

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

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Quick Facts

- U.S. families spend, on average, less than 15% of their time interacting together as a unit (Pope, 2012).
- U.S. divorce rates are 50% for the first marriage, 67% for the second marriage, and 74% for the third marriage (Divorce Rate, 2011).

Terms to Help You Get Started

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

Keywords

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

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

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

Words were ultimately exchanged out of frustration — an act which prompted my four-year-old daughter to become upset. She said she heard a friend at pre-school talking about how her parents no longer lived together because they always hollered at each other. My daughter asked if her parents were going to live apart because we raised our voices at one another. All was calmed, and life went on fine within the household. But we did not want our children introduced to these types of issues at such young ages, and it happened just like that without much warning.

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

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

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

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

Which Family-Operations Items Can Improve Your Overall Home Performance?

Respondents from a representative sample in the United States were asked to rate multiple items—as identified in the literature—that could improve the overall performance of a home (Cantrell, 2012). The goal was to determine which of 81 items the respondents thought had the greatest likelihood of improving the remaining 50%–60%

of their home's overall performance. Within the Family-OperationsCategory,theychose 19 of 27 daily routines.

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

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

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

- Ensure that tasks are accomplished around the home on a routine schedule. Staying “on top of things” can reduce frustration and the need to obligate time that could otherwise be spent with the family.
- Ensure that there are well-organized storage areas. Organized storage can reduce frustration, offer time savings, and be safer because of the reduced need for unpacking and re-packing.
- Ensure that there is a designated work area where items can be assembled and repaired. Designated work areas can reduce frustration and the risk of injury and damage to items.
- Ensure that the correct tools are easily accessible in order to accomplish specific tasks. Accessing correct tools for the task can reduce frustration, re-work, and injury.
- Do not attempt repairs and upgrades without first gaining proper knowledge. Proper training about home improvements can reduce frustration, re-work, and injuries.
- Do not use furniture for more than one purpose (e.g., table as a desk, etc.). Repurposing furniture can be frustrating, time-consuming, and disorganized.
- Ensure that there is a designated office space where files can be accessed readily. Having a defined office space can reduce frustration and save time.
- Ensure that there is a computer area visible from the main rooms in the house (living room, kitchen, etc.). Overseeing the computing/web-browsing area is

for protecting the safety of minors while also increasing family interaction.

- Ensure that there is a designated payment book (for Home Owner Association dues/tax escrow accounts/maintenance, etc.). A payment notebook can reduce frustration and late charges while also saving time.

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

- Have pre-made, pre-ordered, or pre-purchased dinners. Prepared dinners can allow for more and healthier family meals while also saving time.
- Ingest edible foods that are produced at home (on your property). Eating foods prepared on the property can foster a sense of well-being while also educating children about agricultural lessons that are no longer taught in most schools.
- Ensure that all communication devices (cell phones, TVs, computers, etc.) are silenced and not allowed at the dinner table. Silencing communication devices and not allowing them at the dinner table can enable focused ingestion, communication, and digestion.
- Do not offer second portions and/or rich desserts at dinner. Not offering second portions or rich desserts at dinner helps to enforce portion control and reduces caloric intake.
- Ensure that everyone takes a 15-minute walk together or stretches after dinner. Family walking/stretching after dinner can foster improved digestion and health.
- Ensure that adults view at least 15 minutes of commercial-free international news after dinner. International news viewing can foster a more informed, less-biased opinion.
- Ensure that all communication devices are surrendered to a “safe” place for the night. Silencing communication devices and putting them out of reach for the night helps to enable full focus on preparing for and receiving uninterrupted rest.
- Ensure that all lights are turned off for the night no later than 9 p.m. Turning lights off by 9 p.m. can help to ensure that everyone will have adequate time to be well-rested during the following day.
- Ensure that 30 minutes are taken to slowly wake the family in the morning. Waking up slowly during a 30-minute period can reduce stress associated with having to get out of bed and start the day.
- Ensure that everyone stretches for at least 15 minutes after awakening. Stretching in the morning can increase

blood flow and oxygen while reducing the chances of muscle injury.

Summary

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

References and Resources

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