

(source:<https://www.parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/positive/quality-time/>)

How to Spend More Quality Time With Your Child

Although the days with little kids often seem long, the years fly by.

Use this practical and purposeful blueprint to savor the moments you have together.

By Harley A. Rotbart, M.D. from [Parents Magazine](#)

The ten o'clock news hasn't even started, but you're too exhausted to watch—who can stay awake that late? Car pools, lunch bags, after-school activities, dinner, homework, bathtime, bedtime. All on top of your own job (or jobs) and the other realities of adulthood. You have just enough energy left **to drag yourself to bed** so you can wake early and start the routine all over again.

Each day with young kids feels like a week, each week like a month. Yet as every birthday passes, the years seem to be **streaking by at warp speed**. Five-month-olds become 5-year-olds **in the blink of an eye**, and then 15-year-olds. This **inexorable march of time** that turns babies into big kids is the "other" biological clock facing young couples. Every day brings new growth, new milestones, and new wonderment, but the **challenges of juggling our adult lives** often prevent us from fully **appreciating the delicate nuances of childhood**.

We've heard about slow parenting, attachment parenting, and tiger moms. However, over my past 30 years as a pediatrician, I have learned that there is a single truth that applies to any parenting philosophy: **Your children need to spend meaningful time with you**. They need to see who you are and how you live your life. And in return, they will **help you to better see who you are**.

When you add up all the time your kids spend at day care, in school, asleep, at friends' homes, with babysitters, at camp, and otherwise occupied with activities that don't include you, the remaining moments become especially precious. **There are only 940 Saturdays between a child's birth and her leaving for college**. That may sound like a lot, but how many have you already used up?

Instead of worrying about how many minutes you can spend with your children each day, focus on **turning those minutes into memorable moments**. Parents often compensate for having such a small quantity of time by **scheduling "quality time"**. Two hours at the nature preserve. An afternoon at the movies. Dinner at a restaurant. But the truth is that **quality time may occur when you least expect it**—yes, at the nature preserve, but also in the car on the way to ballet practice.

Try this mental trick to help you readjust your thinking: In the course of a crazy day, imagine your biological parenthood clock **wound forward** to the time when your children have grown and have left home. Picture their tousled bedrooms as clean and empty. See the backseat of the car vacuumed and without a car seat or crumbs. Playroom shelves neatly stacked with dusty toys. Laundry under control. Then **rewind the imaginary clock back to now**, and see today's minutes of mayhem for what they are: finite and fleeting.

Not every day with your kids will be perfect, but hopefully one day you will greet their departure with a profound sense of satisfaction because you've given them what they need to succeed and also given yourself what you need to feel like a successful parent. Although I don't know how to slow down time, I do have some ideas about how to **optimize the time you spend with your kids**—while they are still tucked into their beds, where you can peek at them before you go to sleep.

Practice Parenting Meditation

When you're overwhelmed with your responsibilities, it's easy to **toggle into automatic pilot** with your kids. Instead, try to stay in the moment with a "parenting meditation," in which you focus on seeing your kids, hearing them, understanding them, and really being amazed by what you've created—living, breathing miracles of nature who are learning like sponges and growing like weeds.

Have Taco Night

Dinner at home with the whole family is special unto itself, but your kids will be even more eager to sit down together **when your meal has a theme**. You can have taco night, pizza night, Chinese night, egg night, or pancake night. Turn your kitchen into a sushi bar or an Italian bistro once a week. When kids are excited and having fun, they are energized in their conversation and about sharing their news at the table.

Fix It Together

Never repair a leaky faucet, change a tire, paint the fence, or replace the furnace filter without your kids. **Home improvements** are a great way to spend time with them while teaching them about tools and life at the same time. The attic, the basement, and the crawl space are all classrooms for learning how things work and how to safely fix things. Give them a flashlight, and talk them through the job you're doing. As they get older, hold the flashlight for them. Instead of dreading things that break, you'll see new tiles, built-in shelves, and paint jobs as bonus chances for time with your kids.

Don't Drive Everywhere

The minutes that we "save" by driving our children a short distance to the neighborhood park or a friend's house are actually priceless moments that we lose in the name of convenience. The next time you need to take your children somewhere nearby, try to get there on foot. Walking with your kids is a great way to slow down the pace of your lives and to have more unscripted moments with them. Talk about where you're going, what you're thinking, what they're thinking, what you see on the way, and who said what to whom in school today.

Play Their Games

If you decide to bring video games into your home, do your best to **screen them** and even learn how to play them so you can experience this part of your kids' world. Why? Because, your kids will "kick your butt," to use their phrasing; this is one activity where you'll never have to let them win, and it's a good thing for children to occasionally **see their parents as human and vincible**.

Assignment: Summarize the text explaining a) why it is important and b) how to spend quality time with your young kids.