when they eventually boil to the surface it's unlikely they will be resolved calmly. Communication is a lot more than simply speaking your mind. In addition to spoken words, communication also extends to tone, volume, expression, eye contact, body language and effective listening. I would argue that this is the most important value for families to have. When people feel they can talk openly about anything – hopes, dreams, fears, successes or failures – all without judgment, it's encouraging and strengthens the bond.
  
9. **Responsibility.** We'd all like to be considered responsible people. Some of us are and some of us are decidedly less so. Responsibility is something that is learned. As a child you may have been shown how to put your toys away after playing, how to tidy your room or how and when to feed the dog. This sense of responsibility extends well into adulthood. An adult who has an intrinsic sense of responsibility doesn't require a lot of prodding to show up to work on time, return phone calls or meet deadlines. Setting out individual responsibilities for family members works to instill this quality in everyone.
  
10. **Traditions.** This is by far the most fun for me. I think traditions are what make a family unique, they draw people together and create a sense of belonging for everyone. Traditions don't need to be expensive,

elaborate or a lot of work. It can be something as simple as a lazy Saturday morning sipping coffee and chatting or an annual fondue dinner to ring in the New Year. If you don't currently have traditions in your family, create them! All traditions started with one person why not let your family traditions start with you? Get creative and have fun.

So those are my top 10 family values. Do we have many in common? What is in your top 10?