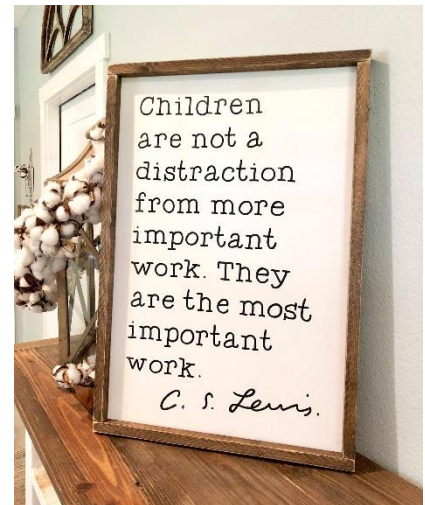


Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

The importance of parental attention

Over the last 2 weeks I have begun leading this year's Incredible Years Parenting Programme. It's such a joy to work with a lovely group of parents who are committed to improving their parenting skills. I know many others would love to attend but can't because of work or family commitments. So, over the next few weeks, I'll write about the topics we cover to give you a flavour of what we're learning.

The foundation for Incredible Years is to build a strong and caring bond with our children. Everything else on the course relies on this loving relationship being firmly established and if it isn't the other practices and techniques just won't work. So, first things first, how much quality time or as we call it in Incredible Years "Special Time" do we spend with our children?



We may spend several hours a day in the same house, or even the same room as our children but are we consciously interacting with them in positive ways? How often have we left them to get on with their play so we can get things done and only spoken to them when they start to misbehave? Children desire our attention, they want to be noticed and they will do anything to get us to interact with them. So, if we don't "notice" them being good, they'll play up to get our attention. The principle behind spending "Special Time" with our children, is that we are giving them positive attention, while we play and interact with them. When their "emotional bank account" is full with the positive attention we have given them, children have less need to gain our attention through negative behaviour.

Another key to getting the most out of "Special Time" is to allow children to lead the play. There is a time and a place for using play to teach and instruct but there is also tremendous value in just watching our children play and keeping our interactions minimal, whilst still allowing them to know that we are interested in what they are doing. This involves choosing to slow down, putting aside our own agendas (and our phones!) and immersing ourselves in our children's worlds for just a few minutes. Parents on the course realised that sometimes they spend playtime with their children asking constant questions or telling them what to do, rather than allowing them to use their imaginations. After all, there is no right or wrong way to play with lego, build a train track, colour a picture, etc.

How do we fit in all this "Special Time"? It's about putting our children first. The Incredible Years model works on parents committing to spend just 10-15 minutes each day with each child, so we're not necessarily talking about large chunks of time. We don't have to provide expensive or complicated games. It's possible to have a really good chat while you wash up together or have fun on the way home from school kicking leaves or jumping in puddles. The main purpose is to build your relationship with your child with consistent, frequent times throughout the week, when you can enjoy each other's company and remember why you love them so much!

If you have any questions, or need to chat anything through, please email parenting@foundrylanepprimary.co.uk.