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## **A Parenting Tip - Do You Crave Time Off?**

**By Colleen Langenfeld**

Parenting can be funny, exciting, boring, thrilling, challenging, confusing, satisfying, uplifting, maddening, frustrating, unreasonable, exhausting, silly, and more.

Because of that fact, sometimes, as a parent, you just need a break.

This parenting tip is not to be taken lightly. Parenting your children will be the wildest ride you ever take. It is certainly the most demanding of jobs. And, as you probably have already noticed, it's a 24/7 position.

With no paid vacations.

To be the parent your kids need you to be, you've got to take some regular breaks. How many? How often? That depends upon you and your family situation. In addition, be careful about playing the comparison game. You may need more or less time off from parenting than other parents you know.

How do you know if it's time to take a parenting break? If you are on the verge of burnout...you already know you need a break. Yesterday. And if you are proudly sharing stories with other parents of how long it has been since you've had a REAL break from parenting (the kind where someone else actually takes over the responsibility of parenting for a period of time...even an hour), then you need to stop and plan your next time off. I've certainly been guilty of over-extending my commitment as a parent and under-nourishing my true self. It's not something to be proud of. It's something to pay attention to.

Here are some ideas for taking that well-deserved parenting break.

-- A full fledged vacation. Just your spouse and yourself. (Who?)

If you're having trouble remembering that guy or gal you originally signed up with to parent alongside of, this parenting tip may be for you. Lack of money and babysitters were always my excuse; if that's the case with you, too, start putting away a little cash today and circle a date on the calendar. Anticipation is a wonderful thing and the time will give you ample opportunity to find that totally responsible person to watch your kids.

Trust me. This getaway doesn't need to be expensive. In fact, working out the creative details together with your spouse can make for even more pleasant memories.

-- Who will be in charge?

If you live far away from extended family (we always did), babysitters may be scarce. One solution to this is to get involved. Find a family-oriented house of worship and dive in. Hook up with classes at your local YMCA. Volunteer at your school. In other words, look for opportunities to make friends with other parents. These are the folks who have similar needs and frustrations.

Eventually you might be able to set up a kind of babysitting co-op where each family takes turns taking care of each others' kids so everybody gets regular parenting time-off without breaking the bank. (Important parenting tip: DO look for people of similar values to your own so you know your kids will be cared for by people who share your sense of parenting.)

-- All by yourself.

Maybe you need some personal time off from being mom or dad. Then my parenting tip for you is to take some time to rejuvenate yourself as a human being. If you recognize this need, talk to your partner. He or she may be feeling the same way and all the two of you need is to juggle your schedules for both of you to be able to take a break.

Are you a single parent? Your parenting challenges are even greater, to be sure. And your need for time off can increase since you don't have the natural breaks built in like a two-parent family can have.

Again, look for ways to meet other single parents and work together on this issue for the mutual good.

-- Think deeper...

Make sure your parenting break will genuinely refresh you by considering the type of rest you need. Do you crave solitude? Or adult conversation? A gaggle of girlfriends? Or an exciting adventure? Pampering? Or time learning something new and stimulating?

Truthfully, the quality of your time off will be as important as the quantity. We're often pretty good about planning the 'where' and 'what' of our breaks, but often we neglect the deeper needs of our soul. Think about what you would do if you had no restrictions; plenty of time and money and no responsibilities. Then ask yourself what your answer means to you.

Parenting is an enormous responsibility and requires genuine fortitude. To pull off such a task successfully, you'll need to take enormous and extreme care of yourself over the years. Whether it's an extra date night twice a month with your spouse, a lone weekly college class, or an all-out get-out-of-town vacation, taking calculated time off from parenting is a parenting tip you'll need to put (and keep) at the top of your list.

Colleen Langenfeld has been parenting for over 26 years and helps other moms enjoy mothering more at <http://www.paintedgold.com>. Visit her website and pick up another parenting tip at <http://www.paintedgold.com/Kids/parenting-tip.html> .

## A Parenting Tip - The Most Important Thing A Parent Can Do

By Colleen Langefeld

The most important parenting tip won't drain your wallet, but it is costly.

It doesn't require years of parenting education, instead it's actually quite instinctive.

The most important parenting tip is simple yet profound. You can start using it today and expect almost immediate results.

After over two decades of parenting experience, I can tell you the most important parenting tip I have discovered is simply 'being there'. 'Being there' has become my most fundamental parenting concept.

- Be there...when they're just babies and need to be cuddled for the hundredth time in a day.
- Be there...then they're toddlers and need one more book read to them, calmly, so they can settle down in bed.
- Be there...when they're preschoolers and they fall down the slide on the playground.
- Be there...when they're in elementary school and their three best friends desert them all at once.
- Be there...when they're in middle school and damage something they can't fix on their own.
- Be there...when they're teenagers and need to talk at 10 pm three nights a week.
- Be there...when they're college-aged and sometimes just need to hear mom or dad's voice because nothing's going as planned.

Just be there.

Be there physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, spiritually, and relationally.

Be there because it works.

A word of caution about this parenting tip. Your kids can tell when you're 'being there' with them or when your attention is wandering. If you need to be doing something else, then tell them and go do it. But when you are with them, be with them. The child that feels he or she is special enough to be important to at least one other human being is the child that grows up well-grounded and secure in a stable environment. (If you would like more parenting tips based on 'being there', see the resource box following this article.)

Being there is a costly strategy in a distracted world. Your kids know you and your time is valuable and it speaks volumes to them when they see you putting your own needs aside and giving them your time and self instead.

And, please, I'm not speaking about spoiling your child. Not about giving into their every demand for

attention, money or time. Not at all.

I'm speaking of shouldering your responsibilities as a parent. Even when it's inconvenient. Even when you're tired. Especially when it means sacrifice.

I'm talking about doing the right thing.

That's another way to understand the most important parenting tip of all.

Colleen Langenfeld has been parenting for over 25 years and helps other moms enjoy mothering more at <http://www.paintedgold.com>. Get the parenting tip that works for you at <http://www.paintedgold.com/Kids/parenting-tip.html> .

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