



enriching ideas for strengthening relationships

Chieko Okazaki on Partnership

The most important way to build strength in partners is to realize that our real job is relationships; people, not programs; ministering to others rather than just administration. Building strong partners means that you trust your partners, even if they don't do everything perfectly. I think it means respecting their decisions and their intentions, even if their behavior isn't perfect yet. It means kindness, nurturing, and appreciation.

It will be easier for us to be strong partners and build strong relationships if we keep focused on our real job—and that's the same as the Savior's—to "love one another" (1 John 4:11). Remember the love. Love builds strengths.

Our real work is relationships. When we understand this, every contact creates and enriches and reinforces a relationship. It's a ripple effect but the ripples, instead of dying out, get stronger.

President Barbara B. Smith in 1976 said, "All that the Brethren have taught me says that we have a companion relationship—not inferior or subordinate, but companion, side-by-side. The priesthood presides, but each of us contributes a vital part to make the whole complete. This isn't my plan. It's the Lord's plan."

Here's a question that will work with colleagues, among presidencies, and between visiting teachers and sisters being visited. Sit down in a private situation where you won't be interrupted and just ask, "What can I do to improve our relationship?" The sincere desire to serve opens doors in a powerful way.

Let's be innovative and creative as we explore ways of building partnership, not only in our marriages and with our children but also with friends and colleagues. There is a world that needs our work; and we will work better in partnership. We can help each other, and the Savior will help us when we do.

"Count Me Therefore a Partner," *Cat's Cradle*, Chieko N. Okazaki

Spouse Talk: Finding Time for Conversation

Finding time to talk to each other on more than a superficial level is a great start. Studies have indicated that most couples talk only about 20 minutes a week—or approximately 3 minutes a day! And when they do talk, conversation is rarely elevated above: 'Good morning,' 'Good night,' 'What's for dinner,' and 'Any mail?'

If this sounds familiar, take heart because you're not alone. Anyone who has tried to have a meaningful conversation with a toddler nearby knows that it is nearly impossible. And even if your kids are teenagers, trying to find time to talk in the midst of a million after-school activities can thwart the best of intentions. Look for opportunities to talk during your daily activities:

- Shop with your spouse so that you can talk in the car.
- If you're really pressured for time, talk when you're with the kids.
- Allocate time after dinner each night. Wash the dishes together or sit on the sofa for 15 minutes.
- Take a walk and put your child in a stroller or on a bike.

Of course, the trick isn't only in finding the time to talk but in maintaining a deeper level of conversation. You need to talk about more than kids and your jobs.

One way to achieve deeper connections is to ritualize your activities. Start traditions and give your relationship continuity. Go back to the same restaurant each year for your anniversary, or attend a special football game each year. Find rituals that interest you and take the time to enjoy them.

Go out on a weekly date, even if it is only for a short time. It will give you a chance to talk and be together. Another technique is to surprise your spouse—a little mystery can go a long way towards invigorating your marriage. Don't despair if you can't manage a full getaway. Even if you only have a couple of hours, a made-to-order adventure is possible. Just think about what your spouse would find exciting.

Source: www.familyfun.com

101 Ways to Praise Your Child

WOW ♥ WAY TO GO ♥ SUPER ♥ YOU'RE SPECIAL ♥ OUTSTANDING ♥ EXCELLENT ♥ GREAT ♥ GOOD ♥ NEAT ♥ WELL DONE ♥ REMARKABLE ♥ I KNEW YOU COULD DO IT ♥ I'M PROUD OF YOU ♥ FANTASTIC ♥ SUPER STAR ♥ NICE WORK ♥ LOOKING GOOD ♥ YOU'RE ON TOP OF IT ♥ BEAUTIFUL ♥ NOW YOU'RE FLYING ♥ YOU'RE CATCHING ON ♥ NOW YOU'VE GOT IT ♥ YOU'RE INCREDIBLE ♥ BRAVO ♥ YOU'RE FANTASTIC ♥ HURRAY FOR YOU ♥ YOU'RE SMART ♥ GOOD JOB ♥ THAT'S INCREDIBLE ♥ HOT DOG ♥ DYNAMITE ♥ YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL ♥ YOU'RE UNIQUE ♥ NOTHING CAN STOP YOU NOW ♥ GOOD FOR YOU ♥ I LIKE YOU ♥ YOU'RE A WINNER ♥ REMARKABLE JOB ♥ BEAUTIFUL WORK ♥ SPECTACULAR ♥ YOU'RE SPECTACULAR ♥ YOU'RE DARLING ♥ YOU'RE PRECIOUS ♥ GREAT DISCOVERY ♥ YOU'VE DISCOVERED THE SECRET ♥ YOU FIGURED IT OUT ♥ FANTASTIC JOB ♥ HIP, HIP, HURRAY ♥ BINGO ♥ MAGNIFICENT ♥ MARVELOUS ♥ TERRIFIC ♥ YOU'RE IMPORTANT ♥ PHENOMENAL ♥ YOU'RE SENSATIONAL ♥ SUPER WORK ♥ CREATIVE JOB ♥ SUPER JOB ♥ EXCELLENT JOB ♥ EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE ♥ YOU'RE A REAL TROOPER ♥ YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE ♥ YOU'RE EXCITING ♥ YOU LEARNED IT RIGHT ♥ WHAT AN IMAGINATION ♥ WHAT A GOOD LISTENER ♥ YOU'RE FUN ♥ YOU'RE GROWING UP ♥ YOU TRIED HARD ♥ YOU CARE ♥ BEAUTIFUL SHARING ♥ OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE ♥ YOU'RE A GOOD FRIEND ♥ I TRUST YOU ♥ YOU'RE IMPORTANT ♥ YOU MEAN A LOT TO ME ♥ YOU MAKE ME HAPPY ♥ YOU BELONG ♥ YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND ♥ YOU MAKE ME LAUGH ♥ YOU BRIGHTEN MY DAY ♥ I RESPECT YOU ♥ YOU MEAN THE WORLD TO ME ♥ THAT'S CORRECT ♥ YOU'RE A JOY ♥ YOU'RE A TREASURE ♥ YOU'RE WONDERFUL ♥ YOU'RE PERFECT ♥ AWESOME ♥ A+ JOB ♥ YOU'RE A-OK ♥ MY BUDDY ♥ YOU MADE MY DAY ♥ THAT'S THE BEST ♥ A BIG HUG ♥ A BIG KISS ♥ A BIG SMILE ♥ I LOVE YOU

Terrific Tips for Staying in Touch with Far-Away Family

Not so long ago, keeping in touch with Grandma meant slipping up the street for a slice of peach pie served up with parenting advice and a bag of fresh tomatoes to take home. For today's far-flung families, however, leisurely drop-in visits are harder to come by. But the stuff of daily life is still what holds families together—the weird jokes cousin Bonnie tells, the way your brother's face looks when he laughs, the fact that Uncle Andy always loses at checkers. The question is, How do you share all that richness with loved ones who live hundreds of miles away? Of course, nothing substitutes for a face-to-face chat over a good pie. But when it comes to staying in touch, here are the next best things to being there.

GIVE THE SCOOP Extra! Extra! Family newsletters are an easy way to share information, and they let everyone see his or her name in print. There is are countless ways to be a family publisher: newsletters that are two pages or 20, sent via e-mail or regular post, handwritten or computer typeset. They can offer poetry, recipes, travelogues, drawings, interviews, family histories, jokes, birthday and anniversary announcements, and more. Try publishing photographs of different noses for a "Guess Whose Nose?" contest. Other tips:

- *Make one person editor in chief*, responsible for setting deadlines, writing or editing articles, and laying out the information in a readable format.
- *Have fun with the title*. If you write your newsletter every Sunday night before going to bed, title it "News to Snooze To." Or name it after your child: "This Week in Hannah."
- *Try publishing special issues for holidays* (New Year's, April Fools', and so on) or issues dedicated to an older relative, a new baby, or the family pets.
- *Include a kids' section*, with games, drawings, and stories written or dictated by the children. Don't skimp on the photos. Jazz up your newsletter with photos (then reproduce the pages using a color copier). Don't forget funny captions.
- *Send a round-robin letter*. This isn't exactly a newsletter, but it serves the same purpose (and it doesn't require any editing). Write a letter full of your family's news and send it to another branch of the family. That family then adds a letter to the packet and sends it on to the next branch of the family. Once the round-robin letter has come full circle, you read all the letters, remove your old one, write a new one, and send it on.
- *Make a copy of each newsletter* and keep it in a three-ring binder as a record of family history.

SEND OFF SOME GOODIES Letters and phone calls may be fine for sharing the latest family news, but nothing says you care like a care package. A few tips:

- *Make it easy*. To simplify things, put a box in a central location in the house, inscribe it with the name of the lucky recipient, and add to it daily.
- *Send a bit of hometown news* to a family member who's moved away from home.

• *Make the package interesting*. One way is to

individually wrap each gift—candles, stationery, games, treats, and so on—then tape a clue to the wrapping paper. Keep Grandma guessing with riddles, backward words, and scripture verses.

• *Send pieces of your life*, like scrapbook pages of photos, funny stories, journal entries, kids' artwork, and so on. For big family mailings, color-photocopy the pages. Or you might send out blank photo albums, then every month or so send off packages of snapshots to fill them.

LET'S ROLL THE TAPE Audio- and videotapes offer a much more creative outlet than phone calls (which can be fleeting, prone to humdrum details, and expensive). Plus, kids who clam up on the phone open up for the camera or tape recorder, and there's no telling what adults will do when the tape starts to roll. A few ideas:

- *Record a storybook*. Many grandmothers enjoy recording their grandchildren's favorite books on tape. Personalize the tapes by talking between stories, even ringing a bell at page turns. Kids can record books too—it's great reading practice—and the finished product makes a special present for a younger cousin.
- *Make a music tape*. At Christmas, help your budding musician record Christmas tunes on the piano or other instrument. Relatives will love feeling close on Christmas day even though they may be miles away.
- *Create a radio show*. Record a cousin's favorite songs on tape and play DJ in between, talking about the songs and reporting on your life and hometown news. The tapes are cheaper than a phone call, and relatives can listen to them anywhere and as often as they like.
- *Swap videos*. Record a month's worth of your child's milestones and daily activities, then send the videotape to your relatives, who do the same for themselves and their children. Not only are the tapes motivation to keep the camera going, but your kids 'know' their extended family so well from watching the tapes that when they get together later, they're already acquainted. They don't waste any time!

SHARE A DELICIOUS SECRET Want to cook up a little family spirit? Hold an annual recipe exchange. In the fall, send three blank recipe pages to each branch of the family. They fill the pages with favorite recipes and related anecdotes and return the pages to you, and then you distribute full sets in time for Christmas. You could also mail a binder to hold all the recipes. Some of the recipes might be silly (like Dinosaur Stew—marinate 10,000 years). Others, like Parker's Famous PB&J Sandwich, are contributed by junior cooks. In any case, it's interesting to find out who's eating what, and to think of your far-away family at dinnertime.

PUT FACES TO PHONE VOICES For kids, seldom-seen relatives are too often relegated to the "out of sight, out of mind" department. To help small kids match voices to faces of far-flung

kin, arrange photos in a small album by the phone and help your youngsters flip to the right picture whenever a relative calls so kids can "see" who they're talking to.

MAKE MAILING EASY In order to get kids to write letters, you've got to make the process as easy as pouring a bowl of cereal. On a small desk, put out everything your child needs: paper, writing and art supplies, envelopes, return address stickers, stamps, even preprinted mailing labels to Grandma. Whenever your children think of their grandparents, they can quickly grab paper to illustrate or write something. If you go to a movie, play, recital, or sports event, just throw the ticket stub or program into an envelope and mail it. Sometimes you may not write anything, but at least the grandparents know why you've been too busy to write.

KEEP DAILY JOURNALS If a parent will be out-of-town on an extended business trip, have each family member keep a journal and write in it every day you're apart. Then when you get back together or talk on the phone, you can pick a day and read about what everyone did. Of course, it won't take the place of being there in person, but it gives you a way to catch up on the everyday details you might otherwise forget to share.

PICK A SECRET PAL In a large family, you can't always shower all your relatives with the bushels of mail they deserve. But how about this solution: every year at Christmas, members of your extended family shuffle their names in a hat and draw a "Secret Pal." During the year, they pay extra attention to their Pals with birthday, Valentine's, and "thinking of you" cards, trinkets, and other tokens of affection. (No return addresses! These are *secret pals!*) Senders reveal their true identities at the following year's Christmas gathering—just in time to put names back in the hat.

GIVE US THE FAX Buy an inexpensive, second-hand fax machine and give it to distant grandparents. Then let your kids fax drawings, letters, and report cards to Grandma and Grandpa daily. It lets you share sentiments right in the moment, with no waiting for the mailman.

SEND POST-TRIP POSTCARDS If you've taken a trip with grandchildren, send postcards to them of places you've visited together, inscribing the cards with memory-jogging notes like "Remember the dolphins we saw at the ocean?" or "Remember the soldiers we saw at Gettysburg?" Children will relish the cards, which they can keep as a travelogue of their vacation adventures.

Source:
www.familyfun.com

