



Spend Time with Kids or Grandkids

CHALLENGE

Each day
spend at least
30 minutes of
quality time with
a child.

Requirements to Complete this WELLNESS CHALLENGE

1. Read “Your kids need your attention,” “When you’re apart,” and “But I don’t have kids.”
2. Each day, spend at least 30 minutes of quality time with your kids, grandkids, nieces/nephews, or other important children.
3. To complete the Challenge, you must spend at least 30 minutes of quality time on at least 22 days. Use your monthly Wellness Challenge Calendar to keep track.
4. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

Your kids need your attention

With families juggling work, school, after-school activities, and religious and social commitments, it can be a challenge for parents and children to be in the same place at the same time – let alone spend quality time together. But what is quality time? “Quality time” is time spent doing an activity that is meaningful to both the parent and child; time when family members really get to know each other. Quality time means focusing on your children, listening to and sharing thoughts and feelings in an upbeat and useful way.

Ideas that work

Quality time can happen anywhere and at any time, and can vary in length from a few minutes to several hours, depending on the situation. Take advantage of one-on-one time that “just happens” as you are cooking, caring for a pet, or raking leaves. Some great parent-child talks take place in the car; while driving to soccer practice or the grocery store. It’s also nice to set aside specific family time.

Eat dinner together – with no distractions. Turn off the TV. Don’t answer the phone. Use the time to catch up on what your kids are doing and what they’re thinking. Conversation should be pleasant. Resist the urge to engage in debate or to chastise anyone for his or her activities.

Play together during a weekly family night. Popular activities include playing board games, solving puzzles, and playing ping pong, catch, or tag. Watching TV or a DVD in silence doesn’t count.

Exercise as a family. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily for most children. Walking fast, bicycling, jumping rope, dancing fast, and playing basketball are all good ways for your child to be active. It will be a lot more fun for them – and healthy for you – if you exercise together.

Do chores together. Spend productive time with your kids, and also help them transition to the adult world by teaching them responsibility and essential life skills. Here are some suggestions:

- Cook meals together
- You wash the dishes; they dry (or vice versa)
- Get their help carrying the trash or recycling to the curb together
- Help each other change the bed sheets
- Walk the dog together

Better your world. Do yard work for an elderly or ill friend or neighbor. Plant a flower garden – and maintain it together! This is a great opportunity to share your values with your child.





Read together. In addition to encouraging your child's interest in reading, it also gives you a chance to talk about what you have just read.

Seize the moments. If your child wants to tell you something, stop what you're doing and give your undivided attention. Your child's idea or need to share it may be gone in a matter of moments.

Learn together. You can pick a hobby (e.g., building a birdhouse or creating a hook rug) or sport (e.g., rollerblading or badminton). You can visit parks, libraries, the zoo, museums, and other places of interest. Invite your child's friends to come along sometimes. That way, you'll get to know them, too.

Spend time with each child, individually. If possible, establish a regular routine for doing something special with each child – even if it's just a few minutes of conversation while you're cleaning up after dinner or right before bedtime. To build an open and honest relationship, encourage each child to talk about what they like to do, their feelings and concerns, and how they feel about themselves. This will help to build an environment of trust and acceptance.

Hold regular family meetings at a mutually agreed upon time, such as the second Sunday of each month. Family meetings provide a forum for discussing triumphs, projects, and any topic of concern to a family member. Ground rules help. Everyone gets a chance to talk; one person talks at a time without interruption; everyone listens, and only positive, constructive feedback is allowed.

Create family traditions. Whether they are simple or extravagant, traditions help give a child a sense of stability and unity.

Show your love, appropriately.

Physical and emotional closeness is important in keeping the family functioning as a unit where everyone feels they are important and loved. Small children love to cuddle, hug, and kiss their parents. But this behavior may embarrass older children. Smiles and supportive words are beneficial at any age. Every day, tell your children: "I love you."

Communicate. Parents tend to "tell" kids – to lecture, sometimes yell. They often forget to listen to what children might have to say. If you don't listen to them, their friends will. If you talk openly and honestly with your kids and listen to their concerns, they will be more likely to come to you with questions. You may not always know the answers, but you can probably find information. Say something like, "That's a good question. We'll have to find out. Want to research it with me?"



Single parenting

You'll be more crunched for time as a single parent. It helps to know you're not alone. Friends and family love your child, too. When they offer their help, be sure to take it! Children benefit from good role models. And, they need input from both sexes. So, if you're a single mom, ask a positive and responsible male – such as an uncle or grandfather – to spend time with your child (and vice versa). If you don't have a family member or friend available, groups like Big Brothers/Big Sisters can help.

What traditions do you have as a family?

- "Family bed" snuggle time on Saturday mornings
- Table game night
- Holiday celebrations, such as surprising neighbors with flower baskets on May Day
- Camping or backpacking as a family
- A physical activity the whole family enjoys, such as dancing or skiing
- Reading books to each other
- A hot-chocolate-and-chili snow day
- Pizza the third Wednesday of each month
- Crêpes on Sundays
- Star gazing
- Letter writing
- Scrapbooks
- Volunteerism, such as litter patrol or helping with a favorite charity
- Prayer before bedtime
- Photography
- Bird watching or rock collecting
- Music appreciation, such as attending Youth Symphonies or joining a choir
- Charades or word games
- Family reunion barbecues
- Birthday parties
- Family projects, such as gardening or building a tree house
- Memorizing favorite quotes together
- Celebrating a special day from your heritage, such as:
 - Girl's Day (May 3) or Boy's Day (May 5), Japanese
 - 15th of August (middle of the summer holiday), Italian
 - The Feast of Purim (14th of the Hebrew month of Adar), Jewish



When you're apart...

Some parents rarely see their children because of divorce or other issues, such as work schedules. Children whose fathers are highly involved with them in a positive way do better in school, demonstrate better psychological well-being and lower levels of delinquency, and ultimately attain higher levels of education and economic self-sufficiency. The nurturing provided by a mother also contributes significantly to the child's development.

Here are some ways you can get to know your children and let them know you care:

- Leave affirming notes in unexpected places
- Call or text-message your child
- Send emails
- Send "thinking of you" and "you're a terrific kid" cards
- Attend their games and cheer for them
- Go to parent-teacher conferences
- Post their creative pieces (such as art work or poetry) in conspicuous places
- Take your child with you to work sometimes
- Let them know it's okay if they occasionally want to go to a friend's house instead of spend time with you
- Put aside your differences with your ex and work together for your child's best good



Grandparents are important

If you do have grandchildren, you can have a big impact. The grandparent-grandchild relationship is second in emotional importance only to the parent-child relationship. By talking with and listening to your grandchildren, you can influence their values and behavior. For example, this unique relationship between

grandparent and grandchild presents many opportunities to discuss the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

If you live close, try to do something special with your grandchildren weekly. You can teach them to jitterbug or waltz, bake bread, quilt, or build lawn furniture. Take your grandchildren camping or fishing. Read books you check out from the library. Tell them stories about when you or their parents were their age. Ask questions about what foods they like, who their friends are and why, how they spend their time, and what they might want to be when they grow up.

You can still be close to grandchildren who are far away. Learn to use email (if you don't know how already) – maybe even take a class to help you create your own family web page. Send pictures, homemade treats, and notes. Telephone just to say, "I love you!" By being active and involved, you are helping them develop positive attitudes about aging, teaching them about important traditions, and giving them a sense of belonging.

But I don't have kids at home...

If you don't have children at home, perhaps you have nieces or nephews you could "adopt." Ask your friends and neighbors if they know of a child who would benefit from your time and attention. Or, volunteer at a local school or in the children's division at your church. Become a Big Brother or Big Sister.



Sources:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – *Tips for spending time with your kids* <http://www.family.samhsa.gov/get/time.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – *Positive parenting tips* <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/PositiveParenting/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – *ABCs of Raising Kids: Steps to Staying Safe and Healthy.* <http://www.cdc.gov/women/kids/abc.htm>
- U.S. Government – *Resources for parents and grandparents* <http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Parents.shtml>





Spend Time with Kids or Grandkids

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record each day you spend at least 30 minutes with your kids.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you spent at least 30 minutes with your kids. You must meet this goal at least 22 days during the month to complete the Challenge.
4. Turn in your Wellness Challenge form if requested, or enter your completion of this Challenge on the Health Activity Tracker report for the month, if applicable. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

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MONTH: _____							WC = Wellness Challenge	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
WC [] ex. min. _____	WC [] ex. min. _____	WC [] ex. min. _____	WC [] ex. min. _____	WC [] ex. min. _____	WC [] ex. min. _____	WC [] ex. min. _____		
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_____ Number of days this month I spent 30+ minutes with a child

_____ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____

