

Parenting on the run



For many working parents, spending quality time with your children is a luxury. But while it's sometimes difficult to make the time, it's not impossible. With a little planning and creativity, you can parent on the run.

With overloaded schedules and endless pressures, most of us who work don't get to spend a lot of quality time with our children. But because quality time is important for us to connect with and teach our children, it is crucial that we make time for our children every day.

Quality time means doing anything that enables you to connect with your child emotionally, regardless of the time and place, and, as you'll see, sometimes even the space.

The key is to be creative with your time together, even if it's just 15 minutes a day. You don't need expensive toys or the latest video game to get their attention either. All you need to do is show them that they have your undivided attention and be really present in the moment. In other words, put work, your phone, and everything else out of your mind. By doing so, you will communicate, non-verbally, that you love them, you love spending time with them, and wouldn't want to be anywhere else at that moment.

Here are a few ideas to stay close to your child:

- **Maximise time.**

Turn 'wasted' time, such as travelling to school or standing in queues, into valuable time by playing word or observation games with your child.

- **Establish routines and rituals.**

Memories are made of these. Pick, for example, one activity that you can do together every day, whether it is bath time, reading a bedtime story, tucking them in, or a walk after dinner. If you are

going to miss the routine, make a plan – record it or make a quick call to say that you're missing spending the time together.

- **Plan ahead.**

Make arrangements for when you are not able to be at important events. If you are going to miss a school play or sports match, make an arrangement to see it one way or another. Ask a loved one or a friend to tape it for you, or request for example, that you go to a rehearsal or practice session.

- **Leave little love notes.**

These are especially great when you have to work late or go out of town. Slip a little 'I love you' or 'I miss you' into a lunch box or under a pillow as it's always nice to hear.

- **Be available to talk.**

Let your child know that even when you're not there, you're available on your cell or email when they need you. If you're really not able to talk, let them make use of a special message system to let you know there was something important they wanted to tell you when you get home – older children can leave a note on the door, for example, while younger children can leave a stuffed animal on your pillow.

Making the time to spend with your child every day isn't always easy, but it's an investment that will yield invaluable returns. So, start making every moment count today.