

## Calling All Parents



March 2004

### CREATIVE FAMILY FUN TIME

#### Waiting? Enjoy Family Fun

Time is a precious commodity and most busy families never seem to have enough of it. Studies have also found that today's time is in smaller amounts and more frequent throughout the day as opposed to larger blocks of time people had thirty years ago.

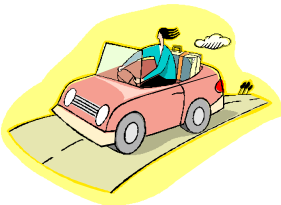
Dr. James E. Van Horn, professor of rural sociology, Penn State University says, "Spending time and doing things together with your children doesn't just happen. Parents must design their life so that time will be available."

Today's families frequently spend time together while waiting for appointments, traveling, shopping, at a restaurant, and at the supermarket. These times are usually short, unplanned, and many times are stressful with restless and bored children. Be prepared and take advantage of the times spent waiting to have some family fun. A little creativity can help parents avoid difficult and sometimes embarrassing situations.

The following strategies may help make the most of family times when waiting:

#### Traveling Tips:

- Develop an emergency bag of fun things to do in the car.
- Read the names of the county or states on license plates. (Identify plate numbers if your child is starting to read.)
- Play a game of twenty questions to guess where you are going on a fantasy trip.
- Play "I Spy" with colors or objects.



#### Supermarket Tips:

- Play the alphabet game in a supermarket using the first letter of a food, i.e.: a- apple, b- banana, c- corn, etc.
- Involve older children in the grocery shopping, finding items with coupons.
- Allow pre-schoolers to arrange items in the cart and find the items you're looking for.

#### Waiting for an Appointment Tips:

- Carry flash cards to practice while waiting for appointments.
- Pull questions from a board game to practice.
- Create a story by passing a pencil for each person to add to the story or discuss it out loud.

#### Restaurant Tips:

- Play connect-the-dots into squares on the back of a paper placemat or tray liner.
- Use sugar packets to play concentration by hiding a coin under the packets.
- Fold paper placemats in thirds and have each child draw one of the following on each placemat: a head, trunk, or the feet of an animal (mark the boundaries so each connects).

Remember to make the most of your family's time by capturing the opportunities and having fun at the same time. Together with your children, create your own fun ways to spend time while waiting. The next time you are waiting, your children will be ready for the bag of tricks, and you will discover that you have more family fun time than ever.

Source: Ohio State Extension



## PARENT CORNER

It's probably safe to say that nearly every parent in the United States experiences poverty of time. We need time to connect well with each child, time to tend relationships with our partners and our extended families, time to keep our households, time to sleep and eat, time to learn new things, and time to relax. And time has been taken from parents in drastic proportions over the last thirty years. But we are hard-pressed to meet our own needs and our children's. Thirty years ago, one employed parent could usually support a family of four. Today, it takes two parents working to support the average family of four. The work week for each of those parents averages 6 ½ hours longer than the work week of forty years ago. This amounts to six weeks of extra work days each year! It's no wonder we're under pressure!

There's no magic formula, but there may be a few practices that can help us to satisfy our needs to connect well, to relax and play, and to think about our children. Here are some ideas that parents have told us are helpful.

**Organize Help.** We have been trained to think of parenting as a one-or-two adult project. So when we get worn, we blame ourselves for our lack of energy rather than seeing that we are expecting ourselves to do a superhuman task. It's not work that is meant to be done in isolation. We need to identify the toughest times of our week, and experiment with setting up assistance at these times. Extended family members, neighbors, church or temple members, and teenagers in the neighborhood looking for work can be asked to do child care or errands or cooking.

**Build a Listening Partnership with another parent.** Make the commitment to tell someone what it's like for you, what your victories are and what is driving you up the wall, and then listen back so that parent gets listening time too. It's surprising what a difference this exchange of listening time makes.

**Lift some expectations.** Do you really have to have a clean house? Must you really fold the clothes? Is a hot meal at dinnertime really essential every night? It feels like, "Of course! What would people think? And me-how can I stand things being more undone than they are?!" When we're overloaded, we often keep working as though the sky will fall if we don't get it all done. We feel resentful, but don't move to change things to benefit our children or ourselves. So serving raw carrot sticks and peanut butter on toast for dinner (three food groups!), stuffing unfolded clothes into drawers or letting them sit in a pile in the corner (they're clean!), and vacuuming less (it just gets dirty again anyway!) are viable tactics with which to fight against the overload that so much work creates. Remember, as a parent, **you get to construct your own way of doing things.** Anything goes. You get to set your own priorities. There's no expectation that you can't question, no "right way" to run your household. Source: Parents Leadership Institute  
[www.parentleaders.org](http://www.parentleaders.org)

## KIDS IN THE KITCHEN

### Pizza Rolls

1 (11 oz) refrigerated soft bread sticks  
Pizza Sauce  
Grated Parmesan Cheese

Separate bread sticks and lay out flat. Spread a small amount of pizza sauce on top of each bread stick and sprinkle on cheese. Roll up bread sticks and place on a baking sheet sprayed with non-stick cooking spray. Bake at 350° for 14-16 minutes. Makes 8 rolls.

### Good-For-You Popsicles

Mix in blender:

8 oz. plain yogurt      2 or 3 bananas  
6 oz. frozen orange juice concentrate

Freeze in ice cube or popsicle trays.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### Clean little hands can help stop the spread of colds.

Children can sometimes unwittingly share more than crayons, pencils, and jump ropes. When grouped together at day care or school, children are likely to catch each other's chest colds and common bugs. But parents can teach their children a few simple tricks to keep such contagious illnesses at bay.

Proper hand-washing is the single most important step to take in preventing the spread of infectious diseases. Timing is also important to proper hand-washing. With a little soap and water, children can properly clean their hands in the amount of time it takes to sing the ABCs or Happy Birthday.

## FUN TIME PLAY TIME

### Fun things to do with your children in March

- Make a train out of your kitchen chairs. Cut scrap paper and sell tickets. All Aboard!
- Find something green in every room of the house.
- Eat something green.
- Play a game with all family members.
- Count the plants in your house.
- Exercise!
- Make green milkshakes or shamrock-shaped pancakes.
- Take a walk. Look for the early signs of spring.
- Tear pieces of bread and scatter in the snow. Feed the birds!
- Begin spring cleaning- involve the entire family.
- Celebrate National Ag Day. Talk about farm animals.

For information about the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service in Boone County, call 765-482-0750.

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