Safe kids Healthy kids Happy kids

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Got A Minute? Give It To Your Kid.

Ten tactics other parents have used to stay involved in their child's life.

- **Schedule time for you and your child.** Plan for it, like you might a business meeting. Write an appointment with your child on your calendar. Most importantly: Hold yourself to it. Even scheduling a short time–say, 10 minutes–can show your child he or she is important.

- **Catch your child doing something right.** We often focus on the bad things our kids do. When your child does something right, offer a compliment. This encourages good behavior and keeps the communication lines open.

- **Prove you are listening: Ask questions.** Pretending to listen is easy. Really listening is tougher. You have to pay attention and ask follow-up questions. If you rarely listen to your child when he or she wants to talk, your child will be less likely to open up when **you** really want to connect.

- **Create rules, then enforce them.** Rules are the boundaries that every kid needs. Say *yes* when you can, but make *no* stick.Set only the rules you intend to enforce.No follow-up to breaking a rule creates confusion.

- **Post a family calendar.** Keep your family connected. Write everything down: soccer practice, haircuts, work schedule, family outing to the park. In this way, you can better monitor your child's plans as he or she gets older and more independent. In the meantime, your child will feel more connected to you simply by knowing where you are.

- **Regularly share a meal.** Not everybody has the luxury of eating a regular meal with his or her child. If you do, take advantage of it. Kids who report eating meals with their family are less likely to smoke or use drugs. Even if you cannot always eat together, maybe you can find a few days a week when you can. It will help you to catch up with each another. One other suggestion: Turn off the TV. Talk instead.

- **Share your day.** Every parent has heard it: "How's your day?," the parent asks. "Fine," the child responds. Then silence. One way to help your child open up is to share a brief story about your day first, especially if you saw something funny.

- **Write your child a thank-you note.** Some kids say they know their parents care when they get thank-you notes left at the dinner table, stuck in a book, or slipped under a pillow. You do not need to thank your child for anything really big. It can be for setting the table, helping a friend, or saying something nice.

- **Ask him for advice.** Sure, you may not consult your child about approaching your boss or refinancing your home. But there are smaller issues where your child will appreciate being asked for input. What to wear to a school event or where to position the television are two examples. It shows you value their opinion, especially if you follow the advice.

- **Give your child family responsibilities.** Assign a chore that helps the whole family. It can be to organize your home, recycle, or care for the dog. You are saying you trust him. This allows him to feel more "adult"

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.
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