

Giving your Child the Gift of Time

Time is something that we all wish we had more of these days. From sunrise to sunset (and beyond) most of us are on the go with days filled with work, grocery shopping, chores and activities. In the midst of this business our children are growing up faster than ever. One of the most important things you can choose to do as a parent is to spend quality time with your child every day. Simple quality time will have a huge impact on your child's self esteem and self worth and assure your child how much you love and care for him. When the dishes are left and you take an honest and sincere interest in your child you are sending the message that your child is important and that you truly want to spend time together.

Spending quality time together doesn't require any extra work on your part if you follow these simple tips:

1. Eat breakfast together. Take 20 minutes each morning and have breakfast with your child. With the television turned off, start the day off and enjoy your time together. You may be out the door and not see each other for the next several hours, which makes this time even more special.
2. Talk with not at your child. Use opportunities to talk with your child about her day. Most days, you will find you and your child in a vehicle together so use this time to talk together about who your child played with, what was the best thing about his day or to share a joke.
3. Have a Games night once a week. As a family, reserve one night a week where you sit down and play a game together. Have each family member take turns choosing the game you will play. Alternatively, have a family movie night and don't forget the snack!
4. Bedtime Snuggle. Bedtime is often the time when even young children will share something they are worried about that happened during the day. Take an extra few minutes every night to let your child feel safe in your arms with a special hug and send your child off to bed feeling assured and loved.
5. Plan special holidays together. Most children love to be included in planning family activities. So encourage your child to participate in the planning of holidays such as birthday parties and Christmas as well as summer or winter vacations. Find out what your child would like to do during these special occasions.

6. Plan outings together. Take the time to go for a walk to the park, spend a few hours in the afternoon swimming, or go out for supper together. Leave all the chores behind and have some fun!

7. The saying *many hands make light work* is so true, and having all family members help with chores can make a big difference. Supper is a perfect opportunity when everyone (even toddlers and preschoolers) can help with setting and clearing the table, putting dishes in the dish washer and leftovers in to the fridge. With supper and chores over sooner, you'll have extra time to spend together.

8. Once a day, every day, tell your child how lucky you are to have him in your life – and mean it. Your child is precious and despite the times when you may feel frustrated there is no greater gift than the blessing of a child in your life.

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