

Ways to Connect With your Children and Family

In today's busy world where many parents have to work long hours, and kids often participate in several after-school activities, it is sometimes very difficult for families to spend time together, let alone "quality time." Here are some ideas for situations that can help you get the most out of the time you do spend with your children.



Compute together

Instead of isolating yourself at the home computer, put your child on your lap and play a computer game together. Tom Snyder, a well-known educational software designer, calls this parent-child activity "lapware."

Eat meals as a family

Many families make eating together an important ritual: no books, newspapers, or TV allowed. Make eating in front of the TV a special event rather than a daily occurrence. One mom says her family has made a rule that they all eat one meal together each day. "The only meal we know we can eat together is breakfast, because that's the only time everyone is home." She jokes, "We eat at 4:30 a.m."

Cure your telephone hang-up

Take the phone off the hook or refuse to answer it during dinner time and family time. That's what answering machines are for.

Share hobbies

You may have trouble sitting down for a serious chat with your teenager, but you can explore all sorts of topics while fishing together. Help your child stan a collection of baseball cards, seashells, bottle caps, stamps, or any other fascinating object. Work as a team organizing the collection, and create a special place where it can be displayed.

Schedule days with no commitments, except to your family

"I would give anything to do family things at least every other weekend," one junior-high student wrote. Another teenager suggested finding at least one day out of the month to be together without any promises to other people.

Respect family commitments

Treat appointments with your kids or spouse as you would any other meetings. Apologize if you are late, and offer to make up the time in another way. Explain in advance if you know you won't be able to make it to your child's school play or soccer game, and reschedule your time together.

Give kids, and parents, dreamtime

Remember, as a child, lying on your back in the grass watching the clouds move? Remember sitting on the carpet looking up at the dust fall in front of a sunny window? That was dreamtime, essential to the mental health and creativity of children—and adults.