

35 SLOW TIPS FOR FAMILIES

1. Spread out the pieces of a difficult puzzle somewhere in the house and let the family (plus any visitors) assemble it over several days (or longer).
2. Give everyone in the family a soccer-style yellow card to hold up when another family member starts getting too fast.
3. Designate certain hours of the day screen-free and place all phones, tablets and other electronic devices into a Gadget Box for the duration.
4. Create a pop-up playground near home and rope in the neighbours.
5. Pinpoint the most frenetic moments of the day (bedtime?) and then devise ways to make them less frenetic (a cup of tea with stories?).
6. Create a Listening Bank. If a parent is too busy or stressed to listen to a child now, book time to listen later.
7. Encourage your children to knock on the door of a neighbouring family you don't know and invite the kids to play.
8. Dedicate one evening per week when the family does something fun and relaxing together: a movie with popcorn, board games, charades, etc.
9. Encourage children to roll up their sleeves in the garden: get them planting, watering and nurturing something edible (or inedible).

10. Head together to the local Farmers' Market to ask questions, try foods, buy what you fancy and then cook it all up together for a family dinner back home.
11. Mum and Dad have a regular date night when talking about the children is gently discouraged.
12. Lie together on the ground in the back garden or on the common and do some cloud- watching. Or do the same at night but use a book or an app to identify stars and constellations.
13. Share the load by setting up a carpool or a babysitting cooperative with other families
14. Designate one room or zone in the house to be permanently screen-and-gadget-free.
15. Eat together (with all the gadgets switched off) at least once per day.
16. Organise a regular multigenerational game of soccer, frisbee, etc.
17. Hold no-spending days when you come up with fun activities that cost nothing.
18. Every once in a while be spontaneous, tear up the schedule, go off-piste and just seize the moment. For example: blow off bedtime one night in favour of an epic game of Monopoly.
19. Hold a weekly Calendar Night to discuss the family schedule and avoid clashes and overload.

20. Build blocks of time into the family schedule when nothing is planned. When the moment rolls round, do whatever takes your fancy: play a game, chat, go for a bike ride, potter, bake a cake....
21. Designate some family outings gadget-free (no phones, tablets, cameras, etc).
22. Make certain car journeys permanently gadget-free (eg. the school run; or the ride home from visiting grandparents).
23. Put the children in charge of the schedule for one day to identify which (screen-free) activities really matter to them.
24. Set the alarm ten minutes earlier every morning (it's worth it, trust me!) so the family can start the day in a more relaxed groove.
25. Make the children earn time on digital gadgets by performing household chores or indulging in a Slow activity. For example: one hour playing outside might get them 15 minutes on the Xbox. Use popsicle sticks or seashells with the time credits written on them – and keep them in a jar in the kitchen.
26. Find other likeminded parents (through school, neighbourhood chat forums, local grapevine) to build the confidence and networks to slow down together.
27. Create more in-between time. We tend to pack our schedule so tightly that we end up running from one thing to the next. If you normally schedule 10 minutes to get from one activity to the next, schedule 15 minutes instead.
28. Find ways to do things together as a family that you are currently doing alone: chores; siblings helping each other with homework; exercise, etc.

29. Keep a family journal or scrapbook where everyone logs photos, funny stories, memorabilia – and bring it out regularly to reflect.
30. Hold Photo Nights when you pass round family snaps and talk about the memories they evoke.
31. Talk to parents with older children to help put the anxieties of today in perspective.
32. Find a way to close your street for a day. Get the neighbours to pitch in with food and let the street games begin.
33. Write a short Mission Statement. It might be, “We are a family that has fun together.” Or: “We are a family where everyone listens to each other.” Pin it up on the fridge door as a reminder of what you aspire to.
34. Find ways to trim the extracurricular load by focussing on fewer activities.
35. Check your own speed. Slowing down family life starts with slowing down yourself...

CARL HONORÉ

www.carlhonore.com