

Parenting *ideas*


INSIGHTS

Building parent-school partnerships

WORDS Malcolm Dix

Oh, so serious!

When Malcolm Dix found himself taking life too quickly and too seriously, he decided to take a dose of his own medicine.



Everywhere I go I hear from parents that they are too busy, too stressed, and have too much to do and not enough time. Many social observers say parents seeing themselves as 'time poor' is at epidemic levels, a belief that is only compounded by technology that enables us to be connected 24/7.

At one point I personally had to take some time to stop and honestly reflect upon my own life and that of my family. It didn't take long for me to see that I too had become caught up in the 'busyness' of life.

I knew that for the sake of my kids and my family, I had to make a change but it requires a day-in day-out conscious level of commitment – a commitment to practise joy, fun, patience, forgiveness, silliness, bad dancing and reflection.

Currently I'm doing seven things to calm my life down and that of my family while trying to create more space for my children to simply enjoy their childhood. (Some of the following I'm sure you already do but it's taken me a while to figure them out).

My strategies to slow down and not be so busy are as follows:

1 Eat together as a family at the table at least four nights a week

There has been more and more written about the importance of families eating together and the positive effect it has on children and adults alike. I have to say I'm enjoying it.

2 Avoid watching the nightly news

I've stopped watching the news and to my surprise the sky never collapsed as I had feared. I'm a much happier man not watching the oh-so-depressing' news.

3 Turn off the TV and sit around an open fire

I've constructed a simple fire pit in our inner-city backyard and every second weekend my partner, the kids and I toast marshmallows, listen to funny songs, talk and look up at the stars. Who needs to go camping to enjoy the outdoors! My eldest boy (13 years old) is also learning to set a fire and his younger brothers are learning a lot about flames, hot coals and what happens to marshmallows when they are left in the fire for too long. Meanwhile my 16-year-old daughter will stare at the flames for an hour thinking about who knows what ... but for me this is better than seeing her staring at social media or watching mindless television.

4 Dance together

I've made the conscious decision to start dancing in the kitchen with my kids at least three times a week. I can't dance to save myself, however I have three boys and if they are ever going to learn to dance and be comfortable with moving their bodies, I suddenly realized I have to lead the way. This parenting caper sure can be humiliating at times, but we wouldn't have it any other way.

5 Exercise together

I exercise with my kids at least four times a week, usually at the local park kicking the footy, throwing a frisbee, running with our dog and so on. I have realised that the best way to get them all moving is by moving myself too.

6 Explore nature together

I've started spending more time in nature with my kids by taking them to the river, the hills, lakes, nature parks. I keep it local, with the occasional longer drive on weekends. I contacted my local council and found so many fun things to do as a family in my local area that I never knew existed ... who would have thunk it!

7 Limit your own social networking

I have severely reduced my time spent on social media such as Facebook, Twitter etc. My personality type could disappear into social media and never come back so I knew I had to significantly change my ways and, once again, it's all about positive role modelling for my kids.

So there you have it, my strategies for simplifying and calming my family life. As a result I'm happier, less stressed and far more 'present' for everyone which, in turn, is having a positive effect on my kids.

Malcolm Dix

Stay one step ahead of your kids with great ideas & expert advice from Michael Grose. Join Michael's **NEW Parentingideas Club** today at parentingideasclub.com.au. You'll be so glad you did.

