



ACPed's Parent Talk

Keeping parents up to date on the latest news in child and teen health

Parenting 101: Do less and be more



Parents are busier than ever these days with pursuing careers, working on marriages, caring for aged loved ones, running households, managing finances, and raising kids, all while trying to find time to stay fit, eat healthy and practice self-care.

Being busy can be good, but being too busy is bad

When parents are successful in their careers, everyone benefits from the success. Parents feel fulfilled when their work--whether paid or volunteered--benefits others and they feel good to know they are making a contribution.

However, **when parents don't carve out quality time to spend with their kids, both the parents and the children suffer.**

According to a [Pew Research Center analysis](#) (1) survey of 2,000 parents,

- 56% of working **parents say they find it difficult to balance their time** between work and family,
- 63% wish they had done more activities with their child and
- more than half of **parents said they regret not having more quality time with their children** when they were younger.

Instead of doing more, do less and BE more

Our society has gotten so good at doing, accomplishing, working and achieving that many of us have forgotten how to just be.

To be a good parent, you don't necessarily have to do anything. All you have to do is be you because that's who your kids love and want to get to know.

This isn't to encourage you to neglect your responsibilities. Instead, it's an encouragement to realize that **your most important responsibility is to love your child by being present and engaged when they are around.**

Simple ways to just BE and still be productive

Eat dinner as a family. Family meals don't have to resemble a 1950s sitcom to be effective. Just sit down as a family, turn the TV off and let the conversation flow. It may feel awkward at first but you'll enjoy it. [Research](#) (2) shows **your kids will talk to you more, feel more connected to you and be less likely to have problems in school or get involved in harmful activities** like premarital sex and substance abuse.



In the beginning, don't stress about what to prepare. That will come as you get better. For now, [whatever it is you normally eat for dinner, serve that, add a vegetable and replace the soda with water or a fruit juice](#) (not a fruit drink--there's a difference). Then tell everyone to gather around the table--no exceptions.



Play together. Set a timer for 30 minutes and play a game with your kids. A board game, a card game, or even a video game will work.

The game isn't important. It's the quality time you're spending with your child that matters and [research](#) (3) shows that **playing together as a family boosts feelings of family connectedness.**

Listen to music with your kids. [Research](#) (4) shows listening to music with your kids and teens can help you **strengthen your relationship with them** and the benefits last well into adulthood.

Enjoy time outdoors together. Sit on the back porch and watch the wind blow through the trees. Admire the setting sun. Try to find at least 3 different insects in your backyard. Take a short walk around the block. It doesn't have to be complicated. Just find a way to be outside together. [Research](#) (5) shows **enjoying time together outside as a family helps families get along better.**



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*Try to do each of the activities described above **at least once a week** with your family. It won't take up much of your time but **the benefits will last for the rest of your life, your kids' lives and quite possibly your kids' kids' lives.***

Our kids don't need the latest toys and gadgets. They don't need to eat 100% organic everything. They don't need to be shuffled to some activity every day. They need to feel loved and secure. **Kids need to know that without a doubt, their parents love them and enjoy spending time with them.** What kids need more than anything, above all else, is to feel connected to their parents.

For more information

- [Play benefits adults](#) (6) - ACPeds Parent Talk
- [3 Ways Over-scheduling Can Hurt Your Kids](#) (7) - ACPeds blog
- [How to Have a Healthy Family Table](#) (8) - ACPeds patient information handout
- [Stressed and Depressed \(pt. 2\): What Parents can do to Reverse the Teen Trend](#) (9) - ACPeds blog



www.acped.org | admin@acped.org

Sources:

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2. <https://www.acped.org/the-college-speaks/position-statements/parenting-issues/the-benefits-of-the-family-table>
3. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/moral-landscapes/201404/why-play-child>
4. <https://uanews.arizona.edu/story/improve-relationship-kids-try-turning-music>
5. <https://news.aces.illinois.edu/news/how-can-family-function-better-get-outside-together>
6. <http://myemail.constantcontact.com/Play-Benefits-Adults--Breastfeeding-Benefits-Moms---Talking-to-Teens-About-Drugs.html?soid=1101710997446&aid=JbOLeXcvPMM>
7. <https://www.acped.org/3-ways-over-scheduling-can-hurt-your-kids>
8. <https://www.acped.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/How-to-have-a-healthy-family-table.pdf>
9. <https://www.acped.org/stressed-and-depressed-pt-2-what-parents-can-do-to-reverse-the-teen-trend>