Holding your newborn baby in your arms, you’d never guess that she’d be
off to kindergarten in the blink of an eye and then, before you know it, asking
to borrow the car. Yet that’s how parents often describe the years they’ve
spent raising children.

Time flies, and your growing child will never
again be the age she is today. But if your life is
jam-packed with work, school, extra-curricular
activities and other obligations, finding time
to really know and nurture your child can be
challenging.

Eating dinner together is a frequently
recommended strategy, and while it’s a
wonderful start, it’s not the only way to
make time for children. Here are five simple
suggestions for fitting quality time with your
kids into your busy life.

Read
Kids love being read to, from before they can
talk until long after they can read on their own,
and it helps them grow into good readers and
learners. Make reading together the last part
of your child’s bedtime routine. Even five or
10 minutes is worthwhile (shoot for 20–30),
and chances are reading will help them wind
down and fall asleep more quickly.

Work
Find a regular chore that is usually done alone
and make it a job for two, and in some cases
you’ll get the job done faster while bonding
with your child. If your “helper” is very young,
it might actually take a bit longer to complete
the job, but you’ll still impart the values of
responsibility and cooperation. Whether your
helper is a chatty kindergartener or a quiet teen,
working as a team can bring you closer together.

Play
Share a sport, exercise or hobby you love
with your kids – or try their favorite activity.
When you hit on something you both enjoy,
make it a regular part of your lifestyle by
scheduling it in. Get out your day-planner and
pencil in morning walks, a parent-child class,
or weekly one-on-one games.

Write
This may sound like cheating, since it doesn’t
actually involve spending time with your child.
But people often express themselves more freely
in writing, or show a different side of their
personality. Exchanging letters with your kids
can profoundly enrich your relationship, and
with email you can do it in just five minutes a
day. Try it and see what happens!

Splurge
What’s your son’s favorite flavor of ice cream?
Is there a movie your teenager is dying to see?
Surprise your child with an occasional, spur-
of-the-moment treat by taking a detour from
a routine errand. The real treat isn’t the ice
cream cone or movie ticket, of course; it’s the
unplanned, leisurely time your child gets hanging
out with you.

(continued)
**Worth every minute**

You don’t want to miss out on the delight, insight and wonder of any stage of your child’s development – and your child needs you through the difficult times, too. So make time with your children a priority whatever their age. Yes, your life as a parent is busy. But it’s also short. You and your child both deserve an enriching parent-child relationship, with plenty of space and time for communicating unhurriedly, coping with challenges, discovering, and simply enjoying each other’s company.

This article is for informational and self-help purposes only. It should not be treated as a substitute for financial, medical, psychiatric, psychological or behavioral health care advice, or as a substitute for consultation with a qualified professional.

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**Need help with childcare? Call your EAP!**

Finding appropriate, reliable care for your child can be challenging and exhausting. Your Employee Assistance Program can help you:

- Assess your childcare needs
- Evaluate and understand differences among various types of childcare
- Evaluate the quality of childcare settings and providers
- Monitor and continually assess the care of your child

Call today for a telephonic consultation, or visit our website to search for childcare providers online and access other parenting information and tools.

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