

I like spending time with my mom...but it hasn't always been that way!

"I like spending time with my mom...but it hasn't always been that way. She always used to seem so busy and I got mad at her when she said "not now." But then she learned a few simple things from Triple P and now we have fun just making dinner and she's not too busy for me anymore." Triple P Child

Spending quality time with your children will help in developing a positive relationship with your child and prevent future behavioral problems. Being a parent, however, is busy and demanding. It can be a juggling act of working, taking care of household chores, shuttling kids' to schools and various activities, making time to see family and friends, and putting time aside for personal interests. Parents often feel that they are not able to spend 'quality time' with their children. The thought of planning something 'special' such as an afternoon at the park, a family camping trip or a trip to the zoo, can not only be daunting but could take a long time to set up.

If you are a parent who feels you are not able to spend as much time as you would like with your child, you are not alone! Triple P defines **quality time** in a way that is not only manageable for parents but beneficial and effective for children. Every parent has something special to offer their child and yet many of us have felt guilty about how busy we are and how the demands of daily routines keep us from having fun and enjoying children. Often we forget that a quick hug, a high 5, stopping to look at something that interests the child, singing a song, playing a quick game, telling stories, cooking together, listening to a favorite CD and other easy ways to spend time will help you and your child feel close to each other. **Here are some things you can try right away.**

Frequent, small amounts of time. Spending frequent, small amounts of time with children is very beneficial and helps your child know how much you love her. Try to spend small amounts of time with your child—as little as 30 seconds to 3 minutes—frequently throughout the day. This consistency conveys to your child that you are there for her and by following her interests it will help you to learn more about her.

Let your child initiate. Time that is special to your child will occur when she approaches you to tell you something, ask a question or involve you in an activity. This is also an opportunity for your child to learn how to be open with you and to learn conversational skills.

Stop and engage. When your child approaches you, and you are not involved in something that requires your immediate attention, stop what you are doing and make yourself available. Get down to your child's level, be present and provide her with your full attention. This lets your child know that you are interested in what she has to share.

Don't fall in the 'in a minute trap'. If you cannot stop what you are doing when your child wants your attention, let her know when you are available and then make that time available to her. If you promise to come to her in a minute but are held up for another ten, it can lead to increasing demands by your child and increasing levels of frustration by you.

Quality time does not have to be a special activity or long planned trip; it can occur everyday, through-out the day, when your child is ready to learn and engage. Remember, these small changes, can make big differences!

If you would like to learn more about positive relationship building strategies and strategies to promote your child's development, contact First 5 Santa Cruz County to help you find a local Triple P practitioner. For more information on Triple P services please visit www.first5scc.org or contact Stephanie Bluford at sbluford@first5scc.org (831) 465-2217.

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