



The Comforts of Family



September is an exciting time of the year, full of new possibilities, but it's also a time of new places, faces, and routines. Fortunately, the time-tested comforts of family rituals can help soothe the frayed nerves of a school-age child, calm the fears of a preschooler and quiet a fretful baby.

Mornings Matter

Getting off to a rocky start is no fun for anyone and may set the tone for the entire day. Mornings are hectic when you can't find the diaper bag and the dog ate the homework (really). But even in the midst of confusion, don't forget to give your child a warm hug and kiss before separating for the day. Security for children begins at home, and no matter what comes after they've left "the nest," the day will go smoother for them and you if the really important things are tended to. **Make good-bye kisses and hugs a morning must, no matter what else is going on.**

Cool Connections

The routines of home and family life are something children can count on. Family traditions and rituals are even more important when there are changes coming at kids from all directions. Sitting down at the table for a meal together is good for families. Research is conclusive on that point, so it's worth the extra effort—and it can become a reality even in these days of fast food in the car.

There are other activities, such as a game of "I love you more," a marathon of "knock-knock" jokes, or cuddling in a rocking chair that build family closeness. Shared traditions such as summer picnics, apple picking, and fall gardening add to the family security children learn to depend on. They also look forward to celebrations that roll around once a year such as birthdays and holidays. No time for albums? That's understandable, but capture as many memories as you can with pictures. They extend family memories and are excellent for conversation starters.

Bedtime Is Prime Time

Believe it or not, bedtime can be peaceful and is a great time for family closeness. Separating from parents at night is not much fun for kids—it's understandable that they'd rather stay up with you. To make it easier, create a routine and a ritual. Baths and books seem to go together perfectly and calm even the most active child. These two activities offer a transition between play and winding down for a good night's sleep. Try to schedule bedtime for the same time each night. End the day just like it started, with hugs and kisses. It's comforting for children to know that at home some things never change.

Ties That Bind

It takes a lot of effort to plan playdates and keep the peace! If you've ever wondered whether it's worth all the effort, the latest research suggests that

it is. Building friendships during toddler and preschool years gives children the skills needed for dealing with siblings and, later, classmates. Families play an important role in providing time and space for family friends and extended family members too.



Bring On The Memories!



PERSONAL PARENTING

Corny Corn Muffins

Bring everyone to the dinner table with a bowl of hot chili and these delicious, nutritious corn muffins. Children can help make them!

- 1 1/4 cups cornmeal
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 1/4 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 teaspoon hot-pepper sauce
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup shredded pepper-jack cheese

(about 4 ounces)

- 1 cup fresh corn kernels

Heat the oven to 425°F. Coat 2 mini-muffin pans with nonstick cooking spray. Blend the cornmeal, flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder in a large bowl. In a small bowl, stir together the eggs, oil, hot-pepper sauce, milk, 1/2 cup of the cheese and the corn. Stir the liquid mixture into the cornmeal mixture just until the dry ingredients are moistened. Divide evenly among the mini-muffin cups. Sprinkle the muffins evenly with the remaining cheese. Bake for 15 to 17 minutes.

Organic Playdough Fun

Playdough is always at the top of the list when it comes to fun things for children. But sometimes children are sensitive to commercial playdough if it contains artificial colors, gluten, soy, and other ingredients. *Bluedominoes* has developed organic, natural activity dough that is perfect for little hands. Check out their website: www.bluedominoes.com

What's in a Name?

Out of thousands of names, does your child know how you picked the perfect one?

Share the story: Maybe your child was named after a family member. Maybe everyone in the family has a name that begins with the same letter. After you share the story, play some of these name games.

Common names: How many people can you think of who have the same name?

Choose a name: If your child could choose a different name, what would it be?

Perfect pet names: What's a perfect name for a snake, a dog, a cat, and ... a dragon ?

Hand Washing 101

Regular hand washing is your child's best defense against those nasty old germs that unfortunately cling to little hands that pick up and touch lots of interesting things.



Make hand washing a habit: ✓ Teach kids to wash their hands before and after they eat, after they use the potty, and whenever they come home from an outing. ✓ Use water and soap: Kids often want to rinse their hands quickly, but that isn't enough.

Lather up and wash hands for about 20 seconds to the tune of the ABC song. ✓

Dry hands on a clean towel ✓ Have a backup plan. If you're not near a sink use hand-sanitizing gel or wipes.

What Do Babies See?

Babies at birth are able to distinguish between colors, but they prefer to look at things with contrasting colors such as black and white or red and yellow. Newborns can't distinguish between subtle shades such as pastels, but that changes at around 4 months.



My name is
Dudley





Communicating With Children

Children communicate from the very beginning and not always with words. Babies cry, coo, snuggle, arch their backs, make eye contact, or look away. Toddlers use a combination of body language like pointing and gesturing before they learn to use single words or short sentences. Preschoolers begin to speak in complete sentences that are mostly grammatically correct. And they begin to connect the spoken word with the written word. School-age children speak much like adults. They ask more questions and begin to talk and play with peers more. When parents want to communicate with their children effectively, they need to keep a few things in mind such as the age of their child and communication styles. Researchers agree that lots of positive child-parent communication and interaction builds a foundation for effective communication that helps in all walks of life—from family to friends to colleagues. Why spend a lot of valuable time nagging, shouting, demanding, or threatening when it doesn't work? Practice and incorporate a few of these communication tools into your daily life.

Remember, timing is everything: When you have important things to discuss, choose a time when everyone is fed and well rested. Make

sure you don't feel rushed to move on to a different topic.

Make eye contact:

Look children in the eyes when you speak to them. Get on their level by stooping or sitting as often as you can. Speaking or yelling from across the room is ineffective with young children—they're usually focused on what they're doing, so it's important to get their attention first and then deliver the message.

Brush up on your listening skills:

Effective listening is one of the best things parents can do to improve communication. It takes practice, but it's a skill that can be mastered, and it's worth it. When children are listened to, they know you're interested and they tend to share more. Put down the newspaper and turn off the television—children know when your attention is focused elsewhere.

Validate feelings: Don't you feel better when someone says they understand? It's the same with kids. If they say, "I'm afraid of the dog across the street," say something like, "I know that dog has a very loud bark. Maybe we can get to know him better."

Restate and clarify: It's easy to misunderstand what another person is saying. Young children need a little time to organize their thoughts and get all of the words to line up and make sense. It's often helpful to restate what you thought you heard them say.

Steps To

Effective Communication:

- Get on your child's eye level when possible.
- Provide a parent prompt. "Tell me more . . ."
- Reduce noise and other distractions.
- Use words that your child understands.
- Make sure you have your child's attention *before* you begin to speak.
- Give your child enough time to respond.

Make Communication FUN

Questions that allow for more than one answer help children feel confident. They encourage problem-solving and stimulate interesting discussions

Open-ended Questions:

- Where do you think that bird is flying?*
- What's your favorite color?*
- Why do you think the dog is barking?*
- If you ran out of paper, what could you write on?*