How To Spend Special Quality Time With Your Toddler

Created by Sharon Mary @connectingparentandchild

In The Ultimate Toddler Parenting Course, you learnt how important it is to have connection rituals that fill your child's cup with love.

Special Time is a way to find at least 10-20 minutes in a day to give your child undivided attention to heal the upset & disconnections that build up during the day.

What Research Says:

- Children are less likely to have behavioral issues at home or at school when parents spend quality time with them.
- They are less likely to involve in risky behaviors like alcohol or drugs.
- They are more likely to be physically healthy.

Plus, how it deepens your bond & connection with your child – is a reason good enough to start doing 'Special Time' with your toddler.

When they feel connected, they don't have to resort to negative behaviors to seek our attention & connection. That's the bonus!

Are you ready?

Here's How You Can Do Special Time With Your Toddler, Starting Today!

1. *Plan in advance:*
   Chalk out a time during the day, say before office work, after office work, after all chores in the evening, – when you can regularly (preferably daily) spend a minimum of 10 minutes with your toddler. You can gradually increase the amount of time, if you need to.

2. *Announce that you want to have a special time with your child:*
   Inform your child in simple words with timestamps, "From today, everyday after lunch, I'm going to spend 10 minutes playing with you!" . Give the time a special name like "Mama – (Your child's name) Time" , you could invite them to suggest some names, to make it even more special.

3. *Commit your undivided attention:*
   In my experience, this is the toughest part – to be mentally & emotionally PRESENT in the moment with your child. It requires us to remove any & every sort of physical distractions like the phone, plus more importantly, erasing the mental to-do list & random thoughts that prevent us from being fully present. It requires consistent effort & practice! So hang in there!

4. *Allow your child to lead the play activity:*
   Have NO AGENDA during Special Time. All day, toddlers are being told what to do. Special Time is when you listen, observe & participate as your toddler takes the lead! You don't have to teach, instruct or correct them.
   Say "I'm all yours for the next 10 minutes" and then - They are the Director, You're the Actor! Just go with the flow.

5. *Don't structure Special Time:*
   Experts suggest that Special Time is most effective when it involves fun, play, physical activity, laughs & giggles – that help channel & release your child's pent-up emotional energy. So, it's best to park structured activities like reading, puzzles & quieter activities for a different time, and use Special Time for roughhousing & physical play.

   If your child insists on structured activities during Special Time – you can decide alternate days for you & your toddler to pick the activity for Special Time. When it's your day to choose – pick activities that involve physical play like running, jumping, dance, cuddling, hugging, giggling. Even when you pick the activities – make sure your toddler gets a chance to take lead & call the shots within the game.

6. *End special time when the time buzzes:*
   Special time needs boundaries too. While your toddler might love to spend time with you the WHOLE day, it might not be practically possible for you.

   A timer is the good way to indicate when Special Time would end. Your toddler might have strong reactions when the timer rings. It's normal, natural & a sign of how much they cherish the time they spend with you. So, do ensure that you acknowledge their feelings & remind them that we can spend more time together again tomorrow.

   "I know it's so hard to stop playing. You love playing with me. I love playing with you too. We're having so much fun. I wish this time would never end."
   (Let their emotions flow).
   "We'll have more of this fun time tomorrow! I'm so excited. What do you want to play then?"

7. *Be aware that your child's emotions will bubble up during special time:*
   Since your child senses your physical & emotional availability during Special Time, they will find a safe space in you to let out their pent-up emotions. So, while you might expect it to be all fun & play, be prepared for some meltdowns which might make no sense in the moment. Consider their meltdown as detoxification, & provide your child with the empathy & warmth they need in the moment.

8. *Adapt & Improvize as you go* – As you do Special Time consistently, you'll realize what works & what doesn't – and accordingly you might need to make adjustments to WHEN you do Special Time, WHAT you do during that time, HOW you participate when your child takes lead & so on.

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By Sharon Mary

Only For Parents Enrolled in The Ultimate Toddler Parenting Course

Reference:

- Article on Aha Parenting by Dr. Laura Markham
- Article on Hand In Hand Parenting