

Special Time for Parent and Child

Have you ever heard the sayings “Connection before correction” or “You need a relationship before you give a child rules”? These concepts are very important, especially when a child is sullen, angry and acting out, or defiant with a parent. Taking this time with your child is especially important when there are times of transition such as a new baby sibling, parent re-marriage, sibling discord. It has been amazing to witness changes in entire families once this is successfully implemented. Once your child feels they have a connection or bond with you, they become interested in ‘not blowing it’.

Special time is:

- Allowing your child to pick the activity you do together, as long as it is social in nature, and costs are minimal and doable.
- Spending ‘neutral’ time with your child.
- Keeping questions to a minimum and following your child’s lead.
- No lecturing, criticizing or bringing up past experience or future expectations.
- Staying in the moment with your child, reflecting and guessing what they may be feeling during any given moment: “Wow! You are really proud of yourself for figuring that out!”; staying neutral with comments and avoiding any judgmental remarks. Georgia DeGangi describes this as a “verbal mirror”, a very important way a child not only learns words that describe how they feel, it enhances the parent-child attunement, and allows the child to feel understood.

When there is a lot of anger, this may take time and could even get worse before it gets better; for example, a child may question if the parent is genuine in their effort to build a relationship. I think you will be amazed with the decrease in attitude and behaviors if you can manage even 5 to 10 minutes per day.

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