



Strategies for Busy Dads to Stay Connected To Busy Kids

"Can I stay connected to my kids and maintain peak performance at work? How do I create quality moments with my children during seasons of extreme workplace demands on my time?" These and other thoughts often occupy the hearts and minds of busy dads – and parents in general – who deeply value their success in the marketplace and home.

Research indicates that dads play a very important role in the healthy development of their children. Kids from father-involved homes are less likely to commit crimes, become involved in drugs, or participate in other destructive lifestyle behavior. More importantly, kids with involved fathers are more likely to excel in school, resist negative peer pressure and reach their life goals. Studies also indicate that fathers spend less than one hour of real interaction with children on daily basis. "So how can very busy dads ensure these positive things happen for their kids on a very limited "time-budget"?"

In our fast pace culture, it is common for dads to feel a very limited connection to their children. With workplace commitments which often require overnight travel, weekend retreats or meetings, and other community involvement demands that take dads away from home, it is no wonder that any sort of genuine father and child relationship exist. It is easy to miss those soccer games or dance recitals. Even important events such as PTA meetings can slip by your radar. These events and other crucial "child check-in" moments do not reach the schedule on your BlackBerry.

Kids are busy too. Many Kids are loaded with time in school for 6 hours—or more--a day and involvement in after-school clubs and activities. Friday and weekend events such as sleep-overs, sports games, Hannah Montana concerts, and the like take up their time as well. Dads and kids become like two SUVs (Sports Utility Vehicles) passing in the night of a street called home. Family meals are often not the norm or convenient. Everyone eats on the run. When family meals do occur, communication is not at the table but to friends via text-messaging or emails. We are physically present but socially absent.

In the spirit of globalism, many companies not only require out of state travel but international travel is becoming more common as a prerequisite for moving up the ladder. Dads who want to provide a better life for their families take the extra trip--or just simply fulfill workplace requirements—and head off to the booming global market to make that major business deal that will provide financial security for their family. This is noble and understandable. Unfortunately, the end result too often is that our financial portfolios go up but our family relationships depreciate. This does not have to be the outcome.

And so the story goes for dads, one day we realize that while we have gained the accolades of success from our employer, our profession, and even our community, the reality is not the same at home. No amount of success at work can compensate for failure in the home.

Many dads are really trying to juggle it all and make it all happen; however, this requires support and tools.

The good news is that there are tool and answers. And the answers and tools do not require a lot of effort or time. Here are a few tips to help you stay connected to your children and maintain your responsibilities in a busy and fast paced world:

- **Send text messages to your children often throughout the day to let them know that you are thinking about them**
- **Send pictures (via text cell phone, email, or postcard) of your travel location to your child(ren) when you are on a business trips**
- **Plant surprise notes under the pillow(s) of your child(ren)**
- **Initiate a special weekly or monthly family time where each child alternates in deciding the activity and meal for the designated time period**
- **On occasion, initiate spontaneous family time events such as going out for pancakes on a school night or an early weekend morning**
- **Place special notes in your child's lunch box or container when and where possible**
- **Place a special note in your child's locker at school when and where possible**
- **Draw a special picture for your child(ren) regardless of your talent (It's your love and effort that matters and not your talent)**
- **Make birthdays very special with the entire day being devoted to the birthday child and go through great effort to plan this day as a family**
- **Look for ways to improve your parenting knowledge and skills. You can visit National Fatherhood Initiative's on-line resource center at www.fatherhood.org to find great skill-building tools for dads**
- **Spend time with your children and their friends to learn who and what is influencing your child.**

Our time to directly impact the lives of our children is limited. The eighteen years go by so quickly. As we live in this world of technological upgrade, let's make a decision to upgrade our relationship with our children. Success on Wall Street and Sesame Street are possible if we just assess our priorities and make every moment at home count. If we ever forget those priorities, it does us good to remember the immortal words to that song we all know as The Cat and the Cradle..."we're gonna get together dad soon..."

Ron J. Clark is a national conference speaker, consultant, writer on manhood and fatherhood issues. He is cited in numerous fatherhood and family services articles and research reports. For more information, please forward your emails to ronjclark@aol.com or call (757) 344-5685. You may also visit his website at www.responsiblefatherhood.org