

3 WORDS THAT WILL CHANGE HOW YOU CONNECT WITH YOUR KIDS.

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I have three kids. And a part time job. And a house that refuses to stay clean for more than a minute. There's barely enough time in the day to get the basics done, let alone anything else. And, in the midst of all the chaos, my kids are longing to feel connected to me. They are begging to be seen, noticed, and really understood.

I want to give them this connection. I really do. The benefits of having a strong connection to my kids is evident in the behavior I see when they feel disconnected – disrespect, tantrums, acting out, and flat-out refusal to do what I ask. But when life is crazy, finding time to connect can feel overwhelming. It can become another task on the to-do list instead of something cherished and enjoyed.

If connection has become a chore, or if you feel like you could use a little refresher on connecting with your kids, focus on these 3 simple words: **Observe, Open, and Ordinary.**

HOW TO CONNECT WITH YOUR KIDS

- **Be Observant** — Become a student of your child. Notice times during the day when they seem most open to connection – do they like to snuggle in the morning or night? Do they like to tell you about their day right after school or right before bed? Notice which interactions they seem to enjoy most – do they like being active or calm? Do they like to be silly or serious? With time, you may begin to realize when things are a little off, when something might be wrong, and when they need a little more attention from you.
- **Be Open** — Make connection a priority. If your child is giving you signals that they need more connection from you, try to find ways to be ready. Kids often make this request in subtle ways – whining, crying, arguing, or tantrums. Take a deep breath and give them what they need – even if it's inconvenient. For example, if your normally quiet child requests to talk at a very inopportune time, try to stop what you're doing and be available to listen. For some kids, bringing up a difficult topic can be nerve wracking, and if they are brushed aside, they may be less likely to bring up topics in the future.
- **Be Ordinary** — Your kids want you. They don't need super parents to "fix" everything. They don't need you to say the right thing or do something magical. They just need to know that they are loved by you in a way that speaks to them. This might mean that you get it wrong sometimes – you misinterpret their emotion, you are silly when they wanted to be serious, you downplay something important – and that's ok. Relationships are a constant work in progress. Apologize. And try again.

Connection doesn't have to be complicated. Of course, spending longer spans of quality time with each child is important too, but don't miss out on the mini-connections during the day. A quick backrub while your son's at the table doing homework. Leaving a joke in your daughter's lunch box. Stooping down to your toddler's level while they babble on incoherently. I don't ever want to be too busy to connect with my kids. Even if it means that last email won't be sent, dinner may be a little delayed, and my house won't stay clean.

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