

# Quality Time with Children

For children, love is often spelled T-I-M-E. Spending quality time with your child can not only show your love to him or her, but also help him or her through the difficult time of divorce, and even help protect him or her from some of the damaging effects of divorce in the short and long-term, including mental health problems and problems in social functioning (Clark, 2013). Quality time with children during the process of divorce can help your child feel loved and cared for, which can overpower feelings of abandonment that can set in for children with divorcing parents.

Quality time is quite a large, encompassing phrase; it can include any positive interaction between parent and child. It can be short or long in duration at a time, but should occur very often. Any time can become quality time. Here are 19 pointers on how to help make more of your time with your child become quality time:

1. Spend one-on-one time with your child. If you have more than one child, spend one-on-one time with each child.
2. Spend time with your child doing things that your child is interested in. As a parent, your responsibility is to meet the needs of your child. It is not your child's job to meet your needs. Be sure to focus on your child. Parents who make more opportunities to engage in leisure activities with their children can help improve children's emotional well-being (Offer, 2014).
3. Work to be present and in the best emotional place you can, when spending time with your child. It might seem counter-intuitive, but if you take time to care for yourself first, you will be in a much better place to be present for your child. If you are feeling stressed or other difficult emotions, utilize mindfulness meditation and other healthy coping strategies so that you can get yourself to a place where you can be present for your child, not just physically, but emotionally too.
4. Make sure that you do activities with your child that allow you to actively listen and talk with your child. This helps you show respect for your child and helps your child feel how much you care (Siegel & Hartzell, 2004).
5. Do not forget to use time in the car together to talk and listen.
6. As appropriate, have your child help you make dinner and work on other projects you are doing. Talk with your child during this time.
7. Connect on a daily basis with your child. Do not let a day go by without spending at least a few moments of connection time with your child. Put quality time with your child into your schedule. Establish family routines.

- You might consider scheduling time together in your daily morning and evening routines and weekly routines.
8. Eat together sitting at the table. Research over decades shows that eating together regularly helps parents connect with children and decrease children's stress levels (Offer, 2013). The more you can do it, the better.
  9. Go on a walk or drive together.
  10. Tuck your child in at night, and have a bed time talk or story.
  11. Do activities and play games together. These may include sports, board games, puzzles, etc.
  12. Read together.
  13. Laugh together. Watch or read something funny together. Tell your child if you have any funny moments during the day (that are appropriate of course!). This will help decrease both your child's and your stress levels.
  14. You may schedule a time during the week where you consistently spend time with your child doing a fun activity. For example, you could have pizza night on Fridays.
  15. If possible, go on a vacation together. It does not need to be extravagant. Just make sure that you do something enjoyable for both you and your child.
  16. Develop new traditions for celebrating birthdays and holidays and special occasions. With a change in the family structure, this can help your child know what to expect and have something to look forward to. Also, these new traditions can help you spend quality time together and make memories. Have your child help decide fun plans to do together.
  17. Ask your child to teach you something or to share about his/her interests.
  18. Volunteer together. Do a service project for someone else.
  19. Tell your child that you love them often.

Quality time will help you strengthen the parent-child relationship, which helps you show your child love. Most importantly, quality time shows the most important message that parents can give their children: enduring love. Having a strong parent-child relationship can protect your child from some short and long-term damaging effects of divorce and can help promote resiliency in your child (Clark, 2013). Quality time can help your child learn that he or she is worthy of love and belonging, which will help him or her to have love and belonging throughout his/her life.

## References

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