



Taking Part in Family Life

Key messages

- Family life includes spending time together, having fun, and doing everyday tasks.
- Being included in family life builds skills and a sense of belonging.
- Participating in family gives children the confidence to participate both at home and in the community.

What does taking part in family life mean?

Family life is the things you and your family do together. Activities of family life include:

- Preparing meals
- Eating
- Shopping
- Cleaning the house
- Self-care
- Health care
- Caring for pets
- Spending time together
- Family celebrations
- Visits with relatives

Family life includes having fun together, playing and talking with each other. Family life also includes everyday chores.

Why is taking part in family life important to children?

Taking part in family life is important to children. It helps them learn and develop skills. Family life is the first place of learning for children. Being included in family life helps children to:

- Communicate
- Get along with others
- Feel safe and loved
- Behave well
- Solve problems
- Develop skills
- Improve physical ability
- Build confidence

Being included and participating in family life gives children practical skills such as self-care. Family life gives children social skills to play and talk with others. Family life gives children cognitive skills to know and learn more. Family life builds the



physical strength and abilities of children. Most importantly, family life can help children to feel good about themselves. When children feel good about themselves, they are more confident to explore. Exploring helps children to learn and to solve problems. Participating in family life can help a child to be their best self throughout their lives.

What do children learn through taking part in family life?

Families are a child's first teacher. Children can learn just about anything through taking part in family life including:

- Language
- Self-care
- Empathy
- Daily living skills
- Family and cultural traditions
- How to understand and manage their feelings

Through participating in family life, children can learn what their strengths are. Children learn what they like and don't like and how to behave with others.

What are some strategies to support your child to take part in family life?

Children vary in age, skills, and interests. The wish to participate in any activity will differ from child to child. Ability and interests will vary over time. Include your child as much as you can in family activities. Start at the level they can participate and build from there. Think about what happens in your day from when your child gets up, to they go to bed. What are the activities that occur? How does your child participate now in each activity? Not at all? A little? A lot? If not at all, think about how they could participate a little. If a little, think about how they could be supported to participate a little bit more. What gets in the way of your child participating? What would help them to participate more? Are there people who could help? Sometimes other members of the family could help best. Sometimes extended family or friends could help best. Professionals such as an Early Childhood Intervention professional or Key Worker could help. The more chances your child has to participate in family life the more they will learn. Over time they will be able to participate more and more, both at home and in the community.

How do I start?

Start with a family activity that your child is interested in. If your child loves eating, you might start with mealtimes or cooking. The first step is to be included, to be present. The next step is to participate, to do something. Support your child to help in whatever way they can. It may make the task slower in the short-term. Over time your child will learn, build skills and confidence, and develop into their best self.