



Thursday, 19 March 2020

Priority: HIGH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Family bonding in the face of Covid-19

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, given its mandate to promote healthy and functional families, wishes to advise that in the face of all the restrictions associated with social distancing, now is an opportune time for families to bond and engage in family activities. As the home now becomes the hospital, school, and office, it is important that the residences of children and older persons become fairly structured and organised for ease of living. Parents, guardians and other family members are now being asked to cope and manage with this new reality. They may therefore require the necessary skills and support to help them in their parental duties.

Families may try these simple ways to spend quality time with their loved ones.

- **Make it a point to have at least one meal together as a family.** Enjoy a meal together, share your thoughts and feelings, and spend quality time together.
- **Read a book or start a family book club** where you can read and discuss stories and books you have read.
- **Put down the phone and take a break from social media.** The plan is to spend quality time. Taking calls, especially from work, should be the last thing you do when you're spending time with your family. So, switch off your phones and focus on each other.
- **Cook a meal together or do a family barbeque.** This may include cooking a new dish each time, or stick to an old tradition and cook a particular dish that is an old recipe passed on through generations.
- **Give your home a detailed cleaning together** and make it fun. You could revamp your house, move the furniture around, and get rid of all that clutter. At the end of the day, you'll be satisfied to see that you did something productive and spent time with your family as well.

- **Help your children with school work.** The reality is...You need to know what's going on in your child's life, and at this point, school is their second home. Helping them out with their homework will allow you to figure out their weaknesses and strong points. Sparing time to spend with the children will instil a sense of confidence in them as well. They will be more open to coming face to face with their weaknesses and fears they have about school if you are by their side.
- **Plant a family garden** where you get to enjoy the day outside in the sun while sowing seeds of either flowers or vegetables and fruits which will become food eventually.
- **Create family stories.** Remember the stories of your family are unique - no one else in the world has the same history. Retelling past and present family stories with your children not only brings the family together, but it creates a timeless bridge between generations. Spend today sitting in the living room with your family and tell as many stories about your family history as you can. The richer and more details the better! Not only will your children be fascinated to hear about their great-grandparents and beyond, but they will also have cherished memories they will never forget. There are so many benefits to sharing family stories that go beyond bonding. If you really want to help your children remember the stories, a smartphone app could be used that lets you record audio stories and create video clips by scanning accompanying pictures.
- **Try backyard camping** where the entire family gathers outdoors to plan a fun night camping in the backyard. While vacations are always a good bonding experience, you may be surprised by how excited your children get at the prospect of camping in their own backyard. Backyard camping is a fun family-friendly experience for all - even your pets! All you need is a tent, some blankets, pillows, snacks and you are good to go.
- **Go on bike rides together at parks and if possible,** have a family picnic in the botanic gardens for example.
- **Host family competitions to include,** poems, spoken word, performances, drawing, colouring or painting with young children.
- **Purchase a cake and decorate it** with edible colours along with your family or simply learn to bake muffins, cookies and cup-cakes.
- **Playing board games** with children creates very joyful moments.
- **Have family movie nights** more often and prepare simple snacks to enjoy with the family

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains committed to its remit of promoting healthy functioning families and building the resilience of the

population and takes this opportunity to remind persons that it stands ready to provide psychosocial support, counselling and requisite referrals and advice to individuals and families as necessary. For further information, persons may also call the Ministry's hotline at 800 - 1MSD.

-End-

For more information:

Communications Unit

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

(868) 623-2608; Ext 5405/5424/5432

Website: www.social.gov.tt

corporatecomm.msd@gmail.com