

BUILDING CAPABLE KIDS - IMPROVING FAMILY RELATIONS

Dear Parents and Caregivers:

For working parents the toughest time of the day may not be in the morning when the children are left at day care or even on the job, but those few hours between bringing the children home and getting them to bed. Consider some of the common problems and possible solutions.

Getting Home: Young children may be tired, hungry, and "wild" by the time they reach home. After following the rules for play and behavior at day care or school, they can have excess energy and need some time to "wind down." Unfortunately, parents may also be tired and even less able to deal with the children.

Some possible solutions are to build in run-around time, indoors or out, for the youngsters and a little quiet time--even if it's only 15 minutes to change clothes-- for parents. Having a nutritious snack easily available, like juice, some raisins, crackers and cheese will stave off hunger and give everyone the chance to adjust to being home.

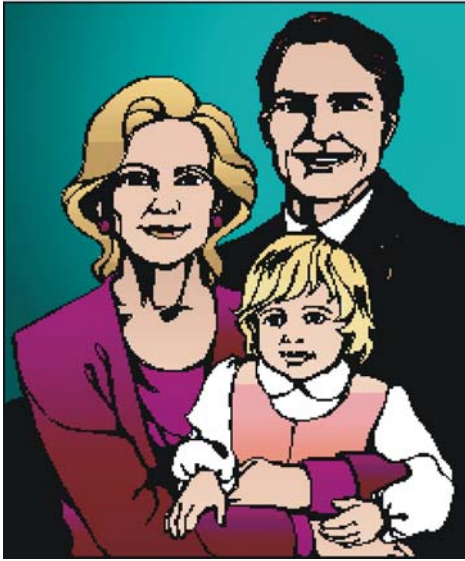
Mealtime: The sales of frozen foods and microwave ovens attests to the fact that working parents have discovered convenience foods. But even convenience foods take some time to prepare. Once the food's on the table parents often have unrealistic expectations for a pleasant, quiet meal with meaningful conversation.

Consider various ways to reduce the stress of mealtime. Carry out food or ordering pizza are occasional alternatives that mean no cooking at all. If you want home-cooked food, try preparing main dishes on the weekend and freezing them. Some days a pleasant family meal may be possible and on others your sanity may be preserved by letting the youngsters eat off a tray in front of the television.

Bedtime: The time between dinner and bedtime is the famous "quality" time parents are supposed to have with their children. But if that time includes supervising baths, doing a load of laundry and answering a few phone calls, it can turn out to be as hectic as any other time of day.

Try getting laundry and other chores done on the weekend so they don't eat into weekday evenings. Some families make it known they don't take phone calls or they turn on an answering machine on weeknights.

Avoid keeping children up late, just so you can see them. When young children are too tired they can't interrelate properly anyway. Instead, try some special parent-child bedtime activity every night, such as reading stories, a quiet game or cuddling and listening to music. It will put everyone in a better frame of mind for sleep and the next day.



Here are some other reminders about young children's needs which can help improve family expectations and relations.

WHAT CHILDREN WOULD LIKE PARENTS TO KNOW

No two children are alike. Each one does things in their own way.

Each child grows in their own way and at their own speed.

Each child needs encouragement and acceptance. This helps the child to be a special person.

Each child needs to feel good about himself. The child needs to feel that the child is a capable person.

A child needs to see and do and feel new things. This helps the child discover the world around the child.

It is good for a child to ask questions. The child needs good answers that the child can understand.

A child needs to be encouraged to tell what the child saw or did.

A child has to learn how to act. The child learns from the people around the child.

It takes time for children to see other's points of view. This requires patience and an understanding by parents of child development.

Children need help in finding acceptable ways to express feelings. Parents help the child learn when they are open and honest with the child.

The most important examples in a child's early life are their mother and father.

Parents and family are very important teachers. Children learn things at home that they can't learn anywhere else.

Sincerely,

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