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Read with Me: The Value of Family Reading Time

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Read with Me: The Value of Family Reading Time

It is no surprise that children benefit when parents and caregivers demonstrate that reading is enjoyable.¹ For a child, there are benefits of reading at every stage of development.² Research has continued to demonstrate that the child's home environment in which the caregiver is reading and modeling the joy of reading, has a positive impact on the child's reading ability.³ The International Reading Association reports that reading as entertainment improves reading comprehension and vocabulary development.⁴ Furthermore, a 2007 study by the *National Endowment for the Arts* found that reading improves job prospects, increases empathy, protects from dementia, reduces stress, and improves cognitive skills.⁵ It is important for parents to not treat reading as a chore, but rather a privilege.

Reading as a family provides parents with the opportunity to model the joy of reading to their children and children to share their interests with their parents. But how can this be done in this day and age when our time is often consumed by technology and other extracurricular activities?

Here are some tips to help you create your own family reading tradition that can easily fit a busy family's schedule.

Creating a Family Reading Tradition

1. **Family Reading Night:** Creating a family reading night is a great way to get the whole family reading. You can either pick one fun read to enjoy together, or have each individual read their own book independently. This is especially good for families with older children who are expressing varied interests. For families with young children, picture books are an entertaining and fun way to cultivate a love for literature.

¹ Sonnenschein, S., Baker, L., Serpell, R., & Schmidt, D. (2000). *Reading is a source of entertainment: The importance of the home perspective for children's literacy development*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net>

² Paul, P., & Russo, M. How to Raise a Reader. *NY Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/books/how-to-raise-a-reader>

³ International Reading Association. (2014). *Leisure Reading*. Newark. Retrieved from <http://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/leisure-reading-position-statement.pdf>

⁴ International Reading Association. (2014). *Leisure Reading*. Newark. Retrieved from <http://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/leisure-reading-position-statement.pdf>

⁵ Sullivan, S., Nichols, B., Bradshaw, T., & Rogowski, K. (2007). *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence* (Vol. 9). Retrieved from <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/ToRead.pdf>

2. **Bedtime:** Taking the time to read a short story with your child before putting him or her to bed is a wonderful way to end the day and creates a strong bond between parent and child.⁶ Older children can be encouraged to read the same book as the parent, one chapter per night before bed, with opportunities for discussion.
3. **Family Devotions:** You can easily incorporate reading time into your family devotions by choosing a family friendly devotional or inspirational story.
4. **Audiobooks:** Road trips and car rides are perfect opportunities to dive into a great read together. Audiobooks provide a wonderful alternative to videos and gadgets. Audiobooks also come in handy while completing routine tasks such as cleaning, laundry, or cooking together. You can check out audiobooks from your local library or download books using apps such as Audible, OverDrive, and LibriVox.

Creative Ideas for Family Reading

- Pick a theme! Choose a book and then create activities around the theme of the book. For example, if you are reading a book set in a foreign country, your family could try new recipes from the country, research its customs and history, or complete a simple craft. Younger children can enjoy a picture book on the country or a coloring sheet.
- Create a family book club and give it a fun name. All members of the family should have a say in what they are reading. Remember, any book, even comic books or graphic novels, count!
- A book buddy, a special stuffed animal held while listening to a story, is a great way to encourage little ones to enjoy the time spent listening.
- You can incorporate family traditions into the reading process, such as enjoying popcorn or a special treat, while reading.
- Families with older children can create their own discussion questions dealing with the book themes, main characters, and morals.
- If there is a movie version of the book you want to read, enjoy the book first before watching the film, then discuss the similarities and differences with your children.
- Check with your local library for book related events such as author visits and storytimes that you can enjoy as a family.

For inspiration and ideas, check out Family Reading Partnership⁷, Reading Rockets⁸, the The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy⁹, Reading is Fundamental¹⁰, and Scholastic¹¹ online.

⁶ Make the Connection | Parents | Scholastic.com. (n.d.). Retrieved August 3, 2017, from <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/reading-together/make-connection>

⁷ www.familyreading.org

⁸ www.readingrockets.com

⁹ <http://barbarabush.org>

¹⁰ <http://www.rif.org/>

¹¹ <http://www.scholastic.com>