



Staying Connected with Your Kids This Back-to-School Season

With the departure of the lazy days of summer, parents often find that one-on-one time with their kids is fleeting as well. With the start of homework, extra curricular activities and a ramped up social life, children (and their families) become busy, busy, busy once school is back in full gear.

During this time, parents and children alike can experience a disconnect from the bonds that were nurtured during the free time of summer and found again on family vacations. The question is “how can parents and children stay connected (and make their bonds a lasting one) once the school year starts again?”

Designating one evening out of the week strictly for family time is one great way to start, no matter the age. Or, schedule a “date” with your child – just as you do that important business meeting or school PTA night.

Below are several more tips from iMOM Founder Susan Merrill that you can try as well to keep the connections open this school year.

Pre-School and Elementary School Children

Parents, take advantage of this pre-adolescence time, especially while your children still like you!

- Plan your lunch break around your child’s lunch break. Visit the school and have a one-on-one lunch with your child and/or with their friends.
- Send a note inside their lunch box or attached to their notebook wishing them a great day or a simple “I Love You.”
- Take advantage of the days when you really are your child’s greatest teacher. Don’t just check homework, tangibly teach your child how to relate math and saving money by opening an account for them; associate science with cooking, gardening or recycling projects.

Middle and High School Children

At this age, children are pushing parents away just a little bit as they are active in their own social circles.

- Find a way to fit in. Whether its movies, sports or music, try to enjoy it with them. And, ask questions! Let them teach you something new. Perhaps you’ll create a new tradition or learn something in the process.
- Have a “Pillow Talk” with your child. Pillow Talk is a creative journal that leads a parent through the process of opening lines of communication with their child. The

- journal is interactive and used by both the parent and the child, with the suggestion of trading the journal back and forth by leaving it on the other's pillow before bed.
- Go for a walk. Not only is walking good exercise, but it relieves stress. Take a short stroll with your child for the benefits of health and a good conversation.

College Children

If you survive the teen years, you will the young adult phase too. While they are living away from home for the first time and fighting for their independence, and even if they don't act like it, they still need you – and not just for money.

- Embrace their communication world – technology is your friend too. Keep them focused with meaningful phone calls, e-mails and text/instant messages. And, don't forget that a nicely packed “care package” delivered through good old snail mail works well too.
- Planned visits with your child are always a great thing. While planning for dinner, shopping and sporting events, make sure there's time aside for one-on-one interaction between you and your child.