

# Trip to the 'moon' teaches important family values



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is Superpop

I GUESS IF YOU OR I were selected to go to the moon and set up shop never to return to the stress and strain and value systems of our complex global society, we too could be fairly confident in stating we have no more use for the family—it's obsolete.

Our case, however, will never be isolation from an involvement in a world family or at minimum, a blood or adopted family because we are pretty much here to stay, whether we like it or not. The family does seem to be crumbling though. The accelerated divorce rate, the declining birth rate, the drug problem among the youth, and even kids divorcing their parents are just some of the symptoms of maladjusted homes.

I would think some time spent by family members in making themselves useful to each other and establishing an interdependence can be a very good step in maintaining the integrity of one of the oldest institutions of man.

## Firing up the family

The birth of a baby can be one way to give vitality to a family. With little ones around, the birth process can stimulate conversation and project knowledge and love that is straightforward, honest, and informative. Being a teacher (and sometimes a student) to your child can set the stage for even greater ties in the future.

St. Vincent's Medical Center on Staten Island is doing their part to strengthen the family. Besides having a very active prepared child birth program for moms and dads, it has introduced a sibling visitation program. After a baby is born, the father may bring the siblings up to the nursery to get a first hand look at the baby that was *not* delivered by a stork. Thus, the children can follow the course of the baby's progress from inside mommy, to seeing the baby in the nursery and then the decades to come at home.

And think about the mother's benefit from such a program. According to the brain child of this unique program, Dr. Joseph Shanaphy, Director of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department of the Hospital, "Our visitation program is making the birthing experience a family event and taking away pangs of separation which mothers have experienced, heretofore." The program keeps families together.

## Let's fly away

And, "when you and your spouse pay full fare to Los Angeles, your children will fly absolutely free." A gimmick—a reflection of advertising genius—whatever. The point is, regardless of the motivations behind the offer, the family benefits and gets to travel as a living unit, sharing the pleasures and leisure of life. This also will help to mold a healthy and viable interdependence of family members.

## Pete's house

You may be now wondering why your family seems to be obsolete and why your son spends countless hours over at his friend Pete's house? Well, could it be something is missing at home that your son is finding at Pete's house? There are different kinds of families and, when one family appears to be against a child, he finds himself looking for support from another. It may be wise for you and your spouse to talk to Pete's mom and dad and discuss what home life is all about. This conversation could open your mind to behaviors that may allow your child to find the interdependence he needs with you and begin to spend more time at home.

## The moon and back

Three years ago my youngest daughter, Michelle, now 7 years old, told me that she was tired of the family and she was packing her clothes and going to the moon. I asked her if I could go. She agreed and I packed my clothes too. We got in the car and went for a ride to the beach. We then played space craft in the sand and set a course to the moon. As we pretended to lift off, the on-shore breeze rushed by our bodies to assimilate such an experience. As we settled in for the voyage, Michelle said, "It's great to be gone." I said, "Me too."

After several minutes of enjoying the space ride, I turned to Michelle, the captain of the ship and said, "Why are you really going to the moon?" Anticipating a knock-out statement that would probably open my eyes and ears up as to how ineffective a parent I was, causing my child to abandon her family, Michelle very forcefully and confidently said, "Well, dad, if you must know, my sister always calls me a jerk and I don't like that. I am not a jerk. If I was a jerk I would not be able to go to the moon. Right?" She had me there.

The ride to the moon did us both some good. Our re-entry back to earth was smooth and we made a soft landing on the sparkling beach of Sandy Hook. I knew if the family was to have continued meaning for Michelle, I had my homework cut out for me.

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