

Special Time with Your Child



What is special time?

Special time is a simple, powerful way to strengthen your connection with your child. When life gets busy it can be challenging to slow down and find uninterrupted moments to spend with your child. Special time is spent one-on-one, free from outside distractions, phone calls, or siblings. It can

be as short as five minutes or as long as an hour, and should happen with regularity. Some families are able to accommodate special time daily with their children, while others engage in it a few times a week.

Why is special time important?

Special time is important because it helps build a strong, trusting relationship with your child. It reminds your child how important they are to you and that you enjoy spending time with them. Call it by your child's name "Beth time" or "Zach time". That will remind them that it's all about them.



Be clear about when Special Time starts and ends

When starting special time put all distractions away, set your phone to "do not disturb", and start a timer to give yourself and your child a clear time frame of uninterrupted engagement. Be clear with your child about how long the special time will last and give them several warnings when it is almost time to be done. Anticipate that your child may be upset when it's over so it is important to validate their feelings and remind them about when the next special time is.

Children feel connected

When your child can count on special time with you they feel connected to you and, therefore, often feel less inclined to misbehave as a mistaken way to find belonging and significance. After special time, you may notice that your child is more affectionate with you, follows directions more easily, or opens up to you in a way that they hadn't previously. They



also may get upset in a way that they haven't before. That is your child's way of showing you that they trust you and are willing to express emotions in a way that they hadn't before.

Let your child choose

Let your child decide how they want to spend their special time with you (as long as it is reasonable and safe). We suggest special time does not include screen time or reading but rather is focused on collaborative play. Resist the urge to make suggestions or steer them towards an activity that you enjoy, but give them choices if they are unsure what their options are. Possible choices could be to build with them, engage in dramatic play, or chase them around outside. Special time is an opportunity to allow your child to do something they aren't usually allowed to do (like jumping off a chair onto their bed or building a ramp to jump over on their bike). Consider that with your supervision they can safely engage in the activity. If they are able to do it during special time with you they will be less likely to try it when you aren't there.

Additional Resources

<https://www.ahaparenting.com/blog/How To Special Time>

<https://www.positivediscipline.com/articles/schedule-special-time-connection>