

Leisure Education Toolkit For Parents with Mental Illnesses



Debra Kubis
Gretchen Snethen



Temple University
Collaborative

On Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities



Temple University Collaborative

On Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

www.tucollaborative.org

This document was developed in the spring 2017 semester, by Debra (Pakstis) Kubis, CTRS in partial fulfillment of her master's degree in Recreation Therapy at Temple University in the College of Public Health, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences. This project was completed under the supervision of Gretchen Snethen, PhD, CTRS with support from Gena Bell-Vargas, PhD, CTRS.

Special thanks goes to Peyton Grace for being the inspiration behind this document, motivating me through both my bachelor and master degrees, and always engaging in family leisure with me! I love you always in all ways!

If you wish to use any material from this document, we recommend the following citation:

Kubis, D, & Snethen, G. (2018) *Leisure Education Toolkit for Parents with Mental Illnesses*. The Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion. Philadelphia, PA.



College of Public Health

Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	4
<u>Benefits of Family Leisure</u>	11
Table 1.1 Benefits and Definitions	
Activity 1.1 How Family Leisure Makes Parents Feel	
Activity 1.2 How Family Leisure Makes Kids Feel	
<u>Core & Balance Family Leisure</u>	17
Table 2.1 Core Family Leisure	
Activity 2.1 Current and Future Core Family Leisure	
Table 2.2 Adding Enjoyment to Errands	
Table 2.3 Core Family Leisure on the Go!	
Table 2.4 Balance Family Leisure	
Activity 2.2 Nature Walk in the City	
Activity 2.3 After our Nature Walk	
<u>Assessment of Family Leisure Interest</u>	32
Activity 3.1 Modified Family Leisure Activity Profile	
Activity 3.2 General Questions about Leisure	
Table 3.1 Leisure Areas	
Activity 3.3 What do We Have in Common	
Activity 3.4 Narrowing it Down	
Table 3.2 Leisure Questions	
<u>Barriers & Facilitators</u>	43
Activity 4.1 What Keeps you From Family Fun	
Activity 4.2 Family Fun is Possible	

<u>Planning and Making Time</u>	50
Activity 5.1 How Busy is my Week	
Activity 5.2 Looking at my Week	
Table 5.1 Leisure in Less than 30 Minutes	
Activity 5.3 Where Does my Time Go	
<u>Using Leisure to Talk with Your Kids about Mental Illnesses</u>	58
Table 6.1 Does Talking about Mental Illness Make a Difference	
Table 6.2 Conversation Starters to Talk about Mental Illness	
Table 6.3 Talking about Mental Illness through Play	
Activity 6.1 What I Enjoy Doing with My Child	
Activity 6.2 What my Child Enjoys Doing with Me	
Table 6.4 Planning a Hospital Stay	
Activity 6.3 Calling my Child from the Hospital	
Table 6.5 Recreation Therapy in the Hospital	
<u>Take Away Message</u>	75
<u>References</u>	76
<u>Printable Sheets</u>	80

Introduction

Most people think of leisure as activities that are done during free time. Although some people may think of leisure as trivial there are many health benefits associated with leisure participation. In this toolkit, the focus is specifically on family leisure. Similar to leisure, family leisure can be viewed as activities that family members choose to do together in their free time. Examples of family leisure may include playing a game together, reading together, going out on a walk together, or making plans to go to the movies. When compared to other responsibilities, family leisure may not be prioritized, especially when considering the 'free-time' aspect. Families may have to 'make' time for family leisure participation. However, when people are tasked with 'making time' typically they have to see or understand the benefit of what they are 'making time' for. Family leisure participation has also been shown to have benefits on individual members of the family and the family unit. For example, when engaging in family leisure individuals may feel less stressed while the family unit may feel more connected to each other (Ackerson, 2003; Hodge, Zabriskie, Townsend, Eggett, & Poff, 2016; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001; Freeman & Zabriskie, 2003). Although every family can gain benefits from family leisure participation, this toolkit specifically addresses the importance of family leisure participation when the parent has a mental illness.

Mental health treatment has changed drastically throughout history. However, despite a shift in approaches from pharmacological to psychosocial the nature of mental health treatment continues to focus on the individual (Drake, et al., 2003). Even when providing community treatment approaches literature suggests that clinicians typically target outcomes such as increasing the individual's ability to manage symptoms and reduce hospital re-admissions (Drake, et al., 2003). Although individual treatment is vital to mental health recovery, treatment that is limited to one member of the family may be an insufficient approach when considering the health and function of the family unit (Suresky, Zauszniewski, & Bekhet, 2014).

The relationship between a parent and child is often described as a special bond; this is also true when a parent has a mental illness (Ackerson, 2003). Parents with mental illness frequently express concern with their child's health and well-being

(Awram, Hancock, & Honey, 2016; Ackerson, 2003). Sometimes parents with mental illnesses acknowledge the importance of mental health treatment because they understand how their mental health can impact their children (Awram, Hancock, & Honey, 2016). On the contrary, some parents may 'hide' their symptoms as a way to protect their children from adverse experiences (Ackerson, 2003). Because of this, mental illness may be dismissed or ignored. When mental illness is not addressed the parent may experience worsening symptoms due to the stress of managing their recovery along with the parent-child relationship (Ackerson, 2003). Hiding mental illness from children, simply means that they won't understand what's going on. This can increase a child's stress or make them feel scared (Grove, Reupert, & Maybery, 2017).

Children who live in a home with a parent who has mental illness may have unique needs when compared to their peers. For example, when parents have serious mental illnesses, children may be at heightened risk for developing a mental illness later in life (Foster, 2014). Research suggests that children, who have a mother with a mental illness, report significantly higher rates of psychological symptoms and higher rates of interpersonal loneliness when compared to children with parents without mental illnesses (Abraham & Stein, 2010). Research has also acknowledged that children of parents with mental illnesses may struggle to connect socially (Foster, 2010) and experience increased emotional problems (Tabak et al., 2016). Consequently, some areas that have been identified in the literature as needs for children of parents with mental illnesses include a need for emotional support and security (Tabak et al., 2016). However, this does not mean children who have parents with mental illnesses will develop these problem areas. The literature suggests that parents can reduce stress in children simply by engaging in family leisure (Offer, 2013). Parents with mental illnesses can also reduce their child's experience to adversity by maintaining open communication and educating their child about mental illnesses (Grove, Reupert, & Maybery, 2015); which can also be accomplished by increasing the family's shared leisure experiences. Recreation therapists can help address areas of need by providing family leisure education. Family leisure can be intentionally used as a way to increase communication, develop the relationship between family members, reduce symptoms

associated with mental illnesses (Ponde & Santana, 2000), foster healthy family function (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001), and decrease stress among children (Offer, 2013).

Similarly, the literature suggests that parents with mental illnesses who are receiving treatment acknowledge their desire to connect with their children and better develop their parenting skills to increase their ability to maintain a healthy relationship with their children (Shor, Kalivatz, Amir, Aldor, & Lipot, 2015). Understanding the individualized needs of the family paired with addressing the mental health of both the children and parent yield best treatment results for parents with mental illnesses and their families (Biebel, Nicholason, & Woolsey, 2014). Therefore, the family unit, including relationships with children, should be considered when mental health providers deliver services to parents with mental illnesses.

Because there is a need to address the needs of the family unit when a parent has a mental illness, recreation therapists and other treatment providers are challenged with the task of how to best address these needs when only having direct access to the client. For recreation therapists this is especially true in regard to the promotion of engagement in family leisure, which has been found to foster the health and wellbeing of family members (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). The literature has consistently supported the notion that family leisure influences the emotional bonding of the family members and the family's ability to adapt to change (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001), along with the overall function of the family (Hodge, Zabriskie, Townsend, Eggett, & Poff 2016).

To further understand how family leisure influences the health of the family members, health care providers should become familiarized with the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning. This model suggests that family leisure is positively associated with family health and function by providing leisure experiences that meet the family's needs to simultaneously have stability and change (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). This model acknowledges two types of family leisure: core and balance. Core family leisure consists of activities that are fulfilled inside of or close to the home. These activities often occur more frequently and are integrated into the common activities of the family. These activities are often free or low cost. Core family leisure is

hypothesized to meet the family's need for stability by providing the family members with a sense of consistency and closeness. Core family leisure participation results in increases in family cohesion (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Examples of core family leisure activities include watching television together, playing board games, doing chores together, eating meals together, or playing together in the front-yard. These types of activities can be spontaneous and require little to no planning. On the contrary, balance family leisure consists of activities that require family members to leave the home. These types of activities require more planning, finances, and happen less frequently when compared to core family leisure activities. Balance family leisure activities prompt family members to problem solve and change roles, which influence the family's adaptability (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Examples of balance family leisure activities include going on a vacation, and going to a museum or amusement park. Balance leisure provides the family with a 'one of a kind' experience and sense of novelty, which meets the family's need for change.

As previously mentioned, engagement in family leisure is positively associated with health and family function (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Although there is no specific literature on the relationship between family leisure participation and parents with mental illnesses, independent engagement in leisure by individuals within this population occurs less often than those without mental illnesses. Research suggests that there is a negative correlation between mental health symptoms and leisure participation (Chang, et al., 2016), indicating that greater participation in leisure is associated with lower symptom levels. Some factors that prevent leisure participation among people with mental illnesses include low socioeconomic status, limited financial resources, and low education levels (Ponde & Santana, 2000). When considering parents with mental illnesses it is important to identify factors that prevent a parent's participation in leisure. In addition to financial and educational barriers, the responsibility of maintaining a family and household may also prevent participation in leisure (Ponde & Santana, 2000).

Therefore, this toolkit was created using the literature to promote family leisure participation when a parent has mental illness. This document not only highlights the

benefits of family leisure participation and assist in the assessment and planning of family leisure participation, but also provides education on how to use leisure intentionally to increase communication between parent and child surrounding the topic of mental illnesses. The document was designed for the consumer; however healthcare providers may also use it to support services. If you are a health care provider this document may help educate clients on the importance of family leisure participation and promote family leisure engagement.

The document includes six sections. Section topics are as followed: *Benefits of Family Leisure, Core and Balance Family Leisure, Barriers and Facilitators, Assessment of Family Interest, Planning and Making Time, and Using Leisure to Talk to with Children about Mental illnesses*. Each section is a packet that is made for the consumer and all the worksheets are repeated at the end of this document to make them more printer-friendly. Health care providers can make the packets available in their facility, enhance group sessions using the information, or distribute them individually to appropriate clients. Due to ethical guidelines, it is most appropriate that health care providers contact or refer their clients to the facility's recreation therapist to provide further leisure education and recreation therapy sessions should these packets prompt leisure and recreation discussion that is out of the health care provider's scope of practice. Example strategies of ways to use this toolkit and the guides can be found on the next page.

Example Strategies to use these Guides

Inpatient Hospitals: The packet titled *“Using Leisure to Talk with Your Kids About Mental Illnesses”* may be particularly helpful during an inpatient stay; page 58 discusses hospital stays and prompts a phone conversation to help maintain the parent-child relationship during a hospital stay. Health care providers at this level may also consider distributing packets to clients as they prepare for discharge. Health care providers can also use the information to enhance group sessions. For example, if a counselor is facilitating a group on family relationships, having resources regarding family leisure available may be helpful for clients, considering parents with mental illnesses tend to discuss their parenting difficulties in a group setting (Shor, Kalivatz, Amire, Aldor, &

Lipot, 2015). The topical areas of each packet could be integrated into sessions to encourage clients to intentionally plan for family leisure participation post-discharge. The recreation therapist should work with the client to establish family leisure goals to develop and plan post- discharge. Table 6.5 on page 71 also provides suggestions on how recreation therapist can assist in managing the parent-child relationship while the parent is hospitalized.

Outpatient Treatment: The end of each packet provides a section titled *“Talking With my Mental Health Care Provider.”* This allows the client to think about how to share the tables or worksheets in the packet with their provider and reflect on topics to discuss with their provider. At an outpatient level of care, health care providers can encourage the clients to complete this section of their packets and review it with them. This can help ensure that outpatient care providers and clients are addressing needs the client has identified. Outpatient providers may also use the packets to prompt parenting-support groups or peer-led parenting groups for the parents in the program. Also, in an outpatient setting, providers may consider assisting clients in using the information to create family leisure goals. Health care providers at this level may assist in ensuring family leisure takes place by ‘checking-in’ on family leisure participation with clients at outpatient appointments. As always, when the discussion requires additional expertise, providers are encouraged to refer clients to a recreational therapist for further assessment and planning.

The packets will begin on the next page. Remember you can use this toolkit as a whole or choose appropriate topics that you and your client believe are important.

Benefits of Family Leisure

Doing fun things as a family is more than just fun and games. When family members spend time together in leisure the family also experiences benefits. Some benefits your family may experience are increases in family cohesion, family adaptability, family function, and family communication (Freeman & Zabriskie, 2003). See **Table 1.1** for a list of these benefits and what they mean.

Table 1.1: Benefits and Definitions

Benefits	What does that mean?
Family cohesion	The emotional bond between family members. In other words, when family members feel close and connected to each other and have a good relationship
Family adaptability	The ability of the family to adjust to change. In other words, when something unexpected happens the family members can be flexible and work through it
Family Function	The way something functions means the way it works. Family function refers to the how the family interacts and works together.
Family Communication	The way the family members talk to each other. Having open communication means that family members will come to each other to talk about good and bad things

(Olson, 2000)

Being aware of the benefits of family leisure is important for all parents to remember and it is especially important for parents with mental illnesses. Parents with mental illnesses may have more stressors than parents without mental illnesses. For example, parents with mental illnesses may worry more about their symptoms affecting their ability to parent, which can increase stress levels (Ackerson, 2003). Children of parents with mental illnesses may also have different needs than children of parents without mental illnesses. For example, children of parents with mental illnesses may need more emotional support and have a greater need for security (Tabak et al., 2016).

Sometimes children take on care-giving roles for the parent, including emotional support and household tasks (Aldridge, 2006). Children who provide care often have less time for play or other activities that are important for child development (Gray, Robinson, & Sedon, 2008).

Activities that interest both the parent and the child can help strengthen the family (Van Der Ende, Busschbach, Nicholoso, Korevaar, & Weeghel, 2016). Family leisure can be a starting point to meet the needs of both the parent and child. For example, family leisure can promote emotional bonding, and add a sense of security. Leisure participation may also reduce depression and anxiety for people with mental illnesses (Ponde & Santana, 2000) and may decrease stress levels in their children (Offer, 2013). The family may also develop better relationships and learn to deal with difficult situations if they do fun things together (Hodge, et al., 2016; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001; Freeman & Zabriskie, 2003). **Activity 1.1** is an activity to help you think about how family leisure has benefited you. Work with your child to use **Activity 1.2** to think about how family leisure helps them. You can complete **Activity 1.1** on your own.

Activity 1.1: How Family Leisure Makes Parents Feel

Complete the sentence by circling all that apply		
“When I do things for fun with my kids I feel...”		
Less depressed	Less anxious	Like a good parent
Happy with the way I am spending my time	Joyful	My child and I are equal
Connected to my child	I can trust my child to make decisions	My child and I talk more
I can make decisions	Easy-going	Relaxed
Satisfied	I can stop being “the parent” and have fun	That my child and I listen to each other

When your child completes **Activity 1.2** you may want to sit down with them. You can introduce the table by asking them what they like doing with you. If they cannot think of anything give them examples. You might say, “I enjoy when we take walks together and I really like when we dance, do you like doing those things too?” After your child is able to think of things they enjoy doing with you ask them to think about how they feel when you do those things together. If needed, read the directions and statement to them while they complete the table. You can find **Activity 1.2** on the next page.

Activity 1.2: How Family Leisure Makes Kids Feel

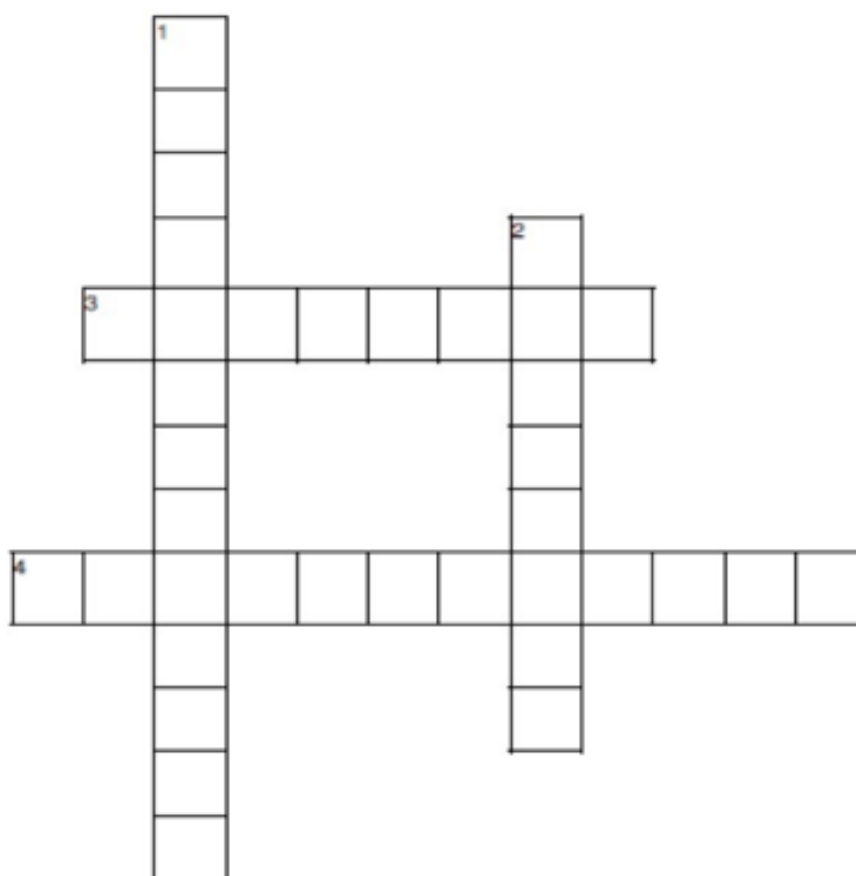
Ask your child to read the sentences below. Have them draw a smiley face next to the sentences they feel are true. If needed, you can read the sentences aloud to them.	
Draw a 😊 next to everything that is true	
I feel happy when my parent plays with me.	
If I am upset, playing with my parent helps me feel better.	
I like to talk to my parent when we play.	
I feel safe when I play with my parent.	
I feel important when I play with my parent.	
I feel like my parent loves me when we play together.	

Despite the benefits of family leisure, people with mental illnesses usually engage in less leisure when compared to people without mental illnesses (Chang, et al., 2016). It may be important for you to think about how much family leisure you currently engage in with your children. If you want to think about what stops you from engaging in leisure and ways to increase participation be sure to look at the section on “Barriers and Facilitators”.

Use the crossword puzzle on the next page as a fun way to test yourself on the words and definitions that are listed on **Table 1.1**. At first, try to see what you can remember without looking back at the table. If you get stuck you can turn back and look at the words and definitions! Try to remember these words and definitions and think about them when you engage in family leisure with your children. For example, if you were to read a bedtime story to your child, it may be helpful for you to think about that experience afterward. Did you feel close with your child as you lounge in bed and read a story while snuggled up together? If so, you are probably developing the cohesion between you and your child!

Word Bank			
Cohesion	Function	Communication	Adaptability

Family Leisure Benefits Crossword Puzzle



Down

1. The way family members talk to each other
2. An emotional bond between family members

Across

3. The way the family unit works together
4. The way the family members are able to change

My next steps!

- Think about what you want to gain out of family leisure.
- Think about types of leisure you can do more of to see the benefits.
- Try to think about the words and definitions on table 1.1. When you engage in family leisure reflect on what benefits you are experiencing.

Write down some goals related to leisure and an outcome! For example, “I would like to do more puzzles with my child so we can work together”

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Things to remember!

- There is a lot of good that comes from having fun with your children!
- Family cohesion is a word to describe to emotional bonding between the family members
- Family adaptability is word that described the family members' ability to change and make adjustments.
- Family communication refers to how the family members talk to each other
- Family function refers to the way the family unit works together!
- Family members that spend time in leisure together may have better relationships.
- Spending time in family leisure can help family members deal with change better.
- Family members may talk to each other more openly if they do fun things together
- Family units function better when they engage in leisure.

Write the benefits you and your children personally gain from leisure!

(You can refer back to table 2 & 3)

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my mental health care provider

- If you have any questions about the definitions in table 1.1 take them to your mental health provider and ask them to explain
- Ask your mental health care provider to give you examples of how family leisure can benefit you and your family.
- If you completed table 1.2 & 1.3 you may want to share them with your mental health provider. This way when your mental health care provider can remind you of the personal gain you experience from family leisure participation.

Think about other things you may want to ask your mental health provider and write them below.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Core & Balance Family Leisure

Research has suggested that families have a need for both stability and change, which can also be described as the family's cohesion and adaptability (Olson, 2000).

Therefore, the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning suggests that there are two types of leisure that can address those needs (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). In other words, certain activities can be done as a family that allow the family to bond, and other types of activity can allow the family members to change or adapt. This allows families to meet their needs through specific leisure participation.

Core family leisure patterns allow family members to experience stability. This is accomplished by family members engaging in activities that are considered informal, occur more frequently, and require little or no cost. These activities require little to no planning and can be done in or close to the home. This allows the family members to foster relationships and increase their family cohesion (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001).

Core Family Leisure

On the other hand, balance family leisure patterns allow the family members to experience change by providing them with new experiences that may be challenging. This allows them to practice working together, problem-solving, and adapting roles if needed which can increase family adaptability (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001).

Core Family Leisure are activities that can take place in or around the home. Typically, these activities are free or relatively inexpensive. When family members participate in core leisure they may feel closer to each other and experience increased connectedness and bonding. Core family leisure can help with emotional connection (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). They can also help your child feel safe and secure (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Family members may also often feel a sense of stability from engaging in core family leisure. For benefits and examples of Core Family Leisure see [Table 2.1](#).

Table 2.1: Core Family Leisure

Examples of Core Family Leisure	Benefits of Core Family Leisure
Playing a board game Doing arts & crafts Making dinner together Doing chores together Watching a movie together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family members get to spend more quality time together • Family members develop closer relationships • Family members have a chance to bond with each other • Family members feel safe • Provides a sense of stability

What are examples of Core Family Leisure in your home?
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Now think about your own family! What are some of the things that you do with your child? Focus on the fun things like playing games or even eating dinner together. These don't have to be big activities! Even small things like tossing balled socks into the laundry basket count! Use the box below to write examples of core activities in your home. Based on what you read in table 2.1, what are the benefits that you get from these activities? This helps you think about why these things are important to you! Use the next box to list those benefits that you experience!

What benefits come from Core Family Leisure in your home?

Use **Activity 2.1** on the next page to think about Core Leisure you and your children like to do together already and new things you would like to try. You can do this table by yourself or with your child.

If you work on the table alone, you can just sit down and follow the prompts in red. If you would like to complete this with your child you can sit down together. To highlight who circled what you can use different colored crayons. For example, you can circle everything in blue crayon and your child can circle everything in green. This may also be a good way to see if you and your child have different views on what you currently do together and allow you to see what you both want to do in the future!

Activity 2.1: Current and Future Core Family Leisure

CURRENT: Things we do now!				FUTURE: Things we would like to try!			
Circle the Core Family Leisure that you currently enjoy with your children				Circle new ideas of Core Family Leisure that you and your children would like to try in the future			
Cook Dinner Together	Board Games	Hide & Seek	Sock Puppets	Cook Dinner Together	Board Games	Hide and Seek	Sock Puppets
Puzzles	Playdoh	Dancing	Telling Stories	Puzzles	Playdoh	Dancing	Telling Stories
Arts & Crafts	Yoga	Movie Night	Clean Together	Arts & Crafts	Yoga	Movie Night	Clean Together
Read	Journal or Writing	Singing	Bedtime Routines	Read	Journal or Writing	Singing	Bedtime Routines
Take a Walk	Finger-Paint	Build a Fort	Fold Laundry	Take a Walk	Finger-Paint	Build-A-Fort	Fold Laundry

Having your children try to keep themselves busy while you do chores around the house can not only be frustrating for the parent and children, but it can also cut down the time you get to spend together. Instead of chores taking away from time you spend with your children, you can use chores as an opportunity to engage in core family leisure. **Table 2.2** provides suggestions on ways to make everyday responsibilities fun for the whole family! This table is on the next page!

Table 2.2: Adding Enjoyment to Errands

Chore	How to make it fun
Cooking	<p>Make your own cooking show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ask your child to be your assistant • make sure your assistant understands the safety rules • give your assistant age-appropriate tasks • give your cooking show a name • take a ‘commercial break’ if either of you feel overwhelmed <p>(Examples of age appropriate tasks for children who are 4 years and older may include rinsing vegetables, mixing ingredients together in a bowl, handing you supplies or ingredients, and preparing and pouring measuring cups)</p>
Folding laundry	<p>Make it a contest!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who can match the most socks in 2 minutes • who can separate their clean clothes from the pile the fastest • who can fold their towel the smallest <p>(Provide praise to your child because they helped you, not because they won the contest. For example “that was really fun, you matched so many socks, that is really helpful for me, thank you for doing that with me!”)</p>
Getting ready in the morning	<p>Children may want to be independent but may also need help getting ready for daycare or school. When responsibilities seem to be overwhelming your child instead of becoming frustrated become playful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try creating a ‘tag-team’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • let your child know when they need your help they can ‘tag you in’. Similarly, when they want to do things on their own again they can ‘tag you out’.
Getting ready for bed	<p>Create a bedtime routine that allows you and your child to bond. Some routines to consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading a short story every night or a chapter from a chapter book • singing a good-night song after you tuck them in • washing your hands together or putting lotion on • brushing your child’s hair before bed <p>Consider lying with your child for five minutes before leaving the room. Children may not understand ‘5 minutes;’ try using an egg-timer for nighttime routines to ensure your child is still in bed on time.</p>

When you are feeling overwhelmed with work, family, and other responsibilities, instead of feeling defeated, be creative. Take your core family leisure from the home to

your car ride, bus ride, or morning walk. **Table 2.3** provides suggestions on how to make your commute more fun!

Table 2.3: Core Family Leisure on the Go!

Car ride	Bus ride	Walk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a sing-a-long • Tell each other your favorite jokes • Make up a story together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play I-Spy • Play a hand-game • Read to your child on the bus, or have your child read to you! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skip instead of walk! • Play ‘don’t step on a crack’ • Start a rock collection. On your walks try to find rocks together.

Balance Family Leisure

Balance family leisure are activities that occur less often, are often outside of the home, and require more planning than core activities. These types of activities also may require more of your time and may also cost money. Family members who engage in balance leisure are able to develop and practice their ability to problem solve, communicate, and adapt. For benefits and examples of Balance Family Leisure see **Table 2.4**.

Table 2.4: Balance Family Leisure and Benefits

Examples of Balance Family Leisure	Benefits of Balance Family Leisure
<p>Going on a picnic</p> <p>Going on a nature walk</p> <p>Taking a trip to a museum</p> <p>Going to a park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family members get to change roles, meaning children can practice being more responsible while adults might be able to relax more • Family members get to practice being flexible • Family members get to problem solve together • Family members can practice communication • Family member can bond

Many people think that balance leisure has to cost a lot of money. Costs might include entrance fees, food costs, and/or travel costs. However, there are a number of ways to reduce your costs. Look for free activities in your city or town. Museums often have ‘pay-what-you-wish’ days, where you can access the museum for a voluntary donation. Worried about food costs? Pack a lunch! Some movie theaters cost less in the afternoon! Balance leisure shouldn’t be a burden on the family. A little more time spent planning can help cut the costs. Plus, planning the activity with your child can be fun, too!

Nature activities can be low cost and another opportunity for balance leisure. There are many benefits to doing fun things that involve nature. Nature activities allow family members to bond with each other. They also allow family members to get out of the house and away from every day stressors which may be very helpful for people who find their living situation stressful (Izenstark, Oswald, Holman, Mendez, & Greder, 2016). Nature activities do not have to be expensive and there are plenty of ways to find nature even if a person is living in the city. In fact, people report liking nature activities because all family members can enjoy them regardless of age or income (Izenstark, Oswald, Holman, Mendez, & Greder, 2016). Some examples of free nature activities that can be done in the

city are going to a park, having a picnic outdoors, going to sit by a public lake or body of water, and taking walks.

Use **Activity 2.2** as a way to turn a regular walk into a nature walk. Take it with you and your kids as you stroll through the neighborhood. Try to find all the listed items. Check off the items you see or find on your walk! Save the sheet for another walk if you and your kids cannot find all the items. After the walk, take some time to talk about what you just did! This can help make the good feelings from the walk last longer. You can find **Activity 2.2** on the next page!

Activity 2.2: Nature Walk in the City

Item list for a nature-walk in the city	Check here when you find the item
Green leaf	
Yellow leaf	
Mud	
A rock the size of your palm	
An ant hill	
Yellow flower	
Butterfly	
Bird's nest	
A caterpillar	
Pinecone	
Spider web	
Feather	
Grass	
Water	
Squirrel	
Bee	
Worm	
An animal's footprint	
A personal treasure	
Add your own below!	

Activity 2.3 has questions and topics you can use to talk about your walk together. It may be a good idea to look at **activity 2.3** before you go on your walk. This can give you an idea of different things you can think about while you are walking with your child. For example, **activity 2.3** asks “how did we communicate on our walk”, instead of waiting until the walk is over to think about it, when you notice you and your child are communicating well point it out! You may say to your child “thanks for telling me every time you found something, this is helping me keep our check-list updated!”

Activity 2.3: After Our Nature Walk

Think and talk about the following questions with your kids
What did you enjoy about our walk?
Can you think of a time our walk when you smiled? What made you smile? How did that feel?
How did we communicate on our walk?
What were some of the jobs we had on our walk? Did we both look for the items? Did we both check them off the list?
What was your favorite part of our walk?
Did you like spending time together?
What could we do next time to make it more fun? (Is there a friend we could invite?)

Things to remember!

- Core family leisure are activities that happen in or around the home and are free of cost or inexpensive
- Core family leisure helps family members bond and build relationships with each other
- Core family leisure might help your children feel safe and secure
- Examples of core family leisure is cooking, cleaning, playing in the front yard, or doing a puzzle or coloring together.
- Balance family leisure are activities that happen outside of the home. These activities may cost more money
- There are ways to find inexpensive or free ways to engage in balance family leisure.
- Balance family leisure can help you and your child problem solve and accept change
- Examples of balance family leisure are going on a nature walk or planning a trip to the zoo or museum

Write down other points that you want to remember below

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

My next Steps!

- Think about what different types of core and balance activities you want to try
- Make an effort to engage in core family leisure 1 to 3 times a week and balance leisure once a month
- **Core Leisure:** Pick one household chore and try to make it fun!
- **Balance Leisure:** Keep a planner so you can commit to balance leisure participation
- Go on a nature walk!

Write down other steps you want to take toward doing more core and balance leisure

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my Mental Health Care Provider

- If you completed table 2.1 you may want to share that with your mental health provider. Your mental health care provider can help you maintain the things you currently enjoy doing and help you create plans for what you want to do.
- Ask your mental health care provider for free or low cost resources in your community that reflect your and your children's interest
- Ask your mental health care provider to help you with a bus schedule if you are unsure how to get to different places such as different parks or museums.
- Share your plans to participate in core and balance leisure. Ask your provider to follow up with you!

Write down other points that you want to bring up to your provider!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Assessment of Family Leisure Interest

Before you think about what you and your children enjoy doing, it is important to think about what you already are doing! Some assessments allow people to reflect on questions and answer them on their own. This is also known as self-report. The Family Leisure Activity Profile (F.L.A.P.) is a self-report tool you can use (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Although this is a self-report tool, it is valid and reliable. In other words, this tool measures what it should be measuring and is consistent (Melton, Ellis, & Zabriskie, 2016).

The F.L.A.P will allow you to think about different leisure activities you have done and are doing with your family members. The F.L.A.P. will also help you better understand how often you participate in family leisure. This will help you keep track of what you're doing and areas you might increase participation. Typically, a leisure professional, such as a recreation therapy, would sit down and ask the questions then score the results. **Activity 3.1** is a modified version of the F.L.A.P that you can reflect on independently. Completing **activity 3.1** will allow you to think about what you do with your family members, for how long, and how often. Typically, the F.L.A.P highlights 8 core leisure activities and 8 balance leisure activities. This modified version is shorter asking only 5 core related leisure questions and 5 balance related leisure questions.

You can find the directions to complete the modified version of the F.L.A.P below!

Directions to complete the F.L.A.P:

To complete the table first read the activity. In the next box, you can write if this is a core leisure activity or a balance leisure activity. Remember, core leisure typically happens in or around the home and needs little to no planning. Balance leisure activities usually need some type of planning and allow you to leave your home.

After that, think of who you do this activity with, for this section you should be thinking about if you are doing it with your child. You may write 'my child' or your child's name. If you have more than one child you can write "my children" or write the names of which children you do this activity with. Next, fill in how long it takes to do this activity; this can range from '1 hour' to '4 hours' to 'all day'. Last, the table asks you

to think about how frequent you are doing the activity. In other words, how often do you and your child do this together, an example of frequency may be ‘once a day,’ ‘once a week,’ ‘once a month or ‘once a year.

You can find **activity 3.1**, the *Modified Family Leisure Activity Profile* below! The first line is filled out in red as an example!

Activity 3.1 Modified Family Leisure Activity Profile

Activity	Core or Balance	With Who	How Long	How Often
Cooking or having a family dinner	Core	My child	1 hour	Once a week
Cooking or having a family dinner				
Playing in the yard or sitting on the porch together				
Going on a walk				
Going swimming, playing with a sprinkler, or having a water balloon toss				
Playing board-games, card games, or puzzles				
Planning and going on a picnic				
Going to the movies				

Going to the zoo				
Going to an arcade				
Volunteering				

Another way to think about your family leisure participation would be to simply think about some general questions about leisure (Ponde & Santana, 2000). **Activity 3.2** provides some questions you can answer or think about to reflect on how much family leisure you engaged in in the past month. Don't be afraid to add your own questions that are relevant to your life.

Activity 3.2 General Questions about Leisure

Leisure Questions	Answer	
In the past 30 days did I have a day off or spare time to spend with my child?	Yes	No
In the past 30 days did I participate in family leisure	Yes	No
In the past 30 days what activities did I do with my children?	1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____ 5) _____ 6) _____ 7) _____	
Write your own questions!		

Look at your **activities 3.1 & 3.2**. If you are doing a lot with your children already that is great! If you are not doing much with your children do not feel bad or worry! Once you have a better idea of what you already are or are not doing it can help you think about the changes you want to make. Most parents may want to be doing more with their children but might not know how to do that. One way to increase leisure participation is to learn more about your interest and your kids' interest. Use **Table 3.1** to think about different types of leisure and examples.

Table 3.1 Leisure Areas

Creative	Physical	Social	Outdoor	Indoor
Coloring	Sports	Hanging out with friends	Gardening	Reading
Painting	Running	Family events	Chalking out front	Cooking
Music	Swimming	Clubs or Classes	Talking a walk	Cleaning
Poetry	Hiking	Parks or Playgrounds	Having a picnic	Videogames
Cooking	Biking	Cooperative board games	Cloud-watching	Board games
Drama	Jump-rope	Multiplayer videogames	Hop-Scotch	Watch T.V.
	Dancing	Card games	Play catch	Movie night
		Holiday gatherings		

After you think about the different types of leisure you may want to learn about what leisure interest you and your child have in common. This is important because it may be hard to make leisure plans as a family if you and your kids do not seem to be interested in the same activities. Use **activity 3.3** as a way to explore what you and your kids have in common!

Activity 3.3 What Do We Have in Common

Parents, circle activities you would like to try	Kids, circle activities you would like to try
Painting	Painting
Biking	Biking
Jump-rope	Jump-rope
Hop-scotch	Hop-scotch
Picnics	Picnics
Cooking or Baking	Cooking or Baking
Gardening	Gardening
Journaling	Journaling
Scrap-booking	Scrap-booking
Reading	Reading
Dancing	Dancing
Sports	Sports

When you and your child are both done with **activity 3.3**, answer the questions on **activity 3.4**. To work on this together ask your child to sit down with you. You can go through your lists together by saying “I circled _____ did you?” Your child can also tell you which activities they have circled and ask you if it matches your list! Try to keep the conversation going while you and your child compare your list. One way to do this is to point out if your child circled something that surprises you. You might say “I never knew you were interested in gardening!” You can ask them follow-up questions like “what is your favorite flower?” or ask “would you like to plant a flower or a vegetable together?” Remember, it is okay to be spontaneous and silly! If you and your child both circled ‘dancing’ get up and start dancing!

After you and your child have talked about what you have in common, **activity 3.4** can help you pick something to plan to do together by asking you to list all the activities you both circled then narrowing it down to just one thing you both want to do!

Activity 3.4 Narrowing it Down

List the activities that both you and your child circled	
Out of the listed activities, name three you both really want to try	
Out of the list of three, choose one!	

Sometimes it can be easier to think of something you want to do than to plan it and actually go do it! You can see *Section 5: Planning & Making Time* to come up with ideas on how to schedule time for the activity you both decided on!

To keep leisure in conversations, use **table 3.2** as a prompt to talk with your kids about the different types of leisure you do together. You do not have to sit down and just ask them the questions in order. It might be a good idea for you to read over the questions first and choose a couple to bring up at dinner, on a walk, or during a car or bus ride. For example, you might say, “Do you remember the last time we made something together?” You can use other questions to follow up. For example, if your child says ‘yes’ you can ask what you made together and if they enjoyed it. If your child says they do not remember the last time you created a piece of artwork, you can respond by asking, “Well, what is your favorite kind of art”. Make sure to ask them if they would like to do it again or try it as a new activity to do together!

It might be a good idea to choose one section and one question to talk about with your child each day, or every other day! For example, maybe Monday on your commute you might ask your child “what is your favorite music to dance to?” which is a question

from the physical area. Be sure to tell them what kind of music you like to dance to as well! You might even ask if your child would like to have a dance contest later at home with you. If your child says they do not know what kind of music they like to dance to give them an option. For example, you might say “well do you like fast music or slow music to dance to better?” You might wait a day or two then choose a different question from a different area to talk about with your child. You can find [table 3.2](#) on the next page!

Table 3.2 Leisure Questions

Artistic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When was the last time you and your child made something together and what did you make? 2. What is your favorite kind of arts & crafts? 3. When is the last time you and your child did a musical activity together? 4. Have you and your child ever kept a journal or wrote together? 5. Do you and your child like to make up lyrics and sing together?
Physical	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When is the last time you and your child spent time being active? 2. What is your favorite physical activity? 3. Have you and your child ever ‘broke a sweat’ cleaning the house together? 5. What is your and your child’s favorite kind of music to dance to?
Social	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What clubs or classes do you or your child belong to? Would you like to sign up for any clubs or classes? 2. Do you know where the nearest recreation center is? 3. Who is your best friend? Who is your child’s best friend? 4. When is the last time you and your child spend time with friends or family? What did you do?
Outdoor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your favorite thing to do outside as a family? 2. Do you enjoy the spring and summer months? 3. What is your favorite thing to do outside if it is cold or snowy? 4. Have you and your child ever played in the rain?
Indoor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your favorite board game? 2. What is your favorite card game? 3. Do you prefer to watch TV shows or movies? Why?

Things to Remember!

It is important to reflect on what you are currently doing with your children
Identifying what interests you and your children have in common can help you do more things together, that is fun for the both of you!

Knowing where you start can help you set goals and see change!

Write down other points that you want to remember

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

My Next Steps!

Think about what interest you and your child have in common

Try to think about which activities you want to do more of

Write down other steps you want to take below

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my Mental Health Care Provider

If you completed table 3.4 you can share this with your mental health provider. It may be helpful for your provider to see what you and your child have in common so they can suggest resources.

If you completed table 3.5 you can share this with your mental health provider. After you and your child have identified one activity you both are interested in your provider may be able to give you ideas on how to plan this activity.

Share table 3.6 with your mental health care provider. Your provider may be able to give you other topics and questions to think and talk about.

Write down other points that you want to bring up to your provider!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Barriers & Facilitators

A barrier is something that can keep people from doing what they want or need to do. When it comes to leisure participation, people with mental illnesses may experience more barriers than people without mental illnesses (Chang, et al., 2016). On top of that, parents may experience more barriers to leisure participation than people without children (Ponde & Santana, 2000). Therefore, when a parent is also managing mental illnesses there may be a lot of things that can stop them from engaging in leisure with their children.

Barriers are often divided into categories: physical, social, personal, environmental, and financial. **Activity 4.1** can help you identify what barriers to family leisure you may experience.

Activity 4.1: What Keeps You from Family Fun

Barriers to Family Leisure Participation		
Circle the barriers that keep you from having fun with your children		
I do not have the time	I do not have the money	I do not know what is available in my neighborhood
I do not drive or have a bus pass	I do not really have an interest in doing it	I do not know what my kids enjoy doing
I do not feel safe in my neighborhood	I am too busy doing other things	I do not see the benefit
There is too much housework to do	I am too tired	I am not feeling like myself
Add your own	Add your own	Add your own:

On the other hand, a facilitator is something that makes an action or process easier. When barriers make it hard for you to have fun with your children, it is important to think about and use the things that support your leisure participation with your children. Although facilitators are not also the opposite of a barrier, facilitators are also divided into categories: physical, social, personal, environmental, and financial. If a barrier you are experiencing is ‘money’, which is a financial barrier, the facilitator might not be ‘more money’, which is a financial facilitator. Instead, the facilitator might be the going to a free-public pool, which is an environmental facilitator. Facilitators are resources that increase access to leisure participation. Facilitators are often divided into the same categories as barriers. **Activity 4.2** will help you think about your facilitators to

family leisure participation. This will help you identify what helps you have fun with your kids!

Activity 4.2: Family Fun is Possible

Facilitators to Family Leisure Participation		
Circle the facilitators that help you have fun with your children		
Public parks	Recreation Centers	Knowing what my child likes to do
Support/family and friends	Having a lot of interest	Understanding the bus schedule
Low cost or free events in the area or surrounding areas	Being in a good mood	Time
Coupons or using passes	Keeping a change jar to save some extra money	Knowing when to take a break
Add your own	Add your own	Add your own

Often, it is helpful for people to make a list of barriers and facilitators. Ideally, you want your list of facilitators to be longer than your list of barriers. Refer back to **activities 4.1 and 4.2**, copy your barriers and facilitators on the next page.

Barriers	Facilitators
List your barriers from activity 4.1	List your facilitators from activity 4.2
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____

Are they balanced? If you have more barriers, don't be discouraged! Start to think about all of the resources you might have access to. A family member might be a facilitator. Even the taking the time to learn more about your barriers and facilitators can be a facilitator! Try to brainstorm additional facilitators you might have.

Things to Remember!

A barrier is something that keeps you from doing what you want

A facilitator is something that helps you do the things you want

There are different types of barriers and facilitators, including physical, personal, social, environmental, and financial.

Barriers and facilitators are not always opposite of each other

Understanding your barriers can help you because you can think about ways to overcome them.

Understanding your facilitators can help you engage in leisure despite barriers.

You can be creative with your facilitators!

Write down other points that you want to remember

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

My Next Steps!

Think about your personal barriers to family leisure participation.

Think about your personal facilitators to family leisure participation.

Think about how both of these effect your leisure time with your child.

Keep a list of your barriers and facilitators. Every time you notice a new one, write it down!

Write down steps you want to take regarding your barriers and facilitators to family leisure participation

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my mental health care provider

- If you completed activities 4.1 & 4.2 you can share these with your mental health care provider.
- Share your barriers! If your provider understands your personal barriers they can help you figure out ways to overcome them.
- Share your facilitators! If your provider understands your personal facilitators they can help you put them to use!
- If you created the list of your barriers and facilitators you can share this with your provider. Your provider may be able to help you think of more facilitators.

Write down other points that you want to bring up to your provider!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Planning and Making Time

Taking time to do fun things with your family members may not seem as important when compared to work, parenting, and keeping up with the home. This makes leisure participation hard (Ponde & Santana, 2000). Engaging in family leisure may be even more difficult for people with mental illnesses because they also have to take time to go to appointments or attend outpatient programs. Symptoms like motivation may also make it hard to participate in leisure. However, when people with mental illnesses do engage in leisure they report feeling like their time was spent well (Goodman, Geiger, & Wolf, 2016).

Even if you are a very busy person, there is good news! Sometimes people may feel like they have less time than they actually do! Once you figure out where you have free time you can better plan leisure with your kids. Use **activity 5.1** to think about how you spend your time during the week. The table will ask you to think about a day of the week and circle what responsibilities you have that day. You may circle some responsibilities everyday while others may only be circled once or twice a week! That's okay! Try to be honest with yourself. If it is hard to think about all the weekdays at once break it up! It may be helpful for some people to take a full week to complete this table. You can do that by just thinking about what day of the week it is. For example, at the end of Sunday night, take time to think about everything you did that day and circle the responsibilities you completed. Do the same the next day on Monday and so on!

Activity 5.1 How Busy is My Week

Under to Each Day of the Week, Check your Responsibilities							
	Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Work							
Appointment							
Outpatient Program							
Taking Care of Kids							
Chores							
Filling Prescriptions							
Therapy							
Cooking							
Other							

Table 5.2 asks you to use the information from **table 5.1** to think about when you are the busiest and when you are the least busy. Knowing what days you have the most and least to do may be helpful when you try to fit in core family leisure and plan balance family leisure with your kids!

Activity 5.2 Looking at My Week

Answer the following questions using activity 5.1
What day am I the busiest?
Which days do I have a break from appointments, programs and work?
What day is seems to be the least busy?

On your busiest day you may not want to add any more things to do. However, even if you are busy, you can still add core family leisure activities by doing core leisure while your do other things! Remember, core family leisure can be as simple as allowing your children to help with the chores. You can look back [table 2.2 Adding Enjoyment To Errands](#) in *Section 2: Core and Balance Family Leisure* of this toolkit to help you address ways to involve your children in everyday responsibilities. The days that you have a break from work, programs, or appointments may also be a good time to add in at least a half hour of core family leisure. For suggestions of core family leisure activities that can take 30 minutes or less see [table 5.1](#). You can find [table 5.1](#) on the next page!

Table 5.1 Leisure in Less Than 30 Minutes

Activities that can take less than 30 minutes			
Watching a T.V show together	Coloring together	Reading a book	Talking a quick walk through the neighborhood
Painting nails or doing hair	A quick bike ride	Using side-walk chalk	Hula-hoop contest
Dance contest	Playing a board game	Doing stretches or yoga poses in the living room	Jumping rope
Watching the clouds outside	Drawing a picture together	Planting a flower	Blow bubbles
Start a puzzle	Playing a card game	Building a fort	Planting a flower
Making sock-puppets	Writing a poem	Singing	Playing hop-scotch
Playing a hand-game	Playing a video-game	Play doh	Add your own:

As stated above, you may not want to add any more things to do on days you are the busiest. However, adding some family leisure on days you are the least busy may help you engage in family leisure without feeling overwhelmed. To complete the activity on **activity 5.3** look back at **activity 5.2** and think about the day you are the least busy. Next, grab some different colored crayons and follow the instructions below!

Activity 5.3 Where Does My Time Go?

Pie of Life Activity

Think of a typical day and answer the following questions.

Color red all the time you are in work, at appointments, or in outpatient programs

Color yellow all the time you spend in self-care, for example taking a shower or eating dinner

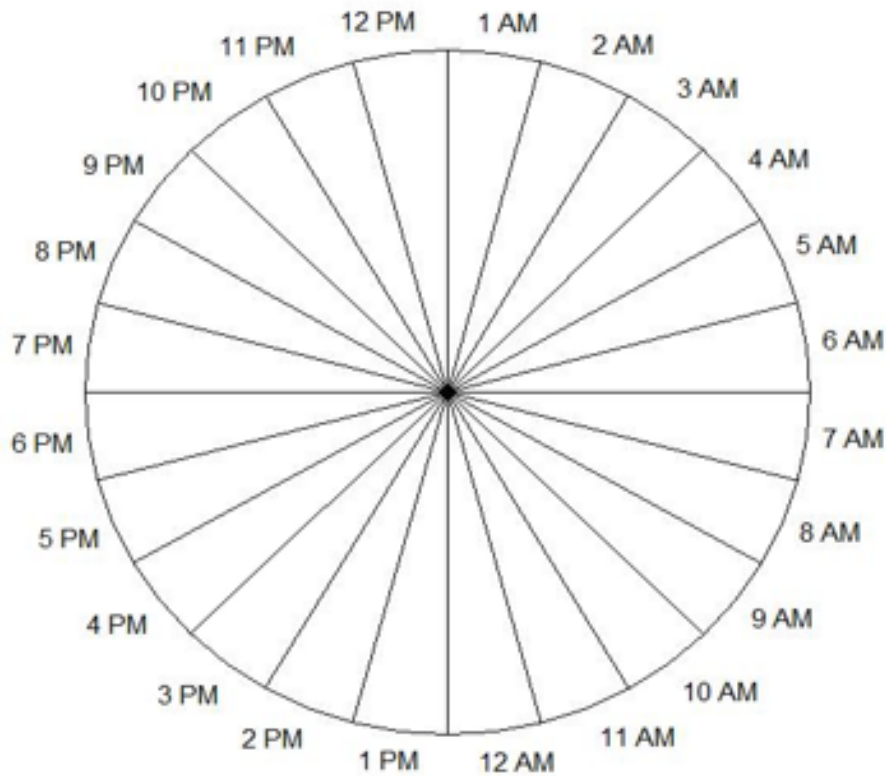
Color pink all the time you spend tending to you & your child such getting them bathed

Color brown all the time you are doing chores

Color green all the time you spend on transportation

Color blue the times you and your child are sleeping

Leave your free-time uncolored or empty



Look at your clock and notice the 'empty' or free time you have. This may be a good time to plan balance family leisure activities with your children! Look at all the space that is brown or green! You can add core leisure to this time! As stated above, all the brown space that you are doing chores, you can have your children do chores with you! As for the green space, you can look back **table 2.3 Core Family Leisure on The Go!** in *Section 2: Core and Balance Family Leisure* of this toolkit to look back at ideas of how you can add fun to your morning or evening commute with your child, whether it be driving, taking the bus, or walking!

Things to Remember!

Making time for leisure can be difficult when you are busy

People typically feel good about spending time in leisure (when they do)

Thinking about how you spend your time can help you plan activities

You can make time for core family leisure by combining fun with chores!

You can plan time for balance family leisure by choosing a day you are the least busy!

Write down other points that you want to remember

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

My Next Steps!

Know your busiest day

Know your least busy day

On you busy days try to still try to engage in family leisure by doing core leisure! You can do this by inviting your child to help you around the house!

Identify core leisure activities you can add to your daily routine. Try to squeeze in core leisure activities that take less than 30 minutes!

Try to identify days and times you are least busy so you can plan balance leisure activities.

Commit to your balance leisure plans! Remember, engaging in leisure is good for you and your family!

Write down steps you can take to planning core and balance leisure activities

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my Mental Health Care Provider

If you completed the Pie of Life activity you can share this with your mental health provider. Your provider may be able to help you make plans in the times you have free. If you did not complete the Pie of Life activity you can take it to your provider and ask them to help you with it.

Ask your mental health care provider about more creative ways you can fit family leisure into your daily routine.

If you are feeling overwhelmed because you are busy, talk to your mental health care provider! They may be able to help you with time management or keeping a planner.

Write down other points that you want to bring up to your provider!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Using Leisure to Talk with Your Kids about Mental Illness

The parent-child relationship is one that many parents, including parents with mental illnesses, identify as a special bond (Ackerson, 2003). Parents with mental illnesses also express true concern with their children's wellbeing, even when the child is not in their care. Despite a deep desire to have and maintain a relationship with their children, parents with mental illnesses may often feel that their symptoms can affect their parenting abilities (Ackerson, 2003). Similarly, parents with mental illnesses may also feel that the stress of managing this relationship can make their symptoms worse (Ackerson, 2003).

Consequently, children may feel guilty or sad when their parents are not feeling well or appear stressed out (Grove, Reupert, & Maybery, 2015). Children may even believe that their parent having a mental illness is their fault (Grove, Reupert, & Maybery, 2015). Therefore, it is important that parents take the time to talk to their children about mental illnesses. When kids understand mental illnesses in the family they may feel less guilty and parents tend to feel more confident in their parenting abilities (Grove, Reupert, & Maybery, 2015).

Family members talking about mental illnesses can help parents feel more accepting of their mental illnesses. Being able to talk about it may also help them manage their recovery because they may not feel the need to hide their symptoms from their children. When children understand mental illness it can make the experience less stressful for them. It also can take shame off the children and prevent them from blaming themselves (Grove, Reupert, & Maybery, 2015).

However, talking about mental illnesses can be difficult. Because leisure is recognized as a safe place (Goodman, Geiger, & Wolf, 2016), it can function as a comfortable way for parents to bring up mental illnesses with their kids.

See **Table 6.1** for a list of what good comes from family members talking about mental illnesses. This table allows you to look at how you and your child may feel if you do not talk about mental illness. It also allows you to see how you and your child may feel if you do talk about mental illness together. **Table 6.1** is on the next page.

Table 6.1 Does Talking about Mental Illness Makes a Difference

Hiding my mental illness from my child	Talking about Mental illness with my child
Children may feel more stressed when parents show symptoms. Children may not understand what is going on or feel the need to act as a caretaker for other siblings and the parent. (Grove, Reupert, & Maybery, 2015)	Children feel less stressed (Grove, et al., 2015)
Children may feel their parent’s mental illness is their fault (Grove, et al., 2015)	Children feel less responsible for parents having a mental illness. (Grove, et al., 2015)
Children will not understand mental illnesses and may find it scary. They may also think it is something that is contagious, for example they may believe it is something that they can ‘catch’, such as a cold or cough in the wintertime. (Grove, et al., 2015)	Children will understand mental illnesses are not something to be scared of. They will understand mental illnesses are not ‘passed’ through germs. (Grove, et al., 2015)
Parents may not seek treatment when they need it because they fear the consequences it places on their family, for example they may feel concerned with custody or child-care arrangements while in the hospital. (Ackerson, 2003)	Parents can better prepare for a hospital stay if needed, such as arranging a care-plan for the child so they know they child is safe. (Ackerson, 2003)
Parents may experience more stress trying to ‘hide’ their symptoms from their family members. (Ackerson, 2003)	Parents can feel more comfortable with their mental health and address symptoms in earlier stages. (Ackerson, 2003)

Talking about mental illnesses can be difficult. Sometimes parents may not know how to bring the conversation up! See [table 6.2](#) for conversations prompts to start conversation surrounding mental illnesses. When talking about mental illness with your children you may want to remind them that your symptoms are not their fault. You may also want to take notice to your child’s behavior you show symptoms of mental illness. Sometimes children may naturally take on a parental role when they notice their parents are not acting the same (Ackerson, 2003). This is called role-reversal, and although it can be helpful to the parent, it may be stressful on the child. Tell your child if you have noticed them helping more recently. They may be helping more with household chores, or with siblings. You may want to say to your child “I have noticed since I have been sleeping

more that you have helped keep the house clean, thank you for doing that for me”. You may also want to remind your child that although you appreciate their help it is not just their responsibility to manage the home. You can thank them and encourage them to do something for fun at the same time. You may say “I appreciate everything you have done since I haven’t been feeling well but I want you to still have fun too, instead of cleaning for me could you draw me a picture or write me a poem?” More conversation prompts are on [table 6.2](#) on the next page.

Table 6.2 Conversation Starters to Talk about Mental Illness

Conversation prompts when children are 5-8 years old	Conversation prompts when children are 9-12 years old
<p>“Mommy/Daddy hasn’t been feeling very good”</p> <p>“I know I have been sleeping more...”</p> <p>“Mommy/Daddy has not been acting the same.”</p> <p>“What have you noticed different about mommy/daddy”</p>	<p>“Mommy/Daddy has been feeling more depressed than usual ...”</p> <p>“Have you noticed that Mommy/Daddy hasn’t been acting like herself/himself”</p> <p>“Have you noticed Mommy/Daddy has said something that maybe they wouldn’t usually say”</p> <p>“Do you remember the last time Mommy/Daddy started acting differently? Do you remember what happened after that?”</p> <p>Ask your child how they feel about what they believe might happen next.</p> <p>Share your plan of treatment with them</p>

Because leisure is recognized as a safe place (Goodman, Geirger, & Wolf, 2016), it can function as a comfortable way for parents to discuss mental illnesses with their kids. There are different activities that may make it easier to discuss mental illness. Remember, this may initially be an uncomfortable conversation for you or your child. Consider where you are at when you have the conversation. It may be more comfortable at home, then in a crowded place. Ultimately, you know your situation best. Sometimes activities may make the conversation easier because playing together allows parents to fully engage with their children (Milteer, et al., 2012). **Table 6.3** provides a description of different activities that you might use to start the conversation. **Table 6.3** begins on the next page and continues on the following page.

Table 6.3 Talking about Mental Illness through Play

Suggested Leisure Activity	How to Modify to Enhance Conversation around Mental Illnesses
<p>Playing with dolls or action figures</p> <p>(recommended ages 4-7)</p>	<p>Prompt conversation between the dolls or action figures that reflect how you have been feeling. You may make your doll or action figure say:</p> <p>“Ugh, I feel angry because...”</p> <p>“I feel sad because...”</p> <p>“I am not sure why but I have so much energy”</p> <p>“I feel confused...”</p> <p>“I am not feeling good about myself...”</p>
<p>Reading storybooks</p> <p>(recommended ages 5-10)</p>	<p>After reading a storybook have a conversation with your child. It may be helpful to use storybooks that discuss emotions. Some story books that discuss emotions and feeling are listed below:</p> <p><i>In My Heart: A Book of Feeling by Jo Witek</i></p> <p>After reading this story you may want to ask your child:</p> <p>Can you pick a feeling or two from the story that you felt today</p> <p>How do you think mommy/daddy felt? Why?</p> <p>Share with your child which emotion in the story you felt today</p> <p>Share with you child why sometimes you feel the ‘not so good’ emotions in the story. You might say “sometimes mommy/daddy feels and looks scared because I have anxiety, not because of anything you did, spending time with you actually helps me feel calm, thank you for spending time with me”</p>

<p>Reading storybooks (continued)</p>	<p><i>Mr. Happy & Miss Grimm by Antonie Scneider</i></p> <p>After reading this story you may want to ask your child:</p> <p>Which character in the story did you feel like today?</p> <p>Why did you feel that way?</p> <p>Do you think mommy/daddy has been more like Mr. Happy or Miss Grimm? Why</p> <p>Share with your child which character you feel you are acting more like right now and why.</p> <p>Share your child that sometimes you may act like Miss Grimm because of mental illnesses. Example to them that you acting like Miss. Grimm is not their fault. Reassure your child that Miss Grimm did become happy at the end! Remind them sometimes it takes time for mommy/daddy to feel better.</p>
<p>Sand play (recommended ages 5-15)</p>	<p>Sand play can be used with your children to decrease anxiety, loneliness, and increase self-expression. Sandplay can also be a way for children to tell stories. Telling stories through sand play can be a way for you to understand how your child feels about certain situations. You can help your child tell their story through sand play by giving them a scenario to ‘play’ about. You can you something regarding mental illnesses without making it personal. For example, you may say “let’s pretend _____ feels bad, how do you think that would make ____ act and feel” You can have your child use action figure in the sand or have them draw with their fingers or other tools on the sand</p> <p>You do not need a huge sandbox to try this activity! Play sand can be purchased at stores like Walmart or ‘5 below’. You can use a paper plate or other types of Tupperware you already own to contain the sand.</p> <p>(Jang, & Kim, 2012; Russo, Vernam, & Wolbert, 2006)</p>

If you are not feeling well...

As stated in the beginning of this section, sharing that you have a mental illness opens lines of communication between you and your child. It's important for your child to know that sometimes the symptoms of mental illness may make things more difficult. When a parent is not feeling well it may be helpful to reflect on the leisure activities they enjoy doing most with their kids. Similarly, it may be helpful for kids to think about the same!

The following activities provide suggestions for creating a list of coping resources for you and your child. **Activity 6.1** is a guide for you to use as a parent to reflect on what activities you enjoy doing with your child. Similarly, **activity 6.2** is an activity that you can assist your child to complete so they can reflect on what they enjoy doing with you and how it makes them feel.

Before you complete **activities 6.1** and **6.2** you can sit down with your child and say “when I am not feeling well it makes me feel good to think about the fun we have together, I am going to write about what I like doing with you and I would like you to draw what you like doing with me”

Remind your child there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. If you get ‘stuck’ and cannot think of an activity ask your child for help! You may do this by saying “there are so many things I enjoy doing with you I can’t pick just one, what activity are you drawing?”


Similarly, if you notice your child is not drawing an activity you may want to ask them if they have an activity in mind. If they say no you can remind them of all the things they enjoy doing with you. Some of this information was discussed the “Assessment of Family Leisure Interest” section. If your child is just unsure of how to draw the activity encourage them to be creative and remind them you are there if they have any questions or need help!

You can find **activity 6.1** and **activity 6.2** on the next two pages!

Activity 6.1 What I Enjoy Doing with My Child

<p>What do I enjoy doing most with my children</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Why do I enjoy this activity?</p> <p>How does this activity make me feel?</p> <p>How do my children act when we do this today?</p> <p>When is the last time we did this together?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Activity 6.2 What Does My Child Enjoy Doing with Me

<p>Draw what you enjoy doing most with your parents</p>	
<p>Circle how this activity makes your feel</p>	 <p>Loved Excited Silly Okay Happy</p>

Preparing for a hospital stay...

Parents with mental illnesses typically acknowledge the difficulties of balancing parenthood and recovery (Awram, Hancock, & Honey, 2016). One way to balance parenthood and recovery is to make sure you have plans in place so your child does not feel stressed should you be admitted to the hospital (Awram, Hancock, & Honey, 2016).

As discussed earlier in this toolkit, parents may not seek treatment or go to the hospital when needed if they do not have child-care plans in place for their children. This may be because parents are scared of custody issues should they be hospitalized with no one to look after or care for their children (Ackerson, 2003).

Therefore, even if you are feeling well, it may be a good idea to prepare yourself and your child for a potential hospital stay. When parents with mental illnesses have care plans set up for their children they are more likely to seek treatment as needed (Ackerson, 2003). Think about the questions on **table 6.4** to help you plan a hospital stay with your child. **Table 6.4** can be found on the next page!

Table 6.4 Planning a Hospital Stay

Things to think about to help you plan a hospital stay
<p>What family members or supports do I have?</p> <p>Who can my child stay with? Make sure you allow your child to become familiar with this person too. Remember, even if you are really close with this person if your child hasn't met them they will feel like a stranger. Allow your child to develop a relationship with your support system in case you need their support should you be hospitalized.</p> <p>Be sure to talk with the people in your support system, ask them if they would be willing to look after your child should you be hospitalized.</p> <p>Allow your child to pack a bag if they will be staying at someone else's house. Encourage them to pick some things they want to take with them. This will give them some choice and control in the situation. It may also be helpful for them to have things from home that make them feel comfortable such as their own blanket, pillow, or a stuffed animal.</p> <p>Let your child know you will be getting in touch with them when you can.</p> <p>Remind your child that this is not their fault or their responsibilities, tell them you will be okay!</p> <p>Remind them how much you love them and how excited you are to feel better so you can hang out again!</p>

What happens when I'm in the hospital?

Having a better understanding of what you and your kids enjoy doing together most can also be useful information to manage your communication and relationship should you ever seek treatment at an inpatient hospital. Many parents with mental illnesses say that going to the hospital can be a scary experience because they are away from their children (Ackerson, 2003). It may be helpful to talk to your children on the phone during your hospital stay about the fun things you enjoy and create plans to do them when you return home. Look at **activity 6.3** for an example of how you can have this conversation over the phone with your child.

Activity 6.3 Calling My Child from the Hospital

Prompted Phone Conversation	
“Hey _____,	how are you doing? <small>Child’s name</small>
I am feeling _____,	<small>how do you feel being away from home</small>
but thinking about when we _____	<small>name something you & your child have done for fun</small>
makes me feel _____.	<small>how did that activity make you feel</small>
When I come home would you like to _____ with me?	<small>name an activity you want to do</small>

Children may feel responsible for mental illnesses especially if parents are not talking to them about it (Tabak, et al., 2016). During your time in the hospital it is important to remind your child that you will be okay. You may want to remind your child that you have to take care of yourself so you can take better care of them! Remind your child that being the parent is your job. You may want to encourage your child to do something for fun while you are in the hospital. You may say to your child “I understand you might be upset that mommy/daddy is in the hospital, but while I am working to feel better I would like you to do something to feel better too.” Encourage your child to do at least one thing they enjoy. For example, if your child enjoys drawing you can say, “While I am away I would like you to draw some pictures! When I come home we can hang them on the fridge together!” Remember to follow through with everything you tell your child you will do when you come home!

While you are in the hospital you can also ask to meet with the hospital’s recreation therapist. A recreation therapist is a qualified leisure professional typically known as a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS).. Although a recreation

therapist will work specifically with you to meet your individualized needs, some general ideas of how a recreation therapist can help you with your parent-child relationship while you are in the hospital are listed on **table 6.5**. If a recreation therapist has not introduced his/her self to you in the first couple days of your hospital stay, don't hesitate to ask your doctor to see one! Some facilities have many recreation therapist who have an active role with all the clients while other facilities may only prescribe recreation therapy per a doctor's order!

You can find **table 6.5** on the next page!

Table 6.5 Recreation Therapy in the Hospital

How can my recreation therapist help me manage my parent-child relationship while I'm in the hospital?
<p>Help me reminisce on family leisure experiences with my child.</p> <p>Allow me to explore what fun things I can do with my children when I leave the hospital.</p> <p>Help me understand why family leisure is important.</p> <p>Help me set family leisure goals.</p> <p>Provide me with affordable family leisure resources surrounding my area.</p> <p>Help me make cards or create 'gifts' to give my child when I return home.</p> <p>Provide prompted journaling or scrapbooking so I can express how it feels to be away from my children.</p> <p>Help me make plans to use leisure as a way to talk with my children about my mental illness.</p> <p>Help me find creative ways to fit more family leisure into my days</p> <p>Begin a family leisure agenda-planner with me so I can schedule and commit to family leisure when I leave the hospital.</p>

Things to Remember!

It is normal to feel like hiding your mental illness is best for your child

Sometimes children feel responsible or guilty for their parent's mental illness when they do not understand mental illness.

Trying to parent while management a mental illness can cause stress on the parent.

It's important to share information about mental illness with your children.

Recreation activities might help make the conversation easier.

Having a conversation at home with your child may be easier than having a conversation in front of other people or family members.

Planning a hospital stay may be a helpful way to make inpatient treatment less stressful on you and your child.

If you are in the hospital your recreation therapist can help you manage your parent-child relationship while you are away from your child.

Write your own take away points!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

My next steps!

- Think about how leisure can help you in the following areas:
 - How can you talk to your child about mental illnesses when you are feeling well?
 - How can you talk to your child about mental illnesses when you do not feel well?
 - How can you talk to your child about mental illnesses when you are planning a hospital stay?
 - How can you talk to your child if you are in the hospital?
- Think about family leisure that helps you feel good! If you find yourself not feeling so well, try to do more of the family leisure that helps you feel better.
- Set up a plan for a potential hospital stay.

Write your thoughts below!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my mental health care provider

- Share the thoughts you wrote in “my next steps” with your mental health provider. This way your provider knows what you would like to work on and can help you meet your goals surrounding communicating about mental illnesses with your children.
- If you completed **table 6.4** you can share this with your mental health care provider. This way your provider can remind you to do the things you enjoy doing with your child!
- If you have a child outside of the age range on **table 6.2** ask your provider of other ways to modified these prompts so they are appropriate for your child’s age.
- If you would like more suggested activities and ways to modify activities to talk about mental illness with your family please see your recreation therapist

Write down other information that would be beneficial for your mental health provider to know!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Take Away Message

Leisure is fun but not always easy! If you go through this toolkit and still are struggling with participating in family leisure don't get discouraged! Remember, making any type of change, including trying to do more fun things with your children, takes time! You may have good weeks and bad weeks. Sometimes you may feel like you are doing a lot with your children and other times you may feel like you haven't played together in a while. This is okay! Try to be aware of what you are doing with your children and how it feels. When you feel you and your child are starting to do less together think about what could be getting in the way. You may want to take another look at some sections of the toolkit!

By using this toolkit you may have learned more about the importance of family leisure, including what you and you children personally gain from doing fun things together and how family leisure can help mental health! You may also have a better understanding of what you enjoying doing, what your child enjoys doing, and how to plan activities so you can do more of the things you enjoy together. You may have more ideas of how engaging in leisure with your children can help you talk about mental illness. This toolkit may have also helped you reflect on how to plan a hospital stay and how to manage your parent-child relation through leisure if you are hospitalized.

After you have completed this toolkit don't throw it away! This is good information to have and to look back on! This is also good information to share with other people, especially parents you may know. Talking about it with other people, whether it is a friend or a mental health care provider, can help the information 'stick' with you!

References

- Ackerson, B. (2003). Coping with the dual demands of severe mental illness and parenting: the parents' perspective. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 84(1), 109-118.
- Aldridge, J. (2006). The experiences of children living and caring for parents with mental illness. *Child Abuse Review*, 15, 79-88
- Awram, R., Hancock, N., & Honey, A. (2016). Balancing mothering and mental health recovery: the voices of mothers living with mental illness. *Advances in Mental Health*, 1-14.
- Biebel, K., Nicholson, J., & Woolsey, K. (2014). Implementing an intervention for parents with mental illness: Building workforce capacity. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 37(3), 209-215
- Chang, F., Coster, W. J., Salzer, M. S., Brusilovskiy, E., Ni, P., & Jette, A. M. (2016). A multidimensional measure of participation for adults with serious mental illnesses. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 38(7), 695-9
- Drake, R. E., Green, A. I., Mueser, K. T., & Goldman, H. H. (2003). The history of community mental health treatment and rehabilitation for persons with severe mental illness. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 39(5), 427-440
- Freeman, P., & Zabriskie, R. B. (2003). Leisure and family functioning in adoptive families: Implications for therapeutic recreation. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 37(1), 73 – 93.
- Foster, K. (2014). One-third of children of parents with severe mental illness are at risk of developing severe mental illness. *Evidence-Based Mental Health*, 17(3), 73-73.
- Foster, K. (2010). 'You'd think this roller coaster was never going to stop': Experiences of adult children of parents with serious mental illness: Adult children of parents with mental illness. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 19(21-22), 3143-3151

- Goodman, W. K., Geiger, A. M., & Wolf, J. M. (2016). Leisure activities are linked to mental health benefits by providing time structure: Comparing employed, unemployed and homemakers. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 1-8.
- Gray, B., Robinson, C., & Seddon, D. (2008). Invisible children: Young carers of parents with mental health problems- the perspectives of professionals. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 13(4), 169-172
- Grove, C., Reupert, A., & Maybery, D. (2015). Gaining knowledge about parental mental illness: How does it empower children? *Child & Family Social Work*, 20(4), 377-386.
- Hodge, C. J., Zabriskie, R. B., Townsend, J. A., Eggett, D. L., & Poff, R. (2016). Family leisure functioning: A cross-national study. *Leisure Sciences*, , 1-22.
- Izenstark, D., Oswald, R., Holman, E., Mendez, S., & Greder, K. (2016). Rural, low income mothers' use of family-based nature activities to promote family health. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 48(2), 134-155
- Jang, M., & Kim, Y. (2012). The effect of group sandplay therapy on the social anxiety, loneliness and self-expression of migrant women in international marriages in south korea. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 39(1), 38-41
- Melton, K. K., Ellis, G., & Zabriskie, R. (2016). Assessing alternative techniques for scaling the family leisure activity profile: Recommendations for future family leisure measurement. *Leisure Sciences*, 38(2), 179-198
- Milteer, R. M., Ginsburg, K. R., Mulligan, D. A., Ameenuddin, N., Brown, A., Christakis, D. A., & The Council On Communications And Media and Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. (2012). The importance of play on promoting healthy child development and maintaining strong parent- child bond: Focus on children in poverty. *American Academy of Pediatrics*, 129(1) 204-213.
- Pass, L., Arteche, A., Cooper, P., Creswell, C., & Murray, L. (2012). Doll play narratives about starting school in children of socially anxious mothers, and their relation to subsequent child school-based anxiety. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 40(8), 1375-1384.

Pondé, M. P., & Santana, V. S. (2000). Participation in leisure activities: Is it a protective factor for women's mental health? *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32(4), 457-472.

Offer, S. (2013). Family time activities and adolescents' emotional well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 75(1), 26–41.

Olson, D. H. (2000). Circumplex model of marital and family systems. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 22(2), 144-167.

Pondé, M. P., & Santana, V. S. (2000). Participation in leisure activities: Is it a protective factor for women's mental health? *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32(4), 457-472.

Russo, M. F., Vernam, J., & Wolbert, A. (2006). Sandplay and storytelling: Social constructivism and cognitive development in child counseling. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 33(3), 229-237

Schwab, K. A., & Dustin, D. L. (2015). Towards a model of optimal family leisure. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 18(2), 180-204. doi:10.1080/11745398.2015.1007881

Shor, R., Kalivatz, Z., Amir, Y., Aldor, R., & Lipot, M. (2015;2014;). Therapeutic factors in a group for parents with mental illness. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 51(1), 79-84.

Suresky, M. J., Zauszniewski, J. A., & Bekhet, A. K. (2014). Factors affecting disruption in families of adults with mental illness. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, 50(4), 235-242.

Tabak, I., Zabłocka-Żytka, L., Ryan, P., Poma, S. Z., Joronen, K., Viganò, G., Simpson, W., Paavilainen, E., Scherbaum, N., Smith, M., & Dawson, I. (2016). Needs, expectations, and consequences for children growing up in a family where the parent has a mental illness: Children of parents with mental illness. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 25(4), 319-329

Van der Ende, P. C, Van Busschbach, J. T., Nicholson, J., Korevaar, E. L., & Van Weeghel, J. (2016). Strategies for parenting by mothers and fathers with a mental illness. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 23(2), 86-97.

Zabriskie, R. B., & McCormick, B. P. (2001). The influences of family leisure patterns on perceptions of family functioning. *Family Relations*, 50(3), 281-289.

Printable Sheets

Complete the sentence by circling all that apply		
“When I do things for fun with my kids I feel...”		
Less depressed	Less anxious	Like a good parent
Happy with the way I am spending my time	Joyful	My child and I are equal
Connected to my child	I can trust my child to make decisions	My child and I talk more
I can make decisions	Easy-going	Relaxed
Satisfied	I can stop being “the parent” and have fun	That my child and I listen to each other

Ask your child to read the sentences below. Have them draw a smiley face next to the sentences they feel are true. If needed, you can read the sentences aloud to them.

Draw a 😊 next to everything that is true

I feel happy when my parent plays with me.

If I am upset, playing with my parent helps me feel better.

I like to talk to my parent when we play.

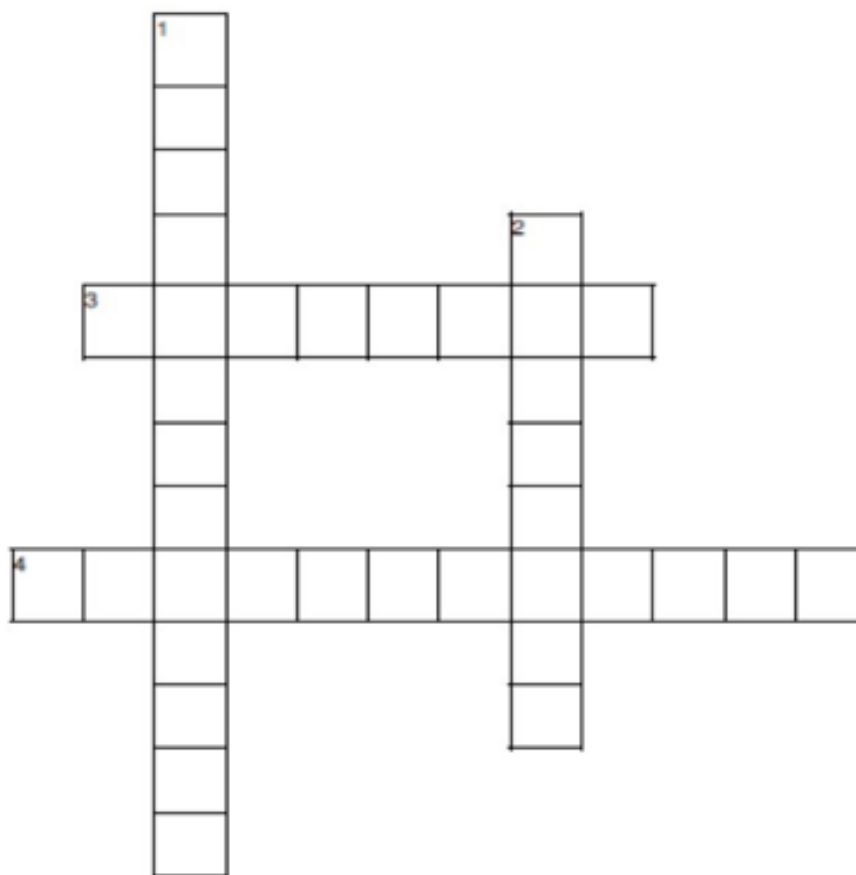
I feel safe when I play with my parent.

I feel important when I play with my parent.

I feel like my parent loves me when we play together.

Word Bank			
Cohesion	Function	Communication	Adaptability

Family Leisure Benefits Crossword Puzzle



Down

1. The way family members talk to each other
2. An emotional bond between family members

Across

3. The way the family unit works together
4. The way the family members are able to change

My next steps!

- Think about what you want to gain out of family leisure.
- Think about types of leisure you can do more of to see the benefits.
- Try to think about the words and definitions on table 1.1. When you engage in family leisure reflect on what benefits you are experiencing.

Write down some goals related to leisure and an outcome! For example, “I would like to do more puzzles with my child so we can work together”

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Things to remember!

- There is a lot of good that comes from having fun with your children!
- Family cohesion is a word to describe to emotional bonding between the family members
- Family adaptability is word that described the family members' ability to change and make adjustments.
- Family communication refers to how the family members talk to each other
- Family function refers to the way the family unit works together!
- Family members that spend time in leisure together may have better relationships.
- Spending time in family leisure can help family members deal with change better.
- Family members may talk to each other more openly if they do fun things together
- Family units function better when they engage in leisure.

Write the benefits you and your children personally gain from leisure!

(You can refer back to table 2 & 3)

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my mental health care provider

- If you have any questions about the definitions in table 1.1 take them to your mental health provider and ask them to explain
- Ask your mental health care provider to give you examples of how family leisure can benefit you and your family.
- If you completed table 1.2 & 1.3 you may want to share them with your mental health provider. This way when your mental health care provider can remind you of the personal gain you experience from family leisure participation.

Think about other things you may want to ask your mental health provider and write them below.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What are examples of Core Family Leisure in your home?

What benefits come from Core Family Leisure in your home?

CURRENT: Things we do now!				FUTURE: Things we would like to try!			
Circle the Core Family Leisure that you currently enjoy with your children				Circle new ideas of Core Family Leisure that you and your children would like to try in the future			
Cook Dinner Together	Board Games	Hide & Seek	Sock Puppets	Cook Dinner Together	Board Games	Hide and Seek	Sock Puppets
Puzzles	Playdoh	Dancing	Telling Stories	Puzzles	Playdoh	Dancing	Telling Stories
Arts & Crafts	Yoga	Movie Night	Clean Together	Arts & Crafts	Yoga	Movie Night	Clean Together
Read	Journal or Writing	Singing	Bedtime Routines	Read	Journal or Writing	Singing	Bedtime Routines
Take a Walk	Finger-Paint	Build a Fort	Fold Laundry	Take a Walk	Finger-Paint	Build-A-Fort	Fold Laundry

Item list for a nature-walk in the city	Check here when you find the item
Green leaf	
Yellow leaf	
Mud	
A rock the size of your palm	
An ant hill	
Yellow flower	
Butterfly	
Bird's nest	
A caterpillar	
Pinecone	
Spider web	
Feather	
Grass	
Water	
Squirrel	
Bee	
Worm	
An animal's footprint	
A personal treasure	
Add your own below!	

Things to remember!

- Core family leisure are activities that happen in or around the home and are free of cost or inexpensive
- Core family leisure helps family members bond and build relationships with each other
- Core family leisure might help your children feel safe and secure
- Examples of core family leisure is cooking, cleaning, playing in the front yard, or doing a puzzle or coloring together.
- Balance family leisure are activities that happen outside of the home. These activities may cost more money
- There are ways to find inexpensive or free ways to engage in balance family leisure.
- Balance family leisure can help you and your child problem solve and accept change
- Examples of balance family leisure are going on a nature walk or planning a trip to the zoo or museum

Write down other points that you want to remember below

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

My next Steps!

- Think about what different types of core and balance activities you want to try
- Make an effort to engage in core family leisure 1 to 3 times a week and balance leisure once a month
- **Core Leisure:** Pick one household chore and try to make it fun!
- **Balance Leisure:** Keep a planner so you can commit to balance leisure participation
- Go on a nature walk!

Write down other steps you want to take toward doing more core and balance leisure

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my Mental Health Care Provider

- If you completed table 2.1 you may want to share that with your mental health provider. Your mental health care provider can help you maintain the things you currently enjoy doing and help you create plans for what you want to do.
- Ask your mental health care provider for free or low cost resources in your community that reflect your and your children's interest
- Ask your mental health care provider to help you with a bus schedule if you are unsure how to get to different places such as different parks or museums.
- Share your plans to participate in core and balance leisure. Ask your provider to follow up with you!

Write down other points that you want to bring up to your provider!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Activity	Core or Balance	With Who	How Long	How Often
Cooking or having a family dinner	Core	My child	1 hour	Once a week
Cooking or having a family dinner				
Playing in the yard or sitting on the porch together				
Going on a walk				
Going swimming, playing with a sprinkler, or having a water balloon toss				
Playing board-games, card games, or puzzles				
Planning and going on a picnic				
Going to the movies				
Going to the zoo				
Going to an arcade				
Volunteering				

Leisure Questions	Answer	
In the past 30 days did I have a day off or spare time to spend with my child?	Yes	No
In the past 30 days did I participate in family leisure	Yes	No
In the past 30 days what activities did I do with my children?	1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____ 5) _____ 6) _____ 7) _____	
Write your own questions!		

List the activities that both you and your child circled	
Out of the listed activities, name three you both really want to try	
Out of the list of three, choose one!	

Things to Remember!

It is important to reflect on what you are currently doing with your children
Identifying what interests you and your children have in common can help you do more things together, that is fun for the both of you!

Knowing where you start can help you set goals and see change!

Write down other points that you want to remember

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

My Next Steps!

Think about what interest you and your child have in common

Try to think about which activities you want to do more of

Write down other steps you want to take below

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my Mental Health Care Provider

If you completed table 3.4 you can share this with your mental health provider. It may be helpful for your provider to see what you and your child have in common so they can suggest resources.

If you completed table 3.5 you can share this with your mental health provider. After you and your child have identified one activity you both are interested in your provider may be able to give you ideas on how to plan this activity.

Share table 3.6 with your mental health care provider. Your provider may be able to give you other topics and questions to think and talk about.

Write down other points that you want to bring up to your provider!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Barriers to Family Leisure Participation

Circle the barriers that keep you from having fun with your children

I do not have the time	I do not have the money	I do not know what is available in my neighborhood
I do not drive or have a bus pass	I do not really have an interest in doing it	I do not know what my kids enjoy doing
I do not feel safe in my neighborhood	I am too busy doing other things	I do not see the benefit
There is too much housework to do	I am too tired	I am not feeling like myself
Add your own	Add your own	Add your own:

Barriers	Facilitators
List your barriers from activity 4.1	List your facilitators from activity 4.2
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____

Things to Remember!

A barrier is something that keeps you from doing what you want

A facilitator is something that helps you do the things you want

There are different types of barriers and facilitators, including physical, personal, social, environmental, and financial.

Barriers and facilitators are not always opposite of each other

Understanding your barriers can help you because you can think about ways to overcome them.

Understanding your facilitators can help you engage in leisure despite barriers.

You can be creative with your facilitators!

Write down other points that you want to remember

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

My Next Steps!

Think about your personal barriers to family leisure participation.

Think about your personal facilitators to family leisure participation.

Think about how both of these effect your leisure time with your child.

Keep a list of your barriers and facilitators. Every time you notice a new one, write it down!

Write down steps you want to take regarding your barriers and facilitators to family leisure participation

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my mental health care provider

- If you completed activities 4.1 & 4.2 you can share these with your mental health care provider.
- Share your barriers! If your provider understands your personal barriers they can help you figure out ways to overcome them.
- Share your facilitators! If your provider understands your personal facilitators they can help you put them to use!
- If you created the list of your barriers and facilitators you can share this with your provider. Your provider may be able to help you think of more facilitators.

Write down other points that you want to bring up to your provider!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Under to Each Day of the Week, Check your Responsibilities

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Work							
Appointment							
Outpatient Program							
Taking Care of Kids							
Chores							
Filling Prescriptions							
Therapy							
Cooking							
Other							

Answer the following questions using activity 5.1

What day am I the busiest?

Which days do I have a break from appointments, programs and work?

What day is seems to be the least busy?

Activities that can take less than 30 minutes

Watching a T.V show together	Coloring together	Reading a book	Talking a quick walk through the neighborhood
Painting nails or doing hair	A quick bike ride	Using side-walk chalk	Hula-hoop contest
Dance contest	Playing a board game	Doing stretches or yoga poses in the living room	Jumping rope
Watching the clouds outside	Drawing a picture together	Planting a flower	Blow bubbles
Start a puzzle	Playing a card game	Building a fort	Planting a flower
Making sock-puppets	Writing a poem	Singing	Playing hop-scotch
Playing a hand-game	Playing a video-game	Play doh	Add your own:

Pie of Life Activity

Think of a typical day and answer the following questions.

Color red all the time you are in work, at appointments, or in outpatient programs

Color yellow all the time you spend in self-care, for example taking a shower or eating dinner

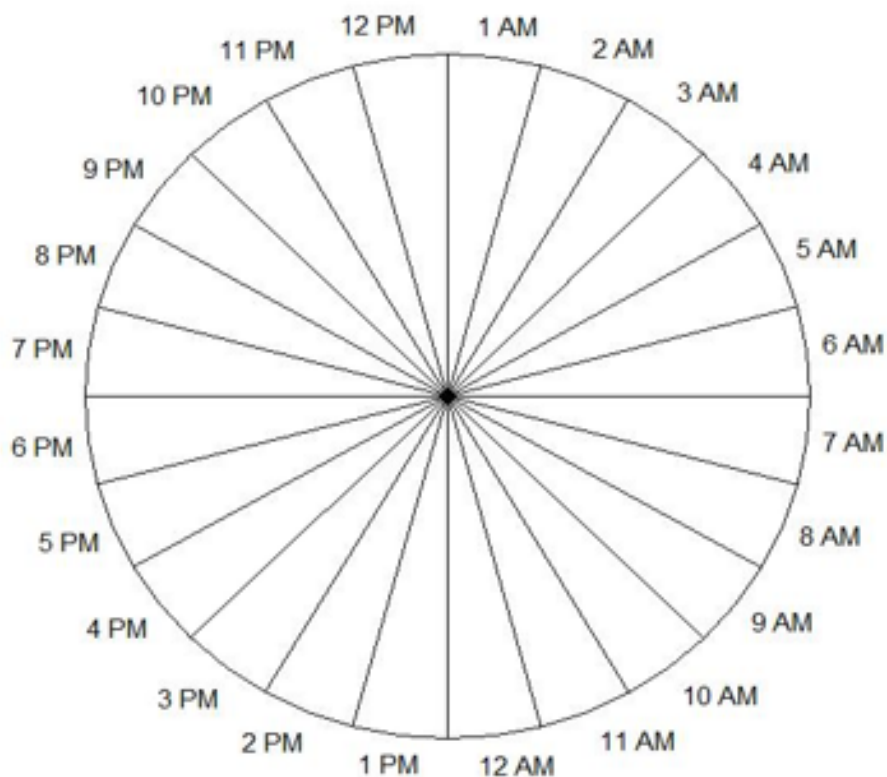
Color pink all the time you spend tending to you & your child such getting them bathed

Color brown all the time you are doing chores

Color green all the time you spend on transportation

Color blue the times you and your child are sleeping

Leave your free-time uncolored or empty



Things to Remember!

Making time for leisure can be difficult when you are busy

People typically feel good about spending time in leisure (when they do)

Thinking about how you spend your time can help you plan activities

You can make time for core family leisure by combining fun with chores!

You can plan time for balance family leisure by choosing a day you are the least busy!

Write down other points that you want to remember

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

My Next Steps!

Know your busiest day

Know your least busy day

On you busy days try to still try to engage in family leisure by doing core leisure! You can do this by inviting your child to help you around the house!

Identify core leisure activities you can add to your daily routine. Try to squeeze in core leisure activities that take less than 30 minutes!

Try to identify days and times you are least busy so you can plan balance leisure activities. Commit to your balance leisure plans! Remember, engaging in leisure is good for you and your family!

Write down steps you can take to planning core and balance leisure activities

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my Mental Health Care Provider

If you completed the Pie of Life activity you can share this with your mental health provider. Your provider may be able to help you make plans in the times you have free. If you did not complete the Pie of Life activity you can take it to your provider and ask them to help you with it.

Ask your mental health care provider about more creative ways you can fit family leisure into your daily routine.

If you are feeling overwhelmed because you are busy, talk to your mental health care provider! They may be able to help you with time management or keeping a planner.

Write down other points that you want to bring up to your provider!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

<p>What do I enjoy doing most with my children</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Why do I enjoy this activity?</p> <p>How does this activity make me feel?</p> <p>How do my children act when we do this today?</p> <p>When is the last time we did this together?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Draw what you enjoy doing most with your parents

Circle how this activity makes your feel



Activity 6.3 Calling My Child from the Hospital

Prompted Phone Conversation

“Hey _____, how are you doing?
Child's name

I am feeling _____,
how do you feel being away from home

but thinking about when we _____
name something you & your child have done for fun

makes me feel _____.
how did that activity make you feel

When I come home would you like to _____ with
me? name an activity you want to do

Things to Remember!

It is normal to feel like hiding your mental illness is best for your child

Sometimes children feel responsible or guilty for their parent's mental illness when they do not understand mental illness.

Trying to parent while management a mental illness can cause stress on the parent.

It's important to share information about mental illness with your children.

Recreation activities might help make the conversation easier.

Having a conversation at home with your child may be easier than having a conversation in front of other people or family members.

Planning a hospital stay may be a helpful way to make inpatient treatment less stressful on you and your child.

If you are in the hospital your recreation therapist can help you manage your parent-child relationship while you are away from your child.

Write your own take away points!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

My next steps!

- Think about how leisure can help you in the following areas:
 - How can you talk to your child about mental illnesses when you are feeling well?
 - How can you talk to your child about mental illnesses when you do not feel well?
 - How can you talk to your child about mental illnesses when you are planning a hospital stay?
 - How can you talk to your child if you are in the hospital?
- Think about family leisure that helps you feel good! If you find yourself not feeling so well, try to do more of the family leisure that helps you feel better.
- Set up a plan for a potential hospital stay.

Write your thoughts below!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Talking with my mental health care provider

- Share the thoughts you wrote in “my next steps” with your mental health provider. This way your provider knows what you would like to work on and can help you meet your goals surrounding communicating about mental illnesses with your children.
- If you completed **table 6.4** you can share this with your mental health care provider. This way your provider can remind you to do the things you enjoy doing with your child!
- If you have a child outside of the age range on **table 6.2** ask your provider of other ways to modified these prompts so they are appropriate for your child’s age.
- If you would like more suggested activities and ways to modify activities to talk about mental illness with your family please see your recreation therapist

Write down other information that would be beneficial for your mental health provider to know!

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____