

“Bringing the Family Closer Together”
Practical Ways to Keep Everyone Feeling Connected
September 11, 2006

The Rev. Christine Chakoian
Pastor/Head of Staff
First Presbyterian Church Lake Forest
www.firstchurchlf.org

There are so many centrifugal forces pulling our families apart: schedules, jobs, media, divorce, adolescence, counter culture and the sheer pace of change. How can we create a house that can withstand these forces?

FOUNDATION: What can they trust?

- Food and shelter are essential to providing a secure environment. Are the kids getting what they need as opposed to what they want?
- Mom &/or Dad. Kids need their parents and they need to know that their parents will be there for them. Adolescents who have a Dad who believes in them are way ahead of others.
- Boundaries and Love: Kids need to know what is expected of them and that they will be loved no matter what.

WALLS: What offers protection from the outside world?

- Family Values – can you articulate them? Do your children know them? When your children know what their family stands for they are more likely to act in a manner that honors those values.
- Rituals and Play are vital and kids rely on them. It can be as simple as going to the same vacation spot every summer to playing the same card games when they get together with their cousins. Kids long for those rituals and are comforted that they can count on them happening. (see handout on The Importance of Family Dinners)
- Listening: Children need to know that they can speak and that they will be listened to. Actively listening to your children is listening to understand the other person in both content and feeling. (see handout on Assertiveness and Active Listening Skills)

ROOF: What provides your spiritual shelter?

- Houses of Worship – literal spiritual shelter.
- Parental surrogates - a friend's parent, teacher, youth minister, coach can provide another place for your children to go for support and guidance.
- Surrogate siblings for the parents – where do you go for support: friends, your spouse.

WINDOWS and DOORS: Reconnecting with the outside world.

Let others ideas inside your home and let your kids and yourself out to explore new ideas. The home should not be a fortress but a home base.