The Weekly Word

a resource for families ifapa Iowa Foster & Adoptive Parents Association

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5 SIMPLE WAYS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR TWEEN

From www.imperfectfamilies.com

Connecting with little kids often means getting on the floor to play Legos or Barbies. A game of chase or a quiet snuggle was just part of the daily routine.

Now your child is a tween and finding ways to connect seems to be less straightforward (and sometimes even awkward!).

The announcement: "I don't need you to walk me to the bus stop today, mom," catches you off guard.

On one hand, you love that he's getting older and more independent. On the other hand, you are not quite ready to let him go. How do you keep the relationship strong when he seems to be pulling away?

Rest assured your child still needs – and wants – you in their life. But, that might mean changing the way you connect.

Don't panic.

How you handle the everyday, ordinary, interactions with your child can be the perfect chance to build a strong relationship that will last into the teen years, and beyond.

ORDINARY OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT WITH YOUR TWEEN:

***During transition times** – You may think that early morning snuggles and bedtime tuck-ins are a thing of the past, but many kids still cherish these times with their parents (even if they would never admit this to their friends). Make an effort to connect with your child before they leave for school, a hug, cuddle, eating breakfast together or leaving a note in their lunchbox can go a long way. Reading out loud together is still valuable for tweens and so is offering them time to talk about their day before they fall asleep.

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Brain Breaks: What You Need to Know

By Amanda Morin

At a Glance

- Taking brain breaks can make homework less frustrating for kids with learning and thinking differences.
- Brain breaks can include physical activities or relaxing, quiet activities.
- It's important to pre-plan brain breaks and set ground rules with your child.

Homework struggles are something most parents and kids can relate to. But many kids with learning and thinking differences have these struggles every day. Their issues can make homework extra frustrating and harder to get through.

Brain breaks during homework or lengthy chores can help relieve that frustration. They can also help kids learn to self-regulate and self-monitor when they're getting fed up or losing track of what they're doing.

That's especially helpful for kids with executive functioning issues. But it's good for all kids to know how to refresh and refocus when homework gets tough.

Learn more about brain break activities and what might work for your child.

What Is a Brain Break?

A brain break is just what it sounds like—a break from whatever kids are focusing on. Short brain breaks during work time have been shown to have real benefits. They reduce stress and frustration and increase attention and productivity.

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Conscious Discipline (CD) for Parents: How Do I Respond When Other Children Are Being Mean to Mine?

Posted on July 28, 2017 by Amanda Bagwell

"Sometimes when we are around family members or friends who do not have consistent behavior expectations for their children, their child has a tendency to be mean to my child. My first reaction is for "Mama Bear" to come out and jump all over that child. Usually though, I do nothing. What would be an appropriate and helpful way to respond to this type of behavior with other people's children?"

BREATHE. As always, the first step to handling difficult behaviors is to pause and breathe. The skill of composure helps us to turn off the negative responses to our situations and refocus our energy in a positive direction. Take a moment to breathe deeply and calm yourself before responding to the situation.

ATTRIBUTE POSITIVE INTENT. When someone else's child acts in a hurtful way towards your child, stay in your place of calm and attribute positive intent to the misbehavior. You do this by saying to yourself something like, "Oops, they must not know how to use kind words," rather than "I can't believe they are acting like this…they should know better!" Positive intent helps you stay in a problem-solving state and helps you to offer those problem-solving skills to children. You can even demonstrate this skill to your child and the other child when you approach them about their behavior. While you might be tempted to ignore the behavior altogether, or choose a frustrated or angry response, instead begin with something like, "Oops! It looks like you may not know how to use helpful behavior. I will help you, so we can all stay safe." Remember to use a sincere tone, not a sarcastic one. This isn't a time for sarcasm or shaming, it's a time for teaching.

USE ASSERTIVE LANGUAGE. In Conscious Discipline, we learn that assertive language is the voice of no doubt…it is what it is. To practice an assertive voice, you can recite something like, "The sky is blue, the grass is green, you may not hit…hitting hurts." Using a formula like this helps to keep your tone from sounding passive or aggressive. Passive language would sound like, "Let's not hit, please." Please and thank you are polite words we use when someone does a favor for us. For example, "Could you please grab a bottle of water for me too?" Using the word "please" implies a question. The person you are speaking to can choose to respond with yes or no. When you are giving directions or relaying a behavior expectation to a child, you are simply stating what *is*.

You are not asking a question and their behavior is not a favor to you, it is an expectation. So, instead of, "Let's not push, please," use an assertive phrase like this, "You may not push. Pushing is not safe. You may use a helpful touch like this or you may keep your hands to yourself like this" and then demonstrate what "helpful touch" and "hands to yourself" look like. Also, avoid aggressive language and tone. An aggressive tone sounds loud and forceful, with the intent of talking "over" someone so that they have no choice but to listen. You can even deliver an assertive phrase in an aggressive tone. To avoid this, remember the formula from above. "The sky is blue, the grass is green, you may not hit…hitting hurts." Aggressive language comes as an angry response, with the intent to punish. Aggressive words may sound like, "Hey, you better stop it right now! Don't you dare push my child!" or "Quit being a brat! No one will play with you if you act like that!" Unlike passive or aggressive language, assertive language stays calm and helps facilitate problem solving.

YOU MAY, YOU MAY, YOU MAY NOT. A helpful phrase for using assertive language and setting limits is the "You may___, you may ___, you may not ___" formula. For example, if another child is pushing your child, you can use an assertive tone and set limits by saying, "You may use gentle touch like this (demonstrate), you may keep your hands to yourself like this (demonstrate), you may not push." Using this phrasing helps to paint a picture with your words and lets the child know exactly what the limits and expectations are.

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