



Getting Involved With Your Children

Put on a happy face. At the end of a busy day your feet may hurt and your head may pound, but when your youngsters come running to you full of enthusiasm about something at school, put on a smile and match their excitement. When you put them off with, “Later, later,” their joy in the accomplishment disappears.

Table talk. Talk about what your children are learning in school while at the table eating supper. After the meal is finished, pass around any papers they’ve brought home for everyone to discuss and admire.

Don’t stow it, show it! Instead of stowing school papers and artwork in a forgotten drawer, show it off. Use a wall, the refrigerator door, or a bulletin board for the display. Take a minute now and then to look at the changing displays with each child and talk about how proud you are of the work that’s exhibited. When papers are taken down from the bulletin board, preserve in a special folder for periodic review.

Change “What did you get?” to “What did you learn?” When tests and reports come home, take the emphasis off the grades and focus instead on the information and skills they learned by doing the work. Give children a chance to show what they know by asking simple questions about the subject. Increase your children’s knowledge by sharing anything you know about the topic, or by looking it up in an encyclopedia.

Talking texts. Ask your youngsters to read their textbooks to you while you fix dinner, sort laundry, or drive the car. Any text will do – a reader, a social studies book, even a math book. When they finish a section, discuss any questions the book presents in order to expand their comprehension of the ideas in the text.

Classroom chronicles. Children who get home before their parents can record descriptions of the school day on cassette tape, while events are still fresh in their minds. These Classroom Chronicles don’t replace the time you spend with your children, but rather serve as springboards for discussion when you listen to them with your children later in the evening.

Family merry-go-round. When you ask “What happened in school today,” and get the answer, “Nothin’ much,” it’s time to hop on the Family Merry-Go-Round. Start a sentence that each person in the family must complete in turn. “The most surprising thing I learned today was...” “One of the things I did well today was...” The sentence merrily goes ‘round till everyone has shared their experiences.

“I can” cans. Give each child an empty juice can covered with contact paper and labeled “My ‘I CAN’ Can.” Whenever your children learn a new skill, be it academic, artistic, or athletic, write it on a piece of paper and stuff it in the can. Review the contents of the cans periodically, and watch your children’s self-esteem soar.

Make mistakes okay. When children can learn from their mistakes, instead of feeling discouraged by them, they are on the road to success. Make mistakes okay by talking about your own errors: “One mistake I made today was...” Encourage your youngsters to describe mistakes that they made, and then talk about solutions: “One way I can keep from making this mistake again is...”