

## Don't Miss the Moments: Slow Down and Take Time to Listen, Laugh, and Learn with Your Children



**By Nefertiti B. Poyner, Ed.D.**

If you were to make a list of everything you wanted to complete this week, it would likely be much longer than you anticipate. The cold, hard fact is that life can be one busy ride. In order to accomplish more, you're inclined to rush things. If you are a parent, we often feel as though there is never enough time in a day to complete all of the tasks on our to-do-list and take care of our children and families. We might want to think about the message we are sending our children as we hurry through our days without taking time for each other. That time might be sharing a laugh, smile, or warm "huggie" – which is what my 4-year-old calls a hug. One important thing that both of my children have taught me is to appreciate each moment, even the seemingly inconsequential ones. A few weeks ago on a drive to the local drug store, I thought my 15-year-old would never get to the end of her ever winding tale of selfies, upcoming parties, sweet 16 birthday plans and her need for an allowance increase. To say that the conversation was exhausting is an understatement, but as I reflect upon our seemingly idle chatter, I realize that it was the best few minutes we had shared in a very long time.

Recently, I have made conscious efforts to slow down with my children. Not only do I feel that it is better for their well-being, I am also finding that I am enjoying parenting so much more. Do not let life get so busy that you don't notice your child has styled her hair differently, or that your 4-year-old completely dressed himself without anyone having to ask. While parenting can be tough, it also comes with great joy. The benefit of slowing down for me is that I enjoy being with my children even more so. When I'm not enjoying parenting, it's usually because I am not in the moment – I'm either rushing to get somewhere or I'm thinking about all of the things I should be doing or need to get done. When I slow down and let go of all other things I feel I should be doing, and just allow myself to be with my children, relax and enjoy them ... I feel alive, present and so very grateful.

If you are ready to slow down, and find greater joy in everyday moments, keep these ideas in mind:

1. **Resolve to slow down.** Step 1 is consciously stating to yourself that you will slow down, beginning right now. Keep the idea of slowing down in the forefront of your mind. Accept the fact that more isn't necessarily better.
2. **Reflect on the times when you feel most rushed.** Is it in the mornings when you're getting ready for work, or when you're preparing dinner in the evening? Maybe you're going at high speed when you're trying to get the kids out the door to school.

***Be aware of when you find yourself feeling the most need to move quickly, so you can brainstorm methods to slow down at those times.***

3. **Notice if certain people or things going on around you compel you to hurry.** Trying to get to the bottom of why you're rushing will help you figure out how to slow things down. For example, if certain people are frequently telling you to "hurry up," find time to talk with them about the situation.
4. **Share your feelings about wanting to slow down your pace with your partner.** You might also find it necessary to explain that you'd prefer your partner avoid saying anything to rush you.

***Problem-solve together on how you'll change your actions to accomplish your goal of slowing down.***

5. **Make adjustments to your schedule.** For example, if the morning is when you feel most hurried, set your alarm 15 minutes earlier to allow more time.

***Take advantage of the power you have by doing something as simple as arising earlier.***

***If you constantly rush the kids to get out the door, talk briefly with them and state that they'll need to start getting up 10 minutes earlier so the mornings aren't as hectic.***

6. **Examine your overall schedule.** Are you consistently in a rush because your schedule is crammed? Are you trying to do too much in a day? Look over your daily schedule with a critical eye.

***It's time for a trim! What can you omit from your schedule today? You'll be relieved after you make some adjustments, allowing you more time for the simple pleasures of enjoying the company of your children and family.***

7. **Remember that you can be a lot more efficient, happier and calmer by slowing down your pace.** Maybe you can't do the book club, volunteer at the church *and* go grocery shopping on Thursday afternoons – and maintain your sanity.

***Give yourself permission to let something go or rearrange your schedule to have down time between duties.***

***When you slow down, you can better focus on each of the activities you choose to do. You'll find them more rewarding and invigorating when you don't have to rush from one activity to the next.***

Slowing down your life will bring a new vitality to your existence. No moment with our children is too big or too small. These special moments are what life is really all about. Vow to enjoy every single minute of it by slowing down your pace.



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