

August 2012

Kindred *Spirits*

Quality Parenting Time Important

Children Benefit from Dad's Attention

Dads and Work

Working long hours is a struggle for many dads, especially in today's economy. A study found that fathers who worked long hours spent less time with their children.

This may sound obvious; however, moms working long hours still manage to spend the same amount of time with their kids.

A researcher found that fathers with higher incomes spend less time with their kids but tended to be more affectionate when they were around.

Most married couples these days fully expect to share the daily physical and emotional care of their children and the responsibilities of childrearing. According to Saralee Jamieson, MU Extension human development specialist, "Research has shown that men as well as women are nurturing and want to feel emotionally connected to their children throughout life."

Studies have also found that the things dads do differently have a positive impact on children. For example:

- ◆ Mothers tend to pick up their infants (usually to care for them) in the same way over and over. Fathers pick up children to do something with them and pick them up differently each time.
- ◆ Dads tend to make everyday activities like bathing and dressing more physical and playful than some mothers would like, but babies love this kind of interaction.
- ◆ Dads tend to support novelty-seeking behavior by encouraging their kids to explore the world around

them more vigorously than mothers do. Men are also more likely to let their kids master tasks on their own before they offer help.

As with moms, what fathers do, how they do it and, probably most important, how they are with their children matters more than how *often* or long they spend with them. Over and over, researchers have pointed out that it's the quality of interaction—whether the father is sensitive to the child's needs and reactions—that determines the overall value of his involvement in his child's life.

- ◆ Infants who have had positive interaction with their dads are more likely to be more curious and less fearful.
- ◆ By the time they start school, children with hands-on dads are also better able to wait their turn for a teacher's attention.

The whole family benefits from a dad's involvement. When the mother feels supported by the father, she is more patient, flexible, emotionally responsive and available to their children.

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Back to School Time

Establish a routine before school begins

It's that time of year to gear up for another school year, and you need to help your grandchildren transition back into school time routines.

Ease into fall routines before the first week of school. Kids need a routine in order to have a good start to the school year.

The primary routine is related to sleeping. Often, during summer months, children have a relaxed sleeping schedule; they may go to bed later and get up later. However, during the school year, it

is important for them to go to bed earlier and get up earlier.

Begin having your grandchildren go to bed fifteen minutes earlier each evening until they are at the "school year" bed time. Easing into the bedtime routine makes the transition manageable for both you and your grandchild.

If you have a grandchild who is just starting preschool or kindergarten, you may see signs of separation anxiety. According to Diana Milne, MU Extension human development specialist, "This is normal, but it can still be upsetting." An article in the *Work and Family Life* newsletter, states the way children

deal with separation depends on their age, stage of development, what the new experience involves and how the parent or primary caregiver responds.

Even for older children, anxiety can occur if they are facing changes like going to a new school or riding a bus for the first time. Visit the new building or talk with them about what to expect on the bus.

If the school has an open house, attend so your grandchildren can meet their teachers, see other students and become familiar with the classroom and school.

Source: Work and Family Life newsletter, June 2012.

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Pudding Pops

Susan Mills-Gray, MU Extension nutrition and health specialist encourages you to have fun in the kitchen with your grandchildren making these cool summertime treats.

Ingredients:

- 24 vanilla wafers
- 1/4 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 3/4 cups cold low-fat milk
- 1 package (4-serving size) chocolate flavor instant pudding & pie filling
- 6 waxed-lined small paper cups
- 6 wooden ice cream sticks

Directions:

1. Coarsely crush wafers then mix with peanut butter. Set aside.
2. In medium bowl beat milk and pudding mix with wire whisk for 2 minutes. Refrigerate for 5 minutes.
3. In each paper cup layer 2 tablespoons of pudding and 1 tablespoon of wafer mixture. Repeat layers, using remaining pudding and wafer mixture, ending with pudding.
4. Place stick in center of each. Freeze at least 4 hours or until firm.
5. Tear away paper cup and enjoy!