

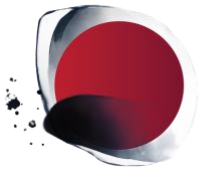
Quality or Quantity



Empathic attunement allows us to fully engage.

Is it true that quality is better than quantity in terms of time with our children?

Some say that the parent-child bond is a result of “quality time,” which is not determined by the amount of time a parent and child spend together, but rather by what they do during this time. While this quality time does have an important effect and is a form of being present for our children, I believe that deeper bonds are formed and maintained due to the amount of *incidental time we spend* with our children.



As parents, our ability to show up fully and be present with our children is what matters. It is not about time; how much or how little. Parenting unfolds moment to moment as children can receive and recognize that we are with them, in this very moment.

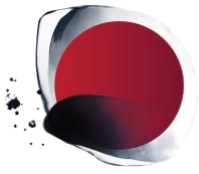
What do children want in terms of time spent with parents?

What children want from us is quite simple: They want our *attention*, when they want it, not when we feel like being available. Children want to experience our *acceptance*, just as they are, not as we think they should be. They want our *care and consideration*. They want to know that we *see them and love them*. They want to know that they *are held and embraced* in the light of our awareness. This gives them residency within us.

What are some ways that busy parents and busy can sneak in quality time?

The baby needs her parent to pick up her discarded spoon—time after time—as she experiments with tasting her food and learning to manipulate the world around her. The two-year-old wants his dad to simply sit with him on the floor, helping him stack blocks into a “fort” that he will soon destroy—just because he can. The adolescent needs her mom to smile with pride as she turns to see if she noticed her brilliant maneuver on the basketball court. In these seemingly incidental moments, the fibers of the parent’s attention weave gently into the child’s psyche and form deep bonds between parent and child.

What advice do you have for busy parents for how they could spend more time with their kids, or at least feel like the time they're spending with their kids is memorable?

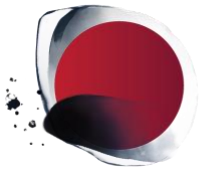


Presence is a fundamental act of empathic attunement that allows us to fully engage, instead of simply appearing to pay attention while inwardly redirecting our awareness. This allows us to value intimate moments of play instead of wishing we were back at the office or at the gym. Presence allows us to embrace our child even when our attention is compelled elsewhere. This is the practice of presence: When I am present, I can see, smell, hear, and feel my child. As I think of my child intermittently throughout the day, even when she is far away, presence determines how dynamically I am able to experience her. As we persistently open and embrace our children, if only for a moment, they know we hold and embrace them within us, in our heart.

How do our children find this residency within us? We look at our children when they are sleeping, and we are aware of our feelings. We see the smile on their faces when they first greet us in the morning, and if we are present, we are aware of this as a unique moment. When we smell our child's head as we hug, we are aware of the scent. When we feel the texture of their skin, we rest within the warmth of the embrace. When we taste the salt on our child's face as we kiss their sweaty cheeks, we are grateful to be so close. We have both the experience and the awareness of the experience; we are the witness as well as the participant. We feel whole as the moment reverberates with great power. Presence provides not a way beyond but a way through life as it unfolds moment-to-moment. The beauty of being present reveals a fundamental truth of parenting: "Up until this moment, you have been the very best parent you know how to be." And if you are not quite sure about that - you can simply start over by being present – in this very moment.

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