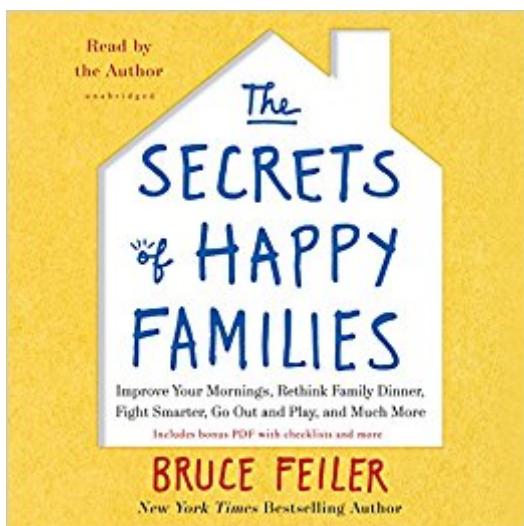


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The Secrets Of Happy Families: Improve Your Mornings, Tell Your Family History, Fight Smarter, Go Out And Play, And Much More



Synopsis

[*Read by the author - Bruce Feiler] Written in a charming, accessible style, *The Secrets of Happy Families* is smart, funny, and fresh, and will forever change how your family lives every day. -- Bestselling author and *New York Times* family columnist Bruce Feiler found himself squeezed between caring for aging parents and raising his children. So he set out on a three-year journey to find the smartest solutions and the most cutting-edge research about families. Instead of the usual family "experts," he sought out the most creative minds - from Silicon Valley to the set of *Modern Family*, from the country's top negotiators to the Green Berets - and asked them what team-building exercises and problem-solving techniques they use with their families. Feiler then tested these ideas with his wife and kids. The result is a fun, original look at how families can draw closer together, complete with two hundred never-before-seen best practices. -- Feiler's life-changing discoveries include a radical plan to reshape your family in twenty minutes a week, Warren Buffett's guide for setting an allowance, and the Harvard handbook for resolving conflict. *The Secrets of Happy Families* is a timely, counterintuitive book that answers the questions countless parents are asking: How do we manage the chaos of our lives? How do we teach our kids values? How do we make our family happier?

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Customer Reviews

A.J. Jacobs, author of *Drop Dead Healthy* and *The Know-It-All*, interviews Bruce Feiler about *The Secrets of Happy Families*. A.J.: Congratulations on this book -- it's amazing. I predict that my family's happiness level will rise approximately 63 percent after I incorporate these tips. You say you

read tons of parenting books and most were eye-glazingly dull. Why? Bruce: First, 63 percent. That's better than our family! As for parenting books, the biggest problem is they're out of fresh ideas. Meanwhile, in every other world — from Silicon Valley, to corporate America, to elite peace negotiators, to the U.S. military — there are cutting-edge ways to bring groups closer together. I asked what those folks were doing with their families, then tested their ideas out with mine. A.J.: I absolutely love the idea of weekly family meetings. I'm going to start holding them this week. Any tips for keeping kids from zoning out? Bruce: Holding weekly family meetings is the single best improvement we made to our family. My wife adores them. Tips: play a short game at the start; have your kids pick their punishments; stop after 20 minutes. Oh, and give allowance at the end; that keeps them interested! A.J.: You talked to a number of experts about how to fight smarter, including simple changes you could make around the home. Which of these improved your life? Bruce: My wife and I changed where we have conversations at night after we discovered we fought more because my spot put me a power position. As a family, we implemented one of my three favorite tips from the entire book: when we discipline our kids, we sit in upright, cushioned chairs. (My other favorites are "The Law of Two Women" and the "What Do You Know?") A.J.: As you point out, the Tiger Mom approach has some downsides. Is there an animal you more identify with? Bruce: Pillow pet. A.J.: In the section on Warren Buffett's guide to allowance, you talk about the importance of having kids work. But the lemonade stand market seems overcrowded. Any alternative? Bruce: First, I was quite surprised by the advice that it's better for kids to earn and lose their own money. Buffett's banker told me, "It's much better to make a mistake with a \$6 allowance than a \$60,000 salary or a \$6 million inheritance." And I'm a believer in lemonade stands, but remember that the lemonade is a loss leader -- the money is in the cookies. A.J.: Are you worried you can never lose your temper at your kids in public, or people will say "Hey, aren't you the Happy Family guy?" Bruce: Oops, was that you behind me at the supermarket the other day? Seriously, I wrote about happy families not because we had one, but because we wanted one. Unlike most "experts," I didn't have an ideology to promote. I had a question: What do happy families do right and how can the rest of us make our families happier? We've definitely improved, but kids change, so we keep having to turn back to the book. A.J.: You start off with Tolstoy's famous maxim "All happy families are alike." Do you agree? Bruce: I didn't at first, but now I do. Happy families have certain larger things in common: They adapt all the time. They talk. A lot. They go out

and play. And they work at it. We try to improve at our jobs, our hobbies, even at being ourselves, yet somehow we forget to work on the one thing that most defines our well-being -- our family. That's my biggest takeaway. Want to have a happier family? Try. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“Infused with humor and authenticity. ... Feiler’s unique perspective and voice... sets it apart from other work in both the parenting and happiness genres.”
(Yahoo) “This is the best book I’ve read about how to transform families. | Run, don’t walk, to get a copy” (NBC Latino) “Makes even the most skeptical parent sit up and take note.” (BONNIE ROCHMAN for Time.com) “Refreshing. ... Feiler has an engaging style.” (Washington Post) “I loved this book because it really is a new playbook for the modern-day family, something to counteract the chaos of the digital age.” (Lyss Stern, creator of Divalysscious Moms and author of If You Give a Mom a Martini) “Not your run-of-the-mill parenting manual. A practical, entertaining playbook that upends some of the most accepted wisdom in family-rearing today.” (Outside magazine) “A self-help book with teeth, loaded with examples. ... The Secrets of Happy Families is comprehensive and clear, a how-to guide for dads who may not have realized they needed one.” (Daddylibrium) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I read Bruce Feiler’s *The Secrets of Happy Families* ahead of the birth of my first child (which is still a month away), and so, to be honest, I’m not in the target audience for the book. Plus, seeing as the large majority of the book concerns a life with kids, I’m far from the most qualified person to assess it. So, I could well be revising my opinion over Feiler’s work as the years go on. Nevertheless, as of now, I found it very interesting, full of ideas that I would consider implementing in the future. The book’s premise seemed to me, once I read the introduction, to be a silly one. The author proposed to look at insights from different careers and fields of study to see how they could improve family life. For instance, how would a professional trained in conflict resolution deal with family arguments? How would a green beret build a sense of “team” in the family? This sounded pretty ridiculous (the team one still didn’t work for me) until I read the first chapter and began to see the specific ideas these people had. I found particularly intriguing the sections on “family branding,” “family

weekly meetings, and the need for having close relationships with extended family. Many sections of the book have original ideas, and Feiler has done his best to support them with relevant research. I think that almost all families would find some useful and helpful ideas here. My only criticism of the book is that it definitely seemed to trail off at the end. This section largely had to do with entertainment. Some of the advice was just weak or obvious (the creators of Farmville suggest playing “20 Questions” on car trips). Even Feiler seemed to think that the idea about making family trips more like an extreme competition (think: Amazing Race) was a little absurd. On the whole, though, this was a quick read with some useful ideas. I would recommend it and expect to revisit it myself in the future.

I read parenting books occasionally - mostly when the kids are making me nuts for an extended period of time or I'm feeling like a bit of a failure as a mom. Usually what I read frustrates me because I am reminded that I shouldn't yell - in fact, shouldn't ever lose my cool, or has a complex process that I'm not going to implement long term. I read the sample of this book and decided to buy it. I actually stayed up late reading it and finished it this morning. Normally, only fiction has that affect on me. I've already recommended it to a friend and am thinking of buying it for a few people. I liked the way the information was presented, I like the no-nonsense lack of navel gazing, and the tips provided (not all, but a lot of them) make sense to me. Most of this is specific, checklist task type of items all designed to improve communication and increase happiness and satisfaction within the family. Who doesn't love that? My family is having our first weekly meeting tonight. This idea appeals to me a lot, because as I read this book, it occurred to me that I'm the one who keeps the calendar/logistics in my head for our family, which stresses me out somewhat, and my kids and sometimes my husband are the ones who can get caught off guard when we're suddenly trying to do three things while heading into as many different directions. We're going to use our meeting to talk about what went well, what we can improve on, have the kids pick their punishments, review the schedule for the week and set a positive tone for the coming days. I love the idea of getting together at breakfast - some days, this makes MUCH more sense than trying to pull off a dinner together given different schedules. I love the suggestions to start empowering the kids. I'll update in a few weeks after we've been implementing some of these practices. I'm feeling pretty positive at this point.

Needed this book for a Marriage and Family class in college. I did not read it in its entirety, but it does read similarly to the Love Languages book.

Loved this book! I actually couldn't put it down - well researched, great stories and examples, and filled with ideas that work!

I highly recommend the book as it will for sure broaden your horizons and it will give you multiple tips on how to do better - for your, your kids' and your partner's sake! I liked the fact that the practical tips are backed up by research and/or experts in respective fields and that you can extend them beyond your family life too. The reason I'm not giving it a max score is that I had expected even more subjects/tips in there based on the raving reviews. Scoops on improving kids' learning/studying habits, inner discipline (motivation) for the whole family ;), etc. would be v. helpful. What could be also great addition to the book is an appendix and, ideally, a web page with a repository of the ready-to use ideas, lists, etc.

A good read, there were a lot of helpful tidbits in here, unfortunately every time I suggested my husband and I implement anything from the book he acted like I was torturing him so we might not benefit from it long term but I'm still going to try to implement the tips within when I can.

This book is changing my life and my family life. I already have a pretty good family life, but there are so many tips and techniques in here that would benefit any family. I like that Bruce Feiler doesn't try to boil everything down into a top ten. Instead, he shares dozens and dozens of nuggets from academia, family studies and his own interviews. I especially like the fresh take on using agile methodologies to improve family dynamics and get things done, the idea of a family mission statements, and how to foster conversation during meals. Bruce is right when he says there's a lot written about raising happy, healthy children, but precious little about happy, healthy families. Love this book and have given it to many of my friends.

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