

Improving Savings, Health, and Happiness by Modifying How the Family Operates the Home¹

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Quick Facts

- US families spend, on average, just slightly more than an hour per day of their time interacting all together as a unit (Paul, 2018).
- Statistics show that in the US, 50% of all first-time marriages end in divorce; 67% of second marriages, and 74% of third marriages (Smith, 2021).

Terms to Help You Get Started

- **Home:** The house, the land where it is sited, and the occupants residing therein.
- **Overall Home Performance:** How well the house, its land, and its occupants function to maximize resources.
- **Minor Conservation Measures:** Largely related to lower-costing mechanical upgrades or behavior and practice(s) modifications.
- **Maintenance:** Actions that are executed on a routine basis to prevent repairs from occurring.
- **Family Operations:** Routines and behaviors that are practiced at home by the occupants.

Keywords

Home performance, home-occupant behavior, home maintenance, family operations, home finances

Introduction: A Lesson in How Overall Home Performance Can Affect a Family

A family recently moved into a home and added a newborn child to it family. The tone was certainly upbeat, but the stress of moving and other little things started to impact the mood. Typically, the father maintains his home in a proactive fashion while also finding time to share life's events with his family. During this period, the home was still being modified, and they were working on repairing all the worn items not detected during the home inspection. In specific, the guest bathroom shower faucet had broken, and the father had postponed repairing it because no guests were expected. When he finally located the part and began repairing it, he became frustrated because the proper tools were not easily accessible due to the house not being completely unpacked yet. Further, he could hear the baby crying, so he knew his wife probably needed assistance.

Words were ultimately exchanged out of frustration—an act which prompted his four-year-old daughter to become upset. She said she heard a friend at pre-school talking about how her parents no longer lived together because they always hollered at each other. His daughter asked if her parents were going to live apart because they raised their voices at one another. All was calmed, and life went on fine within the household. But they did not want their children

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introduced to these types of issues at such young ages, and without warning, it had just occurred.

This anecdote shows how quickly the performance of your home might affect your family's happiness and relationships. This series of EDIS publications will provide you with information about how improving your home's overall performance can help you improve savings, health, and happiness. This publication discusses ways to improve your home's family operations, which are routines and behaviors practiced at home by your family (Cantrell, 2021). Other publications in this series include the following:

- *Improving Savings and Health through Minor Conservation Measures in the Home* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy1320>)
- *Improving Savings and Health by Maintaining Your Home at a Ready-to-Sell Level* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy1321>)
- *Improving Savings, Health, and Happiness by Making Small Modifications to Your Home* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy1323>, for an academic audience)
- *Improving Health and Happiness in the Home by Being and Energy Giver Rather than an Energy Taker* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy1339>)

How Can Your Family Benefit from Improving Your Overall Home Performance?

The concept of overall home performance has much to do with rethinking how we can be happier, but this is not necessarily synonymous with being comfortable. Finding ways to keep our family members together under the same roof and in a relatively peaceful state is no easy task. Many families may decide to spend extra money on the family rather than paying for unnecessarily excessive costs of maintaining a home. This is understandable because keeping the family together and happy is a noble goal to many, worthy of pursuit. If families focus on the various factors comprising their overall home performance, there exists the real possibility of creating financial savings for the family as well as having more discretionary time. However, improving the home performance sometimes takes place in small increments. It often requires extended periods of time before the benefits are truly noticeable.

Which Family Operations Items Can Improve Your Overall Home Performance?

Respondents from a representative sample in the US were asked to rate multiple items—as identified in the literature—that could improve the overall performance of a home (Cantrell, 2012). The goal was to determine which of 81 items the respondents thought had the greatest likelihood of improving the remaining 50–60% of their home's overall performance. Within the family operations category, they chose 19 of 27 daily routines.

Family-Operation Items to Implement in the Short or Long Term

Lists 1 and 2 show the Family Operations (routines and behaviors practiced by the family) that sample participants felt could most likely improve the overall performance of their home (these practices were most reflective of improvements to the family's savings, health, and happiness). Please note all of the items contained in the lists are unranked and not necessarily in any order of priority. The implementation time frames are listed so readers can gauge how soon they can hope to realistically make these types of modifications within their home.

List 1. Nine Family Operations to Consider Implementing in the Immediate to Short Term

- Ensure tasks are accomplished around the home on a routine schedule. Staying on top of things can reduce frustration and the need to obligate time that could otherwise be spent with family.
- Ensure there are well-organized storage areas. Organized storage can reduce frustration, offer time-savings, and be safer because of the reduced need for unpacking and repacking.
- Ensure there is a designated work area where items can be assembled and repaired. Designated work areas can reduce frustration and the risk of injury and damage to items.
- Ensure the correct tools are easily accessible in order to accomplish specific tasks. Accessing correct tools for the task can reduce frustration, rework, and injury.¹

- Do not attempt repairs and upgrades without first gaining proper knowledge. Proper training about home improvements can reduce frustration, rework, and injuries.
 - Do not use furniture for more than one purpose (e.g., table as a desk, etc.). Repurposing furniture can be frustrating, time-consuming, disorganizing, unsafe, and damaging to the furniture.
 - Ensure there is a designated office space where files can be accessed readily. Having a defined office space can reduce frustration and save time.
 - If a computer monitor is used in the home, ensure there is a computer area visible from the main rooms in the house (living room, kitchen, etc.). Overseeing the computing/web-browsing area protects the safety of minors and increases family interaction.²
 - Ensure there is a designated payment book (for Home Owner Association dues/tax escrow accounts/maintenance, etc.). A payment notebook can reduce frustration and late charges while also saving time.
- communication devices and putting them out of reach for the night helps to enable full focus on preparing for and receiving uninterrupted rest.³
 - Consider ensuring all lights are turned off for the night no later than 9 p.m. Turning lights off by 9 p.m. can help ensure that everyone will have adequate time to be well-rested during the following day.
 - Consider ensuring 30 minutes are taken to slowly wake the family in the morning. Waking up slowly during a 30-minute period can reduce stress associated with having to get out of bed early and start the day.
 - Consider ensuring everyone stretches for at least 15 minutes after awakening. Stretching in the morning can increase blood flow and oxygen levels while reducing the chances of muscle injury throughout the day.
- ¹ YouTube has become a go-to source for viewing how-to videos.
- ² For that matter, any and all screen use by minors needs to be monitored. There are controls for doing so built-in to most smart phones and tablets.
- ³ Blue hues (rays/light) from digital screens can interrupt the brain's ability to adjust into certain sleep modes/patterns.

List 2. Ten Family Operations to Consider Implementing in the Short to Long Term

- Consider having premade, preordered, or prepurchased dinners. Prepared dinners can allow for more and healthier family meals while also saving time.
- Consider eating foods that are grown at home (on your property). Eating foods grown on the property can foster a sense of well-being while also educating children about agricultural lessons that are no longer taught in many schools.
- Consider ensuring all communication devices (cell phones, TVs, computers, etc.) are silenced and not allowed at the dinner table. Silencing communication devices and not allowing them at the dinner table can enable focused eating, communication, and digestion.
- Consider not offering second portions and/or rich desserts at dinner. Not offering second portions or rich desserts at dinner enforces portion control and reduces caloric intake.
- Consider ensuring everyone walks 15 minutes together or stretches after dinner. Family walking/stretching after dinner can foster improved digestion and health.
- Consider ensuring adults watch at least 15 minutes of commercial-free international news after dinner. International news watching can foster a more informed, less-biased opinion.
- Consider ensuring all communication devices are surrendered to a “safe” place for the night. Silencing

Summary

Mere modifications to the way in which the family operates the home will not necessarily result in instant improvements in overall savings, health, and happiness. However, when combined with other home-performance measures (e.g., minor conservation measures and maintenance practices), the results will become more noticeable over time. The point is not to seek instant results but rather to establish a lifestyle that naturally gravitates toward conserving and optimizing resources.

References and Resources

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