

Improving Health and Happiness in the Home by Being an Energy Giver Rather Than an Energy Taker¹

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Quick Facts

- U.S. families spend, on average, less than 15% of their time interacting together as a unit (Pope, 2010).
- Researchers estimate that 41% of all first marriages in the U.S. will end in divorce or separation; 60% of second marriages end in divorce; and 73% of third marriages in divorce (Wilkinson & Finkbeiner, 2014).
- Strong families develop and use a system of positive communication, appreciation, and affection (Defrain & Asay, 2007).

Terms to Help You Get Started

Home: The dwelling, the land where it is located, and its occupants

Energy: A measure of caloric intake/output (social, emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical in this context)

Energy Giver: One who offers gestures of inspiration to occupants of the dwelling (in this context)

Energy Taker: One who accepts gestures of inspiration from occupants of the dwelling (in this context)

Positive Energy: Gestures of inspiration that promote positive bonds

Negative Energy: Gestures that increase negativity and diminish positive bonds

Mood: A positive or negative energy/emotional state that endures

Keywords

Home performance, home-occupant behavior, family operations, attitude, mood



Figure 1. Strong families use positive communication and show appreciation and affection.

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1. This document is FCS3313, one of the series Overall Home-Performance from the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 2012. Revised June 2015 and July 2018. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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This material was prepared with the support of the University of Florida. However, any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Florida.

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Teaching the Difference between Energy Giving and Energy Taking in the Family

One way to teach about *energy giving* and *taking* in your family is to have one simple rule: Always take responsibility for your attitude in everything you do. (In this context, *attitude* is different from *mood* in that you are aware of your attitude, but sometimes are not aware of your mood. Generally speaking, you can knowingly choose your attitude, whereas moods can come and go without you fully recognizing or altering them.) For example, as a parent, you could explain to your children that it is natural to be in better moods at certain times and less so at other times. The end result is that you ask your children to take responsibility for their attitudes. This means you hold your children accountable for trying their best to be aware of what type of mood they are in, and your children willingly accept responsibility for actions resulting from their moods. Typically, children (and parents) prefer actions that result when children are in a good mood. However, you cannot expect your children to always be in a good mood, so bad moods (and the actions that result from them) will still occur, but your children will anticipate disciplinary actions and take better responsibility for their bad moods. Also, you can provide an option for them to remain in their bedroom if they are not prepared to accept responsibility for their moods.

When all family members take responsibility for their moods, family meals can generally be more relaxing and easier on the digestive system. Also, children are more likely to accept punishment when they choose to display a bad mood in the home. Chores generally follow the same pattern as meals, and routine maintenance in the home is much easier when family members are accountable for their attitudes. Being a good host to guests is especially important, and moodiness is an unacceptable behavior in the presence of guests. When families pay attention to their attitudes and moods, regular gatherings can turn into special moments.

How Might Your Family Benefit from Its Overall Energy Giving?

The concept of overall energy giving has much to do with rethinking how we interpret our current situation. Finding ways to keep our family members together under the same roof and in a relatively peaceful state is no easy task. Having pleasant times to share with family members rather than arguing with or ignoring one another is an attainable goal,

worthy of pursuit. If families focus on factors comprising their overall energy giving, then there exists the real possibility of creating beneficial, long-lasting relationships in and out of the home. However, changes in habits sometimes accrue in small increments over time before results are truly noticeable.

If we wake up at 7 a.m. and go to bed around 10 p.m., our day is divided into at least sixty 15-minute moments when we can habitually choose to be an energy giver or energy taker. Experiencing some negative energy moments throughout each day is unavoidable. However, we can consciously choose not to stay in those negative energy moments any longer than necessary. Choosing to have a good or bad attitude (or to be in a good or bad mood for those capable) are good examples of how we can consciously choose positive or negative energy. Our daily attitudes and moods will affect whether we will be an energy giver or energy taker throughout our lives.

Energy-Giving Habits to Potentially Improve Health and Happiness in the Home

List 1 shows 12 energy-giving habits likely to improve the overall performance of the home living situation. Please note that the items in the list are not in any order of priority.

List 1. Twelve Energy-Giving Habits to Consider Implementing

- Greeting everyone when you see them for the first time in the morning (and also wishing them a good night's rest)
- Asking if there is anything you can do to assist others when they are doing tasks
- Acknowledging others' attempts to do things well (dressing, grooming, cooking, cleaning, etc.)
- Using the "old school" words and phrases like: "please," "would you mind," "when you get a chance," and "thank you"
- Asking others if what you just said to them makes sense and if they have any questions or concerns about it
- Keeping your area of the home well-maintained, and assisting others in maintaining shared areas
- Muting the television whenever possible, and turning it off during meals

- Doing routine tasks without having someone remind you
- Speaking about uplifting topics when making casual conversation (important topics can be discussed as needed)
- Asking yourself before you say or act, “How would this make me feel if someone said or did it to me?”
- Practicing the principle of attempting to “Do the Right Thing for the Right Reason” in your home

List 2 shows 11 energy-taking habits likely to decrease the overall performance of the home living situation. Please note that the items contained in the list are not in any order of priority.

List 2. Eleven Energy-Taking Habits to Discourage

- Wearing ear buds or headphones while in shared areas of the home
- Appearing before others in the morning without grooming yourself
- Interrupting (especially without saying “excuse me”)
- Discharging anything from your body without saying “excuse me”
- Talking while others are listening to the television (including talking on the phone)
- Sharing unproductive thoughts (or thoughts stemming from nervous energy)
- Showing up late to meals (especially without offering to assist with meal and table preparations)
- Blowing your nose while at the dining table
- Not pushing in your chair after excusing yourself from the dining table
- Unnecessarily raising your voice
- Sitting idly during conversations or dominating conversations

Summary

Modifying the way the family operates within the home will not necessarily result in instant improvements in the overall health and happiness of the living situation. The point is not to seek instant results but rather to establish a lifestyle that naturally gravitates toward respecting others. One way to accomplish progress in the home is by working toward becoming an energy giver rather than an energy taker.



Figure 2. Assist others in maintaining shared areas of the home. Credits: Comstock Images/Stockbyte/Thinkstock.com

The first step in doing this is to accept that you have some control regarding the attitude (and possibly the mood) you choose to display during your waking hours.

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