

Quality Time During the Coronavirus Crisis: What is it and How Can You Achieve it Now?

The coronavirus crisis brought about a lot of time with the kids at home. But is the shared time actually contributing to your relationship with your children? The secret for reinforcing the relationship is quality and not quantity. How can you create quality time with the children during the busy coronavirus routine?



What is quality time and why is it important?

Your relationship with your child is key to their growth and development throughout their childhood years. When a child feels protected and loved by their parents, and receives sensitive and consistent emotional support, they're available to explore the world. Any parent-child time is a chance to reinforce their self-worth, show personal example and acquire important emotional and social skills. Above all, quality time sends our kids the message that they are at the top of our priority list, that they're important to us, and that we're available to them.

A lot of parents feel that their work load and life's demands don't allow them to make time for their children as much as they'd like. During these times, even though you're spending so much energy on the children, you might find yourselves running from task to task and feeling like you didn't actually spend time with your child. Actually, you don't need to stop everything else you're doing to provide your children with quality time. Quality time doesn't necessarily have to be a long time with a special and unique activity. A little bit of attention and thought will provide you with daily moments to reinforce your relationship with the children and support their development. Quality time is any short moment that you spend paying full attention to your children.

So how can you create quality time?

There are a few simple principles that can help you turn daily interactions that happen anyway, into quality interactions:

- **Being present and listening** - Quality time is first of all time when you're listening to your child. Check yourselves, are you properly listening to your child? Tuned in to what they're doing right now? Look at him/her and pay attention to the non-verbal signs as well. Ask clarifying questions and react to what's happening - with curiosity, with a smile or a loud laugh, say something nice, be amazed.
- **Eye contact** - Eye contact has several jobs when it comes to communicating with a parent. It regulates and calms, and allows mutual sharing of the emotional experience. If you're already speaking with your child for a moment, make eye contact with them. Put your cellphones and devices down for a short time, try not to look over their shoulder to supervise the brother who is painting. Use eye contact to establish present and close communication.
- **Body language** - Use your body and facial expressions to express attention and interest when your child is talking with you or asking to show you something. Nod so that they know that you are paying attention. Change your expressions at the appropriate moments as a response to what your child is saying so that they feel like you're participating in their story.
- **Tone of voice** - Pay attention to your tone of voice as an important component of conversations with your child. Check the messages you are sending your child that are beyond words and use them to fit your reaction to your child: is the tone enthusiastic and excited? Is it quiet and calming?
- **Physical contact** - Physical contact is a basic and essential need for the child's psychological and emotional development. Take advantage of daily opportunities for close physical contact and a physical display of emotions with your child. Constantly hug your child and pay attention to the physical contact you make with them while feeding them, dressing them and playing with them. Check your child's reaction and adjust the frequency and intensity of the contact to their needs.
- **One-on-one** - Try finding a few minutes at a convenient time when you can spend some one-on-one time with your child. Take advantage of things that are already part of the schedule - bath time or bedtime can be especially good for this.

Tips for Integrating Quality Time into Your Daily Routine

You should naturally integrate quality time into your family's daily routine. This way there's a better chance that you'll be able to persist and consistently provide them with beneficial moments of attention. Here are a few anchors that you can use:

- Family meals are a great time to all have a conversation. Put phones aside and encourage a conversation about the day's experiences or about any other topic you'd like to talk about.
- Encourage your kids to join you to perform tasks around the house and take advantage of your time together. Sit closely and fold laundry together, have a calm conversation while your hands are busy, or prepare a meal together while listening to music that you love and sing out loud.
- Find moments when the children are well behaved to provide them with positive attention and reinforce their behavior - commend them, tell them what you liked and smile at them.
- With younger kids you can use bathing and dressing time to talk to your child or sing to them. Teach them the names of their body parts, tickle them and make up special games for the bath.
- Take your children to bed before they go to sleep and allow them to end the day and say goodnight to you calmly and pleasantly. Spend a few minutes before they go to sleep reading your child a story, listen to what happened to them today, cover them with the blanket and give them a hug and a kiss.