



Newsletter ~ Vallabh Vidya Mandir ~



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An Expression...

During this festive and up-coming holiday season I have been thinking more and more about the value of family time. My memories are still vivid with family dinners and the nostalgia of being in mom's kitchen with aroma wafting and the noises of ladies cooking and children running around and giggling. Diwali, Eid Thanksgiving and Christmas remind me of family traditions, recipes passed down through generations and just the overall sense of happiness! Childhood memories often influence people's opinion about the importance of family dinners.

Meaningful family traditions have always been a valuable tool for parents and elders to carry out the responsibility of raising children and inculcating [social values](#) and ethos. Family traditions ensure that the warmth and closeness of family bondage grow. In the modern context, maintenance of and developing family traditions continue to be as significant as they were in earlier times.

As the saying goes - *The family that prays together and eats*

together stays together. Miriam Weinstein⁵ discusses the simple act of sitting at the same table and breaking bread together. For generations it has been a "basic human ritual," but now "everyday family dinner is no longer a given." Pressured by two-career households and soccer-mom-carpooling obligations, to cite two of the many distractions of contemporary life, more and more families around the world dine not at a common table but separately and/or on the run.

This may reflect inescapable realities of early-21st-century culture, but that doesn't necessarily make it a good thing. *Family dinner, as Weinstein calls it, isn't just a meal, it's a ritual from which all who participate benefit: "Family dinner is important because it gives children reliable access to their parents. It provides anchoring for everyone's day. It emphasizes the importance of the family nonverbally. It reminds the child that the family is there, and that he or she is part of it."*

The family dinner has long been an example of family togetherness.

But recently, scientists have been coming up with compelling reasons (including a lowered risk of smoking, drinking and doing illicit drugs among teenagers), for families to pull up a chair around the table.

Family meals, experts say, also offer a predictable routine and an opportunity for parents to monitor their children's behavior. "That monitoring has been related to a host of positive physical and mental health outcomes in children and adolescents," said Dr. Barbara Fiese, who studies family routines and rituals at Syracuse University. She added that regular family meals also provide an opportunity to establish a sense of belonging to a family unit."

...Get Smart

Chess Club

Classes will be held on
December 9th and December 16th

Contact Neelay at 713-723-5892

Bring your own Chess Board
Free for VVM Students
(Ages 8 & Up)



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According to one study, family dinners may help improve the vocabulary of younger children. Researchers at Harvard in 1996 looked at the types of activities that promoted language development. Those families that engaged in extended discourse at the dinner table, like story telling and explanations, rather than one-phrase comments, like "eat your vegetables," had children with better language skills, said Dr. Catherine Snow, professor of education at Harvard and the researcher of the study.

The family dinner of my own childhood is among my most vivid memories. Exchanging trivial news of our lives, hearing tales about ancestors long since dead and relatives in faraway places, picking up bits and pieces of informal but invaluable education was all part of the meal. All the children which was the three of us, came away from the table with firm if unconscious knowledge of ourselves as part of a human lineage to which, in time, we would contribute. My father was much more of an ancestor-worshipper. The hazy presence in my consciousness of those long-gone

kinfolk has had an important influence on shaping me; almost all the stories I know about them were learned at the dining table.

The research says, "A child with deep root to his or her family history, traditions and rituals has more stability and resilience."

Miriam Weinstein says, "it supports your staying more connected to your extended family, your ethnic heritage, and your community of faith. It will help children and families to be more resilient, reacting positively to those curves and arrows that life throws our way. It will certainly keep you better nourished. The things we are likely to discuss at the dinner table anchor our children more firmly in the world. Of course eating together teaches manners both trivial and momentous, putting you in touch with the deeper springs of human relations."

Phalguni Kikani

Seniors Tea Party

*Seniors (Age 62+) meet
Youth(Age 14+)*

February 2nd 3-5pm
(Mark your calendars. More details forthcoming)

..No Classes

VVM Classes will NOT be held on **December 23rd** and **December 30th**

*Classes will resume on
Jan 6th, 2008*

The March is On..

Many among us will be content with the rapid growth we have realized in the size of our student body, number of volunteer teachers and variety of classes we offer. It is satisfying indeed. However, won't many agree that something is still lacking? In my humble opinion serious learning cannot be achieved in an environment that lacks in discipline. Be it may arriving on time for classes, properly re-setting the classroom furniture for the next class, placing the supplies where they belong, making prudent use of facilities, protecting property, maintaining library like silence, keeping our campus environ clean like Disney world, addressing our principal as Phalguniben or Mrs. Kikani instead of her first name and the wholesome ambiance the way our SAT instructor Mr. Anil



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Shah described after his visits to Gurukuls in India. Until we achieve this, our true goal of preparing our students to brave the future will not be fully realized. Some of the areas pointed above are the ones we are lacking and all concerned need to give serious thought and see what we can do individually for the collective good.

These goals and standards are not only for students but for all involved in this worth while venture we call Vallabh Vidya Mandir! Think about it. Is it right to blame traffic or cook up some other explanation for coming late for the classes? Is it right to loiter the snack area or the classrooms? Is it proper to gather around the front desk and use it as a public gathering place for social chitchat or occupy the staff seats just because a staff member is away? We are all guilty of such lapses. Let us be conscious of what we are here for, what our true propose and set exemplary standards of behavior so that Vidya Mandir projects itself as a place of serious learning. This is achievable if we resolve. We can do it and we must.

Sureshbhai Patel

Free Seminar...

Women's Health
By
*Dr. Kokila Parikh &
Dr. Dipika Ambani*

*January 20th 10 am
Vallabh Hall*

Kudos to VVM Youth..

On the Thanksgiving Day – Nov 22nd, the VVM/VPSS Youth Group volunteered at the George R Brown Convention Center to feed the homeless and hungry. The Youth were providing them with a warm meal, canned food, and clothing. They served and cleaned. VVM Principal Mrs Phalguni Kikani along with adult volunteers Priti Parikh, Nayana Dalal and Bijal Modi took charge of the 15 odd VVM Youth. Some of the youth went to the City Hall (Gaurav Kikani) to serve the community and needy Houston residents. *VVM and VPSS are very proud of the selfless and valuable service our youth provided for the benefit of the community we live in.* The youth volunteers were:

Mansi Mehta, Nilay Patel, Nirali Shah, Riddhi Yagnik, Kush Parikh, Shrina Parikh, Gaurav Ved, Varun Modi, Yash Mithani, Hiral Modi, Hardik Gandhi, Neel Patel, Milan Doshi, Pranav Patel and Juhil Parikh

