



Families ... generations of strength

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Waiting? Have Some Family Fun Times

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Time is a precious commodity and most busy families never seem to have enough of it. A recent study by James P. Robinson, sociology professor at the University of Maryland, concluded that Americans actually have more time today than they had thirty years ago. The study also found that today's time is in smaller amounts and more frequent throughout the day as opposed to larger blocks of time people had thirty years ago.

Dr. James E. Van Horn, professor of rural sociology, Penn State University says, "Spending time and doing things together with your children doesn't just happen. Parents must design their life so that time will be available." Today's families frequently spend time together while waiting for appointments, traveling, shopping, at a restaurant, and at the supermarket. These times are usually short, unplanned, and many times are stressful with restless and bored children. Be prepared and take advantage of the times spent waiting to have some family fun time. A little creativity can help parents avoid difficult and sometimes embarrassing situations.

The following strategies may help make the most of family times when waiting:

Traveling tips:

- develop an emergency bag of fun things to do in the car
- read the names of the county or states on license plates
- play a game of twenty questions to guess where you are going on a fantasy trip

Supermarket tips:

- play the alphabet game in a supermarket using the first letter of a food, i.e.: a - apple, b - banana, c - corn, etc.

- involve older children in the grocery shopping finding items with coupons
- find the cheapest and most expensive juice and figure the price difference

Waiting for an appointment tips:

- carry flash cards to practice while waiting for appointments
- pull questions from a board game to practice
- create a story by passing a pencil for each person to add to the story

Restaurant tips:

- play connect-the-dots into squares on the back of a paper placemat or tray liner
- use sugar packets to play concentration by hiding a coin under the packets
- fold paper placemats in thirds and have each child draw one of the following on each placemat: a head, trunk, or the feet of an animal (mark the boundaries so each connects)

Remember to make the most of your family's time by capturing the opportunities and having fun at the same time. Together with your children create your own fun ways to spend time while waiting with your children. The next time you are waiting, your children will be ready for the bag of tricks, and you will discover that you have more family fun time than ever.

VanHorn, James E., Design Time Together, Penpages Document: 285071888, 12/3/96.