

Some Quiet Time

I can't believe it's already June! It's time to talk about "time" again. Summer does seem like it still has, at least, the possibility of being a little less scheduled, a little less frantic. So now might be the perfect time to think about "doing nothing". I know, I know, everyone is very busy and there's so much that needs to be done. But everyone needs a break from their hectic routine and the ever-present schedules, and as parents, you are the only ones who can make that happen in your family.

Again, we have to live in the time and culture we live in. There are work schedules and child care demands and all kinds of activities for your children. But children and adults also need time – time when nothing is scheduled, time when they are free to make their own choices, time to be alone with their thoughts and dreams. It's up to parents to make sure open, unscheduled time is available for children.

Why is this important for children – and for us as adults? Erich Fromm, the famous psychotherapist, said: "Productive work, love and thought are possible only if the person can be, when necessary, quiet and alone." When you think about it, "quiet and alone" is not a place we find ourselves very often in our everyday lives. We as a society are pretty much surrounded by sound and activity and so are our children. Most of us have either the radio, TV, phone or computer on most of our waking hours. We are constantly bombarded by information and we have no time to think about that information. We are constantly busy with all we have to do and we have no time to reflect on what we have done. We may have actually forgotten how to be alone and quiet. So what can we do?

Maybe the first thing to do is to decide for ourselves whether we actually do value being quiet and alone. I can't tell you how many times I've heard parents say (and have said myself) "I sure could use a little time alone." But how often do we take that time? If you do decide that some quiet time alone is important for good mental health, then you have to **make** the time for it. So, tell your family you're going to take 15 minutes each day to be quiet and alone. Go to your room or out in the yard and sit and be still. If you have a baby or children who are too little to be by themselves for 15 minutes, use their nap time for your quiet time. Model for your children that this **is** a valuable way to spend time. Then encourage them whenever you see them take time to just be still with their own thoughts. Resist the urge to tell them to go "do something." As Robert Coles says in *The Moral Intelligence of Children*, "Again and again, I have come to realize that even preschool children are constantly trying to comprehend how they should think about this gift of life given them, (and) what they should do with it." Children do need time to think and reflect and they need us to support them in learning how to be quiet and reflective. Summer seems like a good time to try.

Turn down the volume, slow down the pace and have a wonderful summer!