

FAMILY vs CHILD CENTERED HOME

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We believe that a successful home is parent-directed, family-orientated, and outward-focused. We do not believe in a child-centered home for the following reasons. Before a couple have children they usually only have themselves and their own stuff to think about. When a baby comes along, the whole world revolves around what that baby needs. This is what is to be expected of course. The baby can't tell them what it wants so it cries until its needs are answered.

The other evening we watched an Oprah Winfrey show where an Australian woman described how easy it was to know what a newborn baby needed by listening to the type of cry it made. If only I had known this vital information when my kids were newborns, we would have all had a lot more sleep! I digress. Parents have sole responsibility for their little person and they take it very seriously.

As the baby becomes a toddler, they are harder to keep up with and parents may, by this time, have another child on the way. It seems that for the next 18 years the parents' lives are filled with everything their kids want or need, and they think they will never regain those wonderful early years. We have good news.

When we say we believe a home should be family oriented, we mean that parents are actually part of the family. We have found that when parents concentrate solely on kids' needs, the dynamic is completely lopsided. The kids are in control of the family's direction and their needs always seem to come first. Kids may get the notion that the universe revolves around them. This situation is not preparing them for the real world. It is not teaching them that they are part of a team and a community. It doesn't encourage them to consider others, to fit into others' plans, or to value their parents.

To be family oriented, the whole family needs to have equal share of fun time along with family chores. To provide for, and ensure one another's needs are met, the family has to have a plan. When kids decide they want to be in sports teams, attend gymnastics, music, or dance classes, a family meeting needs to take place to discuss how this will affect the family unit. Every aspect needs to be thought through. How long is the class? How many practices will there be per week? Who is going to provide the transport? How much will the activity cost? Does it mean the family dynamics will be impacted in favor of one member above others?

Kids need to learn to think about what parents want and make sure they can enjoy fun activities too. How can this happen? In those family talks, each member of the family has a turn to say what they would like to do – what hobby, what sport, what study etc. I remember when my kids were in pre-school and I decided I wanted to start University study as an external student. I didn't just go ahead and buy the books and start. I discussed it with my husband. We talked about how much time it would take per week, whether we could afford the fees, and what I would do with the kids when I was trying to study. There was also the problem what to do with the children

when I had to travel several hundred miles to attend a week long in-house course at the University. I was very grateful that my husband saw what doing this study would mean to me and he did everything he could to help me. Parents can have a life when their kids are still small. We did.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.