

Media Release:

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Tip Sheet: How To Strengthen Your Family During Tough Times National Families Week 2009

With many families experiencing tough times because of challenging economic conditions and more pain forecast for the immediate future, *National Families Week 2009* from 10 – 16 May (coinciding with the *United Nations' International Day of the Family* on 15 May) calls on all of us to recognise, value, and support our families' wellbeing.

The aim of *National Families Week 2009* is to encourage all Australians to celebrate the diversity of the family unit and to inspire families to focus on what makes them stronger. It's about prompting individuals to remember that they are part of families and that the family unit itself, as well as its members, needs special tending if they are to be strong.

So how do you go about creating a stronger family unit? The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG), the nation's leading friendly society specialising in education benefits with the mission of supporting children and families, has prepared this tip sheet to help you focus on your family's wellbeing. Drawn from expert advice and suggestions sourced from ASG's parenting information website, [KidsLife](#), it aims to support families through adversity.

Accept your situation

- Whatever the make-up of your family or the circumstances that your family finds itself in currently, there's no benefit to wishing things were different or blaming others. An easier path for all your family members will be acceptance so that you can work through the issues that need to be addressed.

Avoid comparisons to others

- Comparing your family and your issues to others is unlikely to be helpful and could bring heartache. Families of all kinds experience issues, even if it may not appear to be the case.

Work together as a team on your issues

- If you look behind success stories, it's often effective teamwork that has contributed to the achievement. Families are no different. When families work together as a team, every member has the chance to contribute and be acknowledged for their unique skills. As a unit, families that function as a team can give every member opportunities to not only achieve a united goal, but also individual goals.

Communicate the issues

- Talking, listening, having your say, discussing a better way to do something or accepting advice, are all skills that for young children particularly, can be enhanced by effective communication. Communicating as a family can also provide kids with opportunities to talk about shared values, rules for behaviour, expectations, and respectful relationships. Being respectful, feeling respected, and being aware of family values, helps in times of negotiation, compromise, and cooperation.

Sharing the load

- Keeping the show on the road can be tricky, particularly during tough times. Stressful times are certainly easier if everyone pulls their weight. For children to contribute, parents need to communicate clearly about what's expected of them and how important it is to contribute. Ensure any activities you delegate are age appropriate for your children.

Ask for help

- If you or another member of your family isn't coping, be sure to ask for help and support through your network of extended family and friends, medical practitioner, or community networks. Be proactive – don't be afraid to ask for support and assistance.

Spend some time together doing fun things

- Family relationships can benefit from sharing time together. Put some time aside each week to do activities that all the family will enjoy. Family activities don't have to stretch the budget, for some low-cost ideas, check out [ASG's 'Mum, Dad, I'm Bored..' e-guide](#).

More tips and information about family life can be found at:

- ASG's website – www.asg.com.au – a range of tips, e-guides, tools and resources are available to support children and families.
- KidsLife website – www.kidslife.com.au – ASG's parenting information website empowers parents and families.

ASG's Education Program™ offers a unique, convenient, and proven way for people to plan for their children or grandchildren's future education. The program can be tailored to suit the needs and budgets of most families.

Currently ASG is helping more than 208,000 member parents plan for the costs of their children's education. Last year almost 45,000 students had their secondary or post-secondary education costs supported by ASG benefits. In addition, ASG has paid out more than \$867 million in benefits to its members since its inception.

More information about ASG's Education Program™ can be found at ASG's website: www.asg.com.au or phone: 1800 648 945.

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