

Hand in Hand Parenting With Madeleine Winter Special Time

Special Time is a regular, defined period of time where you focus undivided attention on your child, playing however the child wants.



BUILDS UNDERSTANDING: in *Special Time* we allow the child to be in charge of what happens and how it happens. This allows the child to show their interests, preoccupations, struggles and concerns. With this comes a rare kind of one-on-one closeness and emotional safety that boosts children's confidence and sense of connection.

BUILDS CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL AWARENESS: they will begin to notice when they feel alone and ask for *Special Time* rather than use "off track" behaviour to show how they feel.

YOU CAN FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOUR PARENTING: It can be hard to prioritise your children. *Special Time* offers permission to give our children regular, undivided attention, quarantined from the usual pressures of life (no multitasking allowed!). You can put your head on the pillow at night knowing you really did what, in your heart of hearts, you always hoped to do: love and enjoy your children, fully and unconditionally.

INSURANCE POLICY: builds "credit" in the relationship that helps get through the hard times. *Special Time* must *not* be conditional on good behaviour. It works best if done regularly at a time that works for the family. It is beneficial whether it lasts 5 minutes or 30.

PRESSURE RELIEF VALVE: offering *Special Time* can be very effective in resolving power struggles and other tensions. Often, after a short *Special Time*, a child will be able to do easily what was previously a struggle.

THE RESET SWITCH: *Special Time* gives us a chance to put our relationship with our child back on track when things have gone wrong, we have made a mistake, or we don't know what to do. You don't need to refer to the difficulty, or you might like to apologise – but offering *Special Time* is a great way to make peace.

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- **Set aside a short time** (5 minutes to an hour, or however long you can last!).
- **One-on-one:**
 - Each of our children longs for special, undivided time with us and will thrive if we offer it.
 - There are other *Listening Tools* we can use when there are several children.
- **No interruptions** – no **cups** of tea, no visitors, don't answer the phone.
- **When you are free** of fatigue and worries.
- **Put the timer on:**
 - So you know you won't have to last forever.
 - So your child knows you will treat it as "special" and out of the ordinary.
- **Tell your child** it is *Special Time* (this is really important).and you will do whatever they want for this time.
- **Don't make *Special Time* conditional** on your child behaving well.
 - More often than not, doing *Special Time* will actually assist things to go well if they have been a bit difficult.
- **Focus completely** on your child: notice everything about him or her.
- **Be completely pleased** with them – show how much you enjoy, approve, delight. Use a warm tone of voice.
- **Follow your child's lead** - put them in charge.
- **Be less knowledgeable, less competent, more foolish** - *Playlistening* – helpless enough to be non-threatening, active enough to be interesting.
- **Notice the laughter** & try to keep it going, but **don't tickle**. Tickling takes control of the play away from the child; there are many other creative ways to get children laughing
- **Do not redirect, instruct, correct, "teach"**.
- **Expect new things to happen.**
- **Safety and limits - set them warmly and playfully.** *The adult is the safety manager* (in *Special Time*, don't expect children to remember what/who needs to be kept safe). If something goes wrong, take responsibility. Do your best to prevent the difficulty happening, but if you can't, don't blame the child. It can help to apologise: some useful words are "I'm sorry I did not get there in time to stop that happening".
- **Do it regularly!** Your child will plan for it, and will count on it happening. It will be a highlight of their week.