



Family and Consumer Sciences, 1787 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210

Spending Time with Your Children

Lois Clark, CFCS, OSU Extension Educator
Family and Consumer Sciences
Auglaize County

With today's busy lifestyles, parents need to spend "quality" time with their children. But what is quality time? "Quality time" is time spent doing an activity that is meaningful to the parent and child. It is time when family members really get to know each other. Quality time is spent focusing attention on the other person and sharing thoughts and feelings.

Spending time with your children can be fun and educational for you and your children. According to a bulletin by Dr. James E. Van Horn, Professor of Rural Sociology, Pennsylvania State Cooperative Extension, "Most of the child's basic learning takes place in the many informal situations that occur daily in the life of the family. These informal occasions for learning include all the times the family members are together doing ordinary things, such as getting dressed, taking baths, preparing to leave for kindergarten, eating, and so forth" (VanHorn, 1993).

The activity does need not be costly, but rather one that satisfies both the parent and the child.

The Importance of Parenting

The goal of parenting is to help your child become a responsible adult. To achieve this goal, parents help children learn about life and living in today's society. The time a parent spends with a child is important.

Children need to be loved unconditionally. Doris Curran, a parent educator, says the cry of children today is, "Love me for who I am, not what I do. Love me for being, caring, sharing, and erring, not winning, placing, and showing" (Curran, 1991). That does not mean that you have to approve of everything the child does. What it does mean is that even though the child misbehaves, you still love and accept the child and provide support.

Talk With Your Child

Spend time talking with your child. Talk about any topic of interest to both of you. Talk about the day's events and the child's feelings about them.

Through observation and interaction with parents, children learn how to communicate. Children learn to express their needs. They learn to listen. They learn to understand nonverbal clues.

Life's Lessons

Children learn about families from the time they spend in their own families. They learn about birth and caring for another person when a new baby comes home from the hospital. They learn about loss when a family member dies. They learn about marriage and relationships by watching their mothers and fathers interact. By living in a family, children learn to share, how to stand up for their own rights, and how to love another person.

Building Self-Esteem

Parents help children develop positive self-esteem by communicating the value they feel for the child. Words of encouragement and love help provide children with the courage to try new things without worrying excessively about not being able to do them.

Growing Up With Trust

Children learn about trust at home from their parents. They learn trust from being trusted. When parents trust children to accomplish a task on their own, they learn that it is okay to try to do the task. The children know that even if they fail, they can learn from their mistakes and try again.

Give Guidance

Children learn to be more responsible when parents help them learn to control their own behavior. A disciplined person has the ability to decide what appropriate behavior is and to act accordingly. Parents use discipline to help guide children as they become responsible adults.

Take the time to make discipline a learning experience for the child. Appropriate discipline should include four parts. The child needs to understand: (1) which behavior is not acceptable and (2) why, and (3) what behavior is appropriate and (4) why. By helping a child understand why what he or she did was unacceptable, the child can learn what acceptable behavior is. There is no one right way to discipline a child. A variety of discipline techniques exist. What is important is a warm and loving relationship between the parent and the child.

Activities

The following are suggestions for ways to spend quality time with your children:

- Take a walk together as a family. It is fun to stop along the way to talk to your neighbors.
- Play a family game. Game nights provide time to enjoy each other's company.

References

- Curran, D. (1991). Delores Curran Talks with Parents. Family Information Services, Section 9, M & P 17–18.
- VanHorn, J. E. (1993, May). *Parent Education: The Importance of Family Meals*. Pennsylvania State Cooperative Extension Service.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

Visit Ohio State University Extension's web site "Ohioline" at: <http://ohioline.osu.edu>

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all educational programs conducted by OSU Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, age, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or veteran status.

Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension

TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868

Revision of HYG-5228-96—August 2007—3465