

# **PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PARENTS -**

MAKING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PRACTICAL FOR FAMILIES



## **CONNECTED PARENTING**

Resnick MD, Bearman PS, et al. Protecting Adolescents from Harm: Findings From the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health 1997:278; 823-832.



### **INFANTS and TODDLERS**

1. Infants and toddlers connect to those who meet their needs. Your loving touches, your smiles, your language all communicate to your child that he/she belongs to you.
2. Mealtimes should be enjoyable - a wonderful time to connect as you meet your child's need for



### **PRESCHOOLERS**

1. If you don't already share mealtimes with your preschooler, now is the time to start good habits. Families who share mealtimes together can connect in special ways.
2. Even if your schedule makes it difficult to always eat dinner together, take time today



### **ELEMENTARY**

1. Your elementary age child should certainly have significant chores by this age. If not, sit down at a family meeting this week to discuss "redistribution" of family work.
2. Hopefully you are eating at least 10 meals together as a family each week. If not, think



### **ADOLESCENTS**

1. Volunteering is even more important for adolescents. See the information under the "Elementary" section. During the turbulent adolescent years, volunteering gives your teen a sense of worth and the knowledge that he is contributing to his world.
2. Parents often struggle

nutrition. Whether you are breast feeding or formula feeding, talk to your baby during feedings.

3. For older toddlers, sit down with your toddler and share meal times together.

4. Research is demonstrating that infants and young children feel more secure and cry less when they are being held. Some parents are afraid they will spoil their babies if they hold them too much - but the research says just the opposite. Babies who are held and cuddled feel more secure and more comfortable; their heart rate decreases and their muscles relax. (Esposito G, et al. Infant Calming Responses during Maternal Carrying in Humans and Mice. *Current Biology* 2013; 23:739-745)

to think of which meals your family could share in this next week. You may need to think creatively, eat a little later, share a snack together, or get up a little earlier for a breakfast together.

3. Chores are a wonderful way to teach your child that he is an important member of your family. Chores do help a child learn responsibility and also help a child learn to do a task. But chores also help a child connect to her family as she contributes to the functioning of the family.

4. What chores can a preschooler do?  
- Set the table with napkins, silverware  
- Help clear the table / wipe the table  
- Feed pets  
- Water plants  
- Sort laundry  
- Put socks together

5. It will take your child longer to accomplish the task than if you did it yourself - but don't take over the task. You are helping your child learn important lessons, so patiently wait for your child to finish the job.

creatively of ways to accomplish this.

3. Volunteering is a wonderful way to connect as a family. It also instills in your child a sense of fulfillment and a knowledge that he has a role in our world. New research shows that adolescents have better heart health after just 2 months of volunteering. (Schreier HMC, et al. Effect of Volunteering on Risk Factors for Cardiovascular Disease in Adolescents. *JAMA Pediatrics* 2013; 167:327)

4. Sharing an exciting or thrilling or even slightly frightening experience certainly bonds you to the person who shared your adventure. "Shared risk experiences" do that for families - and outdoor activities are the best for experiencing adventure that may have some risks associated. As you plan your next family vacation, do something different and maybe a little "risky" that will bond you together as a family - like kayaking or white water rafting or hiking.

5. Worshipping together also helps you connect as a family.

to keep their adolescents participating in family activities. You are more likely to succeed if:

- you have a set time each week or month that is designated as family time
- you ask your teen to think up activities that he would enjoy
- you leave your computer, phone and electronics at home or turned off
- you think of some "crazy" ideas like waking your kids up in the middle of the night for an ice cream outing
- don't forget about "shared risk experiences" and go outdoors for fun and excitement together!

3. Shared dinners become even more important during the adolescent years. The Center for Alcohol and Substance Abuse (CASAColumbia) released its 8th report on the importance of family dinners in September, 2012, and demonstrated once again that teens who have frequent meals with their parents are

more likely to report having a good relationship with their parents, are less likely to participate in high risk behaviors, and are less likely to report stress in their lives.

4. Work on a project together - for your home, for your community. Accomplishing something difficult together keeps you connected.

5. Exercise with your child sets a good example for lifetime health. Exercise also improves

brain function and mood and is an incredible bonding time together.

**Suggestions:**

- Play your child's favorite sport
- Find a new sport together
- Run a race together, the longer the race, the longer the training time together
- It's important to get your child's buy-in before setting sports-related goals--that way keeping on track and staying committed is far easier!

**Jane E. Anderson MD**

Prescriptions for Parents  
000-000-0000  
[md@physicianscenter.org](mailto:md@physicianscenter.org)  
[www.physicianscenter.org](http://www.physicianscenter.org)