



By Skip Forsyth

For many children in Texas, Memorial Day is more than parades and barbecues and solemn ceremonies; it is the commencement of summer vacation.

Summer is a wonderful season for a child: swimming in the pool or lake until the skin seems permanently wrinkled; riding bikes for hours on dusty paths; creating chalk art murals on the driveway and sidewalk; resting in the shade of a large tree; licking ice cream that melts down the cone and over the fingers; s'mores; chillin' with friends; listening to the cicadas' summer serenade. As Sam Keen affirms, "Deep summer is when laziness finds respectability."

Yet, increasingly it seems, summer becomes a stressful time: child care and child safety while parents are at work; increased unstructured time and access to technology and social media; feeling the need to keep kids busy and "entertained;" the cost of "fun" is becoming more expensive; what to do with kids who are bored by the end of June.

The good news is more and more communities are providing a variety of no-cost and low-cost summer activities through city parks and recreation, community service organizations, churches and religious associations. Public libraries and local museums and zoos often have a variety of summer programs. Frequently, bowling alleys and movie theaters have designated times for students at reduced rates. It may require some "homework," taking the time to call various groups and review websites, but parents and families might be pleasantly surprised to discover the number of resources available during the summer.

Be wary of one thing, all that summer fun can result in a "summer slide" and a "rusty return" when the school year reconvenes in late August. It is valuable to encourage children to read. Take them to the library weekly and let them select a book on a preferred topic. Set a time and routine for reading every day: 15-30 minutes for elementary and 30-45 minutes for secondary would be ideal. Mix up the reading. Sometimes ask them to read aloud to a parent or family member or even to a pet or stuffed animal, and sometimes the parent reads aloud to the child. Other times read together, first a child reads a paragraph or a page and then the parent does the same. Ask the child to read the information on the cereal box or milk container or the labels on canned vegetables. They can read the newspaper or favorite magazine. Daily reading will help your child be more ready for the new school year.

Relish the summer fun. As Kellie Elmore remembers, "Some of the best memories are made in flip-flops." Nevertheless, urge your child to continue reading.

**I've worked with your flower,
And helped it to grow.**



**I'm returning it now,
But I want you to know...
This flower is precious,
As dear as can be.
Love it, take care of it,
And you will see...
A bright new bloom,
With every day.
It grew and blossomed
In such a wonderful way.
In September just a bud,
January, a bloom;
Now a lovely blossom
I'm returning in June.
Remember, this flower,
As dear as can be,
Though rightfully yours,
Part will always belong to me!**

Author Unknown

Must-Do Tasks for the Summer Before College

FOR NUMEROUS SOON-TO-BE COLLEGE

FRESHMEN, July marks the halfway point between high school and the start of this exciting new journey. And while it may seem as if late August or early September will never arrive, there is still so much to be done. Here are must-do tasks to accomplish in the weeks that remain.

What you read is less important than simply engaging in the practice, both to acclimate yourself to an increased workload and to keep your mind active. Consider a novel or short story collection that you hoped to read, but you never found the time to start. It's even better if this book happens to be included on college reading lists.

⇒ **READ AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE:** Create a list of titles, visit the bookstore or library and read as often as possible this summer. College will likely require you to complete longer and more frequent reading assignments than high school did, so it is important to prepare accordingly.

⇒ **STRENGTHEN YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS:** Time management is a key component of college success. Begin practicing this skill before you start your first semester.

You need not be drastic or arrange each moment of your day, but create a schedule for certain activities and then follow it. This may include the time you'll wake in the morning as well as when and for how long you'll read and review your high school course work.

Simply schedule those activities that you deem most important, and abide by that schedule. When you begin college, you will find it far simpler to manage your commitments.

⇒ **FIND SOME SUMMER WORK:** Getting a job is a wonderful way to learn how to budget your hours and your money. Summer employment will also prompt you to use your brain and help you pass the days until college begins.

If you worked during high school, you are one step ahead. If you plan to pursue employment during your freshman year, this is an excellent opportunity to ensure you can manage both responsibilities.

⇒ **INVESTIGATE CAREER OPTIONS:** If you have a particular major in mind, investigate the most common careers within that field. Speak with individuals who are involved in such work and try to determine if the career is right for you.

If you are not certain about a career or a major, explore the jobs of those people who you frequently encounter. A significant component of college is preparing yourself for your future career, so use this summer to decide what that future may look like.

SKILLS EVERY COLLEGE STUDENT NEEDS

COLLABORATION: It is imperative for college-bound students to function efficiently and appropriately in groups, collaborate on projects and accept constructive criticism when working with others. People who succeed only when working alone will struggle in college and beyond, as the majority of careers require collaboration.

COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS: A common complaint among employers is that young people do not know how to effectively carry on a conversation and are unable to do things like ask questions, listen actively and maintain eye contact.

PROBLEM-SOLVING: Students will be faced with a number of unexpected challenges in life and receive little or no aid in overcoming them. They must be able to solve problems in creative ways and to determine solutions to issues with no prescribed formula.

TIME MANAGEMENT: Whatever structure students may have had in high school to organize their work and complete assignments in a timely manner will be largely absent in college. It is imperative that they be fully self-sufficient in managing their time and prioritizing actions.

LEADERSHIP: While it is important to be able to function in a group, it is also important to demonstrate leadership skills when necessary. Both in college and within the workforce, the ability to assume the lead when the situation calls for it is a necessity for anyone who hopes to draw upon their knowledge and "hard" skills in a position of influence.



Taken in part from an article in U.S. News and World Report Education by Bradford Holmes: <https://tinyurl.com/he7e8ha>

Summer Fitness Tips

A healthy lifestyle should be a year-round thing, but it's more difficult to do in the summer, considering the vacations and weekend getaways that inevitably happen. The following tips and suggestions for a healthy, more fit you, will keep you on track both at home and while traveling during the warmer months.

1. USE YOUR BODY WEIGHT. You need nothing else besides your own body weight to get great results. The push up, for example, a very simple exercise performed with your own body weight will help you sculpt sexy summer shoulders and a nice firm midsection.

2. PICK UP THE PACE! No matter where you are, you can squeeze in some extra cardio. Walk at a faster pace while breathing deeper to increase your heart rate. Bam! A mini cardio exercise.

3. USE YOUR BREATH. To get the most out of your breath, breathe from the diaphragm. To do this, think of breathing in a 3D fashion; your ribcage should expand from front to back, top to bottom, and left to right. These deep breaths will help you burn extra calories and give you extra energy during your workouts. The bonus is that you can use this breathing style not only to burn more calories during exercise but also while walking to the corner store, working at your desk, or just sitting in the car on your next road trip!

4. CARRY A REUSABLE WATER BOTTLE. No matter where you go or what you do, bring water with you. Our bodies can misread being hydrated for being hungry, leading to over consumption and weight gain. Also, when traveling on planes or to higher altitudes in general, the amount of oxygen in the air decreases equating to dryer air and reduced body hydration. This can leave you with unhealthy food cravings, headaches and poor body awareness from fatigue. To be more alert and make more right food choices, drink more water! Carry a reusable water bottle wherever you go. You can empty out the water before a security check point and fill it up right after. You'll save money on bottled water, not to mention help reduce waste!

5. BE FOOD PREPARED! No matter where we are, we're often tempted to "grab and go," especially when traveling. Unfortunately, most ready to go snacks are calorie packed and nutrient deprived. Save yourself the extra calories and pack some yummy granola bars, fruits and/or nuts in your carry-on bag so you're prepared to fight the urge of the grab and go pastry.

6. NO TIME? NO PROBLEM! MORE INTENSITY! Even 20 minutes will get you into the zone of fat blasting and muscle building as long as you maximize your effort. The goal of a short workout should be to work out at your personal intensity max. When you feel like it's time to stop, try pushing for 10 more reps to maximize the hormonal response from your workout. Do this for at least 20 minutes targeting your upper, middle and lower body with push ups, planks, crunches and burpees, and you've got a complete workout!

7. BUDDY UP! Accountability is everything. Having a partner keeps you accountable and makes diet and fitness goals more fun! Not only have you set yourself up for success with buddy system accountability, but you now have someone to share your excitement with when you hit your goals!

8. SHOP THE FARMERS MARKET FOR FRESH PRODUCE. If your food can survive nuclear fallout, you shouldn't be putting it in your body. The less time your food can survive on the supermarket shelf, the better it is for you. Fresh fruits and vegetables don't last as long as a box of Wheat Thins and that's a good thing! Vitamins and minerals that are found in darker fruits and vegetables are what you need to keep your body healthy. Pick up fresh produce wherever possible.



<http://stylecaster.com/beauty/25-summer-fitness-tips-experts/>

Summer Travel Activities

Home Alone

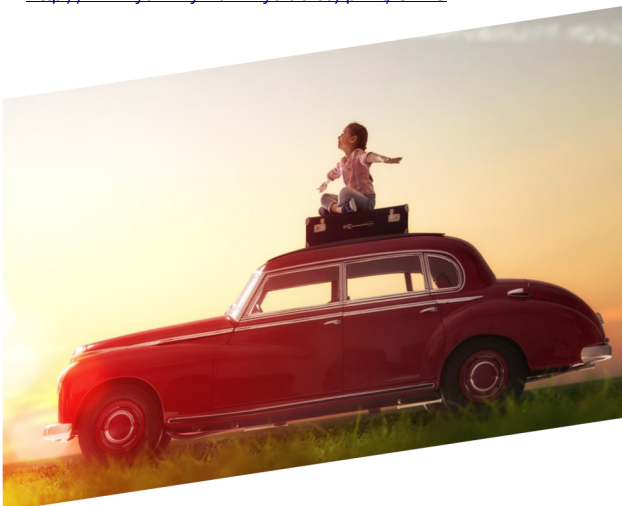
Great Travel Activities for Kids

**HOW MUCH FURTHER?
ARE WE THERE YET?
I'M BORED!**

Whether you are traveling by boat, plane, train or bus...these activities will keep your kids entertained so you can drive, sleep or tweet (not all at the same time of course).

- ⇒ The dreaded e-entertainment. Yes, we live in a world where electronics can babysit our kids—like it or not. From a Sesame Street video podcast to playing fruit ninja to learning baby sign language there is a ton of handheld electronic entertainment available for all ages.
- ⇒ A dollar store toy on the hour. Load up on a variety of dollar store items and hand one out every hour of the trip. The pro is that the items are new and new is generally entertaining in the kid world. It is also a relatively small investment so if something gets lost en route you aren't out big bucks.
- ⇒ Crayons & paper. Old school, yet still cool—crayons and paper can provide heaps-o-fun. From tic-tac-toe to hangman to drawing pictures to writing a thank you card to a flight attendant that gave out extra snacks ...crayons and paper are easy fun.
- ⇒ Alphabet brainstorms. Kids LOVE this. Go through the alphabet and have them come up with an answer. "Name a fruit that starts with C." "Name a country that starts with S." You can do it with almost anything. Cost is free. And no batteries required.

<http://www.yummymummyclub.ca/print/5448>



Home Alone

**Summer
Safety
Tips
For Kids**



Before you know it, school will be out for the summer and you'll be trying to figure out if your child is old enough to stay home alone during the day while you're at work.

Only you can determine if your child is ready to stay home alone this summer.

If you decide that your child will do just fine on their own, here are some safety tips to ensure they stay safe while you're not home:

- ◆ Talk to your child about whether he or she can go outside. If so, set some boundaries about where they can and can't go.
- ◆ Be sure your child knows what to do in case there's an emergency. Ensure they have your cell phone number and your office number.
- ◆ Designate a trusted neighbor your child can go to or call if they're scared or if there's an emergency and can't reach you.
- ◆ Impress upon your child the need to keep the door locked at all times. Caution them not to open the door or talk to anyone who knocks or rings the bell.
- ◆ If you've asked a family friend or relative to check in on your child, make sure your child is comfortable being alone with that person.
- ◆ Remind your child not to tell anyone beforehand that they're going to be home alone. He or she should also be reminded not to tell anyone who calls that they're home alone.

Staying home can be a positive experience for children, if they are ready to be left alone. They'll feel proud that you allowed them to stay at home and many kids love the added level of responsibility.

Taken in part from an article at:

<http://www.americanalarm.com/blog/home-alone-summer-safety-tips-for-kids-03773>

ATTENTION PARENTS: Help your child become a better reader before the new school year begins. Summer is an important time for students to keep reading and improve their language skills. If your child doesn't read regularly this summer, they may be in danger of the "summer slide"—a decline in their reading ability.

Numerous studies indicate that students who don't read or read infrequently during their summer vacation see their reading abilities stagnate or decline. This effect becomes more pronounced as students get older and advance through the school system. The situation for economically disadvantaged students is especially grim: if students from low-income families don't read over the summer, they are much more likely to fall behind their more privileged peers, widening the "achievement gap."

However, this "summer slide" can be avoided by ensuring that children are as engaged as possible in whatever they choose to read—just as long as they're reading every day. The best ways to keep your child from becoming a "rusty reader" over the summer are:

Encourage your children to read books they enjoy for at least 30 minutes per day. Your child will likely be more engrossed in material they choose themselves than material that is forced on them.

- ✓ Provide incentives for reluctant readers. For example, if your child enjoys basketball, agree to take them to the local court if they do their "daily reading."
- ✓ Make reading a social act. Establish a time during the day when all members of the family gather and read on their own, or take turns reading the same book aloud.
- ✓ Connect your reading to family outings. If you take your kids to an aquarium, consider reading a book about fish or the ocean with them later that day. The outing can help place the reading into a broader context.
- ✓ Take your children to your local library or bookstore and let them pick out a book they're going to love today. They will be better readers tomorrow for it.



Taken in part from Homeroom Ed. <https://blog.ed.gov/2011/08/why-summer-reading-pays-off-year-round/>



Keep Your Kids SAFE Online

Kids today effectively don't experience days and nights. Instead, it's time spent on the Internet and time spent on screens; that's the new age anti-meridiem and post-meridiem for you! Summer time just opens the floodgates to babysitting by gadgets.

Here's a to-do-list of best practices for parents and caretakers to ensure that their children are safe online:

- **Spell out expectations.** Talk to kids and treat them like adults. Share your expectations on the use of the Internet and provide an environment of trust. Children must be aware of the dangers online; and must also realize the faith that you place on them. Children are less likely to stray online when parents have an open dialogue regarding Internet use.
- **Be conscious of cyber-safety.** Cyber-safety is a raging topic today, and everyone must open their eyes to it. Understand the need for cyber-safety practices on all the Internet-enabled devices at home. Educate yourself on parental control software that will help you stay on top of potential cyber threats.
- **Be friends with your children online.** The best way to be in touch with your children's online world is to follow them on social media. Children usually keep parents out of online social circles because it makes them uncomfortable. Parental trust and confidence will help shed this barrier; and once "friends" online caretakers will be in the know about all activities. Parents need to know what their children post online and what others (including adults) expose their children to.
- **Live life offline too.** Parents must provide a space that encourages quality time spent with the family. Life online is slowly taking over life offline, but human-to-human relationships will never be out of vogue. And underneath all that reticence, children yearn for parental love and attention; something that can't be replaced by social likes and shares and retweets.
- **Have conversations over difficult topics.** Unless children understand why parental controls are necessary, they will resist any such attempt. No one enjoys the prospect of being chaperoned online.

Summer breaks are meant to be enjoyed. Teach your kids to do it the right way! Let it be fun, let it be enjoyable, let it be productive and, most of all, let it be safe!

Taken in part from a blog by Mobicip: <http://content.mobicip.com/content/10-cyber-safety-tips-summer>

Nutritious Foods That You Didn't Think You Could Freeze (But You Can!)

Page 6

You know when you kick yourself for buying too much of any particular food—let's say, a Costco size bag of avocados—because they end up ripening too fast and going to waste? I bet you didn't know that you could actually freeze avocado for later, when you're ready to use it? Or perhaps you didn't realize that you could freeze leftover cooked rice or pasta for a future busy weeknight when you're frantically trying to make dinner?

Here are some nutritious foods that can be thrown into the freezer for later use, which will help to cut your household food waste, save you money, and offer healthy ingredients for future meals and snacks.

CITRUS FRUITS

Frozen lemon, orange, or lime wedges make for easy and convenient garnishes, and delicious-tasting water. Simply cut your citrus fruit into wedges, place into a freezer-safe sealable bag, remove all of the air, seal and toss into the freezer!



BANANAS

I use frozen bananas all of the time, especially for fruit smoothies and baking! Simply pop the entire banana into the freezer (I usually place in a freezer-safe bag first), or peel the banana prior to freezing in a freezer-safe and sealed bag. Thaw in the fridge overnight to use for baking the next day, or pop frozen peeled banana into a blender to make a smoothie!



MILK

If you find that your milk is nearing its best before date, and you don't want it to go to waste, you can definitely freeze it! Milk expands in the freezer, so make sure that you leave enough room for this in whichever container you freeze it in. You can place the entire unopened container into the freezer, or transfer to a freezer-safe container prior to freezing. Thaw in the fridge overnight and enjoy!



EGGS

Most people don't realize that you can freeze raw egg! Although I don't often run into problems using up eggs before they go off, it's nice to know that freezing them is an option. Hint: don't freeze them inside their shells. Instead, crack the egg, dispose of the shell and freeze in a freezer-safe bag or container, to use later! Thaw overnight in the fridge or run the bag under cool water until thawed. Cook and eat right away.



AVOCADOS

Avocados have a delicious, buttery texture that's hard to resist, but can be really expensive. When you buy them in bulk, they tend to be a bit cheaper, but can ripen faster than you're able to eat them. As an alternative, you can freeze the avocado flesh for later use! Simply half your avocado, remove the peel, place in a freezer-safe plastic re-sealable bag and freeze! You can also puree the flesh, add a squeeze of lemon or lime juice, and freeze it in the same type of bag. Although the texture will change post-freezing, the previously frozen avocado makes for delicious guacamole, a decadent avocado chocolate pudding or a great addition to a creamy avocado pasta sauce.



PASTA

Although it doesn't take long to cook pasta, it's so nice to have some pre-cooked and ready to eat on a busy weeknight. To freeze pasta, make sure that you cook it al dente (a bit firm), toss in a little bit of olive oil, and place in mounds on a parchment-lined baking sheet before putting it into the freezer. Once frozen, transfer each mound into a freezer-safe bag or container and place back into the freezer. Thaw overnight in the fridge or run cool water over top of the bag for faster thawing.



GRAPES

Frozen grapes are like candy—sweet and crisp! Simply rinse and dry them, and either place directly into a freezer-safe bag (making sure to remove all of the air), or place rinsed grapes in a single layer on a cookie sheet and then freeze, prior to transferring to a freezer-safe bag and placing back into the freezer.



<http://www.yummymummyclub.ca/print/21353>

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM HELPS CHILDREN STAY ACTIVE, HEALTHY

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) will open the door to good nutrition after school lunchrooms close for the upcoming summer vacation. Children 18 years old and younger can enjoy healthy meals at SFSP sites operated by nonprofits, libraries, schools and other community organizations across the Lone Star State. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) administers the federally funded SFSP in Texas and the meals are served at no cost to the child.

Families are encouraged to use these three tools from June 1-August 30, to find a meal site:

Dial 211 to speak to a live operator ● Visit www.SummerFood.org for an interactive site locator map ● Text FOODTX to 877-877

Also, many sites offer enriching activities and serve various combinations of meals including breakfast, lunch, snacks and even supper (dates and times may vary).

Last summer, 708 TDA partners served nearly 20 million meals to Texas children and SFSP partners stand ready to serve healthy meals again in 2017. Accessing these meals supports partners' efforts while helping children get the nutrition they need for an active and healthy summer. For more information and to access resources that can be used to increase awareness of SFSP meals, please visit

SummerFood.org.

Walter.Brewer@TexasAgriculture.gov

X-Plan: Giving Your Kids a Way Out (#xplan)

Page 7

Bert Fulks

I recently asked a group of kids a simple question: “How many of you have found yourself in situations where things started happening that you weren’t comfortable with, but you stuck around, mainly because you felt like you didn’t have a way out?”

They all raised their hands....every single one of them.

In the spirit of transparency ... I get it. I’m still in touch with that awkward boy who often felt trapped in the unpredictable currents of teenage experiences. I can’t count the times sex, drugs, and alcohol came rushing into my young world; I wasn’t ready for any of it, but I didn’t know how to escape and, at the same time, not castrate myself socially. I still recall my first-time drinking beer at a friend’s house in junior high school—I hated it, but I felt cornered. As an adult, that now seems silly, but it was my reality at the time. “Peer pressure” was a frivolous term for an often silent, but very real thing; and I certainly couldn’t call my parents and ask them to rescue me. I wasn’t supposed to be there in the first place. As a teen, forcing down alcohol seemed a whole lot easier than offering myself up for punishment, endless nagging and interrogation, and the potential end of freedom as I knew it.

For these reasons, we now have something called the “X-plan” in our family. This simple, but powerful tool is a lifeline that our kids are free to use at any time. Here’s how it works:

Let’s say that my youngest, Danny, gets dropped off at a party. If anything about the situation makes him uncomfortable, all he has to do is text the letter “X” to any of us (his mother, me, his older brother or sister). The one who receives the text has a very basic script to follow. Within a few minutes, they call Danny’s phone. When he answers, the conversation goes like this:

“Hello?”

“Danny, something’s come up and I have to come get you right now.”

“What happened?”

“I’ll tell you when I get there. Be ready to leave in five minutes. I’m on my way.”

At that point, Danny tells his friends that something’s happened at home, someone is coming to get him, and he has to leave.



In short, Danny knows he has a way out; at the same time, there’s no pressure on him to open himself to any social ridicule. He has the freedom to protect himself while continuing to grow and learn to navigate his world.

This is one of the most loving things we’ve ever given him, and it offers him a sense of security and confidence in a world that tends to beat our young people into submission.

However, there’s one critical component to the X-plan: Once he’s been extracted from the trenches, Danny knows that he can tell us as much or as little as he wants ... **but it’s completely up to him.** The X-plan comes with the agreement that we will pass no judgments and ask no questions (even if he is 10 miles away from where he’s supposed to be). This can be a hard thing for some parents (admit it, some of us are complete control-freaks); but I promise it might not only save them, but it will go a long way in building trust between you and your kid.

(One caveat here is that Danny knows if someone is in danger, he has a moral obligation to speak up for their protection, no matter what it may cost him personally. That’s part of the lesson we try to teach our kids—we are our brother’s keeper, and sometimes we have to stand for those too weak to stand for themselves. Beyond that, he doesn’t have to say a word to us. Ever.)

For many of us parents, we lament the intrusion of technology into our relationships. I hate seeing people sit down to dinner together and then proceed to stare into their phones. It drives me nuts when my kids text me from another room in our house. However, cell phones aren’t going away, so we need to find ways to use this technology to help our kids in any way we can.

I urge you to use some form of our X-plan in your home. If you honor it, your kids will thank you for it. You never know when something so simple could be the difference between your kid laughing with you at the dinner table or spending six months in a recovery center ... or (God forbid) something far worse.

Prayers for strength and compassion to the parents out there as we all try to figure this whole parenting gig out—it never gets easy.

Bert Fulks: <https://bertfulks.com/2017/02/23/x-plan-giving-your-kids-a-way-out-xplan/>



THINGS MOMS SHOULD DO FOR THEIR KIDS EVERY DAY

In the midst of our busy days, it is easy to steamroll through the hours. Be sure you don't miss the things moms should do for their kids for a strong parent-child relationship.

SHOW PHYSICAL AFFECTION. Take time to really connect with your child. Sit down and let your child crawl onto your lap. Make hug time fun.

BE FULLY PRESENT. Put down your phone, turn off the iPad and stop loading the dishwasher when your children want your attention.

BE KIND. There is no doubt we love our children, but love without kindness doesn't feel very loving.

USE LOVING WORDS. A mother's words are powerful! Compliment them every day.

DISCIPLINE CALMLY. While screaming at them might feel good and appear to be effective, it's really not. Keeping our cool while we shape our children helps us to discipline with firmness instead of harshness.

LAUGH WITH THEM. A strong parent-child relationship needs a good dose of levity. Laugh with your children at what they think is funny. Point out things that you think are funny. And if all else fails—tickle them!

<http://www.imom.com/7-things-moms-should-do-for-their-kids-every-day/#WLSXH1Xyvc5>

THINGS LOVING FATHERS DO FOR THEIR CHILDREN

LOVE THEIR CHILDREN'S MOTHER. Love your wife without reservation, you can't do much more for your kids than that. If you are divorced, treat your children's mother with respect, even if it is not reciprocated. Never return disgrace with disgrace.

LOVE THEM UNCONDITIONALLY. Make sure that your children know you love them no matter what. Don't confuse this with permissiveness. Unconditional love does nothing to encourage the wrong kind of behavior. In fact, kids who are secure in their father's love tend to act out less, not more.

GROW UP. We're talking about the us here, not the kids. Children don't want another buddy, they want a dad. They want someone who thinks things through, makes tough decisions, and engages life with responsibility. Someone they can count on.

BE THERE. "Quality time" is all well and good, but it has nothing on quantity time. Make the time. Everyone has the same 24 hours available. Make yours count.

PROVIDE. As best you can. Material provision can be tough when jobs are lost and tough times hit. However, you can always provide a stable home with love and affection.

<http://www.allprodad.com/10-things-loving-fathers-do-for-their-children/>



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<http://www.esc16.net/dept/isserv/title1swi/index.html>

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