

Family Connection Initiatives

The most important person in a child's life is their parent. Children look to their parents not only for guidance and support, but also as someone they can interact with in a fun and playful way. Play is actually the easiest and most enjoyable activity parents can do with their children, and results in a happy and confident child, as well as a pleased and content parent. Today's families often appear stressed and busy, and rely heavily on technologies such as TV, video games, tablets and cell phones to serve as entertainment for the child, and an "escape" for the parent. Technology is also often used by many parents as a "soother" or used as a reward if their child appears upset. As parents connect more and more to their own technologies, they are disconnecting from their children, and as a result, many children are forming unhealthy relationships and addictions to technology. Disconnecting from technology, and reconnecting to each other is never going to be an easy task, but can be a lot of fun if that's what you make it!

The following play ideas will help families as they explore different ways of interacting and connecting with each other. Parents should not take control of this process, but rather offer suggestions if children asks questions or indicate they are unsure of how to play the game.

- 1) **Follow the leader.** Leader acts out movements or activity for 1-2 minutes, and everyone has to follow their lead. Could involve a series of exercises or just running through the house.
- 2) **Listening Game.** One family member says something, and next in line repeats exactly what the first person says, and so on, and so on. Continue until everyone has had a chance to start the listening game.
- 3) **Hide and Seek.** Rotate seeker until everyone has a chance. Team up to support younger children.
- 4) **Wrestling Night.** Dad or Mom assumes 4 point kneeling position e.g. on hands and knees, and child tries to get them onto their backs for count of ten.
- 5) **Couch Forts.** Use couch cushions and blankets to make a fort. Can combine with making a tent over the kitchen/dining table.
- 6) **One Chore per Day.** Children like to help out, and feel they are an integral part of the family pack. Everyone decides on one chore they do every day, and make sure the child knows their chore ensures their family's survival.
- 7) **Dinner Talk.** To get conversation going at the table, every family member shares one good thing and one bad thing that happened to them that day.
- 8) **Bring on the games!** Board games, cards, reading, arts and crafts, building tree forts, cooking, dancing, and even chores such as cleaning rooms together can be a fun and bonding experience. Pick one night per week for board game night.
- 9) **Family theme nights** can be a fun way to connect with your children e.g. Monday is baking cookies night, Tuesday swimming, Wednesday go to the park. Assign a short family activity for each night this week, and discuss continuing throughout Tech Talks.
- 10) **Prohibit technology** from the car, an hour before bed, and during dinner prep/eat/clean-up, or meals in restaurants, and replace with a structured activity.

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