

Are We Having Fun Yet?

Finding time to play with my kids can be really hard!

Do not feel bad if you are not just THRILLED with the idea of FAMILY FUN TIME. Some parents HATE playing – that is just a fact. Other parents enjoy playing, but feel like they have 100 other things they should be doing. These are normal feelings – don't feel bad about them!

Why is playing with my children so important?

Family Fun Time can help your family to:

- Know each other better.
- Feel more connected to each other.
- Decrease stress in your home.

Children who feel like their parents really know them and like to spend time playing with them are more likely to:

- Make friends
- Do well in school
- Follow their parent's rules (most of the time).

Sounds good, yes?

How do I have fun with my family?

Make a list of activities that you both enjoy – or can at least tolerate.

Some parents hate board games, but love art activities. Some parents love playing catch but can't stand dancing. Find activities that you both enjoy. Think of what you loved doing as a kid and try to build on that.

Pick a time. Pick a few times a day that you spend listening to and playing with your child. Make it part of the routine.

Build up your time. Start with 3 minutes twice a day and slowly build up to a time that feels good to you.

Don't out-do your child. Sometimes when parents play with children, they completely take over the activity!!!! This can hard on children's self-esteem. Try to match what your child is doing. If your child is building a 3-block tower – you build a 3-block tower – not a castle. If your child is scribbling with a blue marker – you scribble with a



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purple marker.

Give warnings to let the child know when fun time is close to being over. Say, “We can build one more block tower and then I need to stop.” Or “We can throw the ball 3 more times and then it is time to go in.”

Stop while you are still having fun. Remember – it is better to play for 3 minutes and have a really good time and stop while you are still having fun. Stop BEFORE frustration or boredom sends the board game flying across the room!

Grumbling is part of playtime. No child wants to stop having fun -- so don't be surprised if your child is angry or frustrated when play time is over. This can be hard on parents who are thinking, “Gosh, I just spent 15 minutes playing with this child and he isn't even grateful.” Think of grumbling at the end of playtime as just part of the activity. Kids have to learn that good times end and how to move into another activity and you are coaching them on this skill.

Daily Reminder: Make time to have fun with your children. It will pay off in a 100 different ways and is worth every minute.

For more tips, or if you need more information or would like to talk to someone:

In Washington State: Call the Family Help Line at 1-800-932-HOPE

Outside of Washington State: contact your local Circle of Parents agency at

www.circleofparents.org