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Mommies and Me Special Time

By Kimberly Hargis

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Creating and making special memories with your child is very important, especially for your child's development.

Special memories also help build a relationship with your child that will last a lifetime. Moms often do not have the money they would like to spend to do things with their children.

With that in mind, I have put together activities I used to do with my son (who is now 17 and still remembers doing these activities with me). Some activities are also from when I did babysitting at home.

Inexpensive Activities You Can Do With Your Child

Remember Air Hockey?

Some arcades still have Air Hockey Games, which are cheaper to play than the new video-interactive games, but they do not have a time out. If you can find one, suggest that you can score the most goals, and challenge your son or daughter to a game. If you have a young child, make sure that you hit the puck so that stops before the goal line----this will allow your child to successfully defend his goal and hit it back toward you.

The game can go on for a very long time, and you can have a lot of fun with "near misses" and "good saves" and "SCORE!" When my son was an 8-year-old, I could make an air hockey game that cost 50 cents last for an hour. You are probably thinking, "My child will want to play the other games, too!" I used to tell my son that after we play Air Hockey that he could then play two games of his choice. This worked well and I could get several hours of quality time with my son for under \$5.00.

Shaving Cream can be Fun!

Mommies and Me Special Time

Get a bottle of shaving cream and spray shaving cream on the kitchen table or other smooth surface (please test this first by putting a little shaving cream on a corner of the table to make sure it will not discolor the furniture!). You and your child can draw in the foam or make a snowman, etc., out of the foam for as long as the foam lasts.

Be sure to wear clothes that can be tossed in the laundry for a quick rinse! After the shaving cream starts to dissolve all you need to do a wipe down the table for a quick clean up. I loved doing this because there is no real mess; it leaves a pleasant smell in your home (and believe it or not does a great job cleaning your furniture). Your child will also think it is so cool that you are allowing them to play with shaving cream. It is almost as if you are letting them do something mischievous.

Supplies List: Shaving Cream Wet cloth to wipe up with

Paint Walk

Buy a roll of fax paper or any cheap paper you can find in a roll, and a container of washable finger paint. Dress your child in painting clothes. Lay out unfolded sheets of newspaper just to be safe and then roll out a very long strip of paper (about 10 feet or more if you like) on top of the newspaper. Place a baking pan with paint in it at one end of the roll of paper and a baking pan with water in it at the other.

Take off your child's shoes. Your child can then step in the paint and then the walk or dance on the paper ending by stepping in the water that the end of the roll of paper. Dry their feet. Tape the paper on the wall and allow to dry.

These footprints are also great Christmas gifts for Grandparents. I used to do this at Christmas with the children for whom I babysat or in a day care center where I worked so the children could give them to their parents for a Christmas present. The children were so amazed I let them step in paint that they behaved very well. This fun activity works best on a hard floor surface.

Supplies needed: A roll of fax paper or any type of cheap paper on a roll. Washable finger-paint, any color. Old clothes for your child to wear. Tape to use to hang the paper to dry

Painting Sheets

When the weather is nice go to garage sales and buy a cheap white sheet that fits your child's bed. (New sheet or colored sheets will work, just that garage sale sheets are cheaper.) Wash sheet and then hang on the line. At a craft store buy paint that will NOT wash out and is non-toxic. Dress your child in painting clothes. Give your child a paintbrush and allow him or her to paint on the sheet freely. After the sheet has dried, rewash and dry it. The child will love having sheets they painted themselves to sleep on at night. And Mom, you can paint, too!

Years from now your child will remember the day he or she painted sheets with Mommy (and here's a sentimental idea: save the painted sheets for when your child has his or her first child, include the painted sheet in a shower gift for the mother-to-be!)

Mommies and Me Special Time

A few tips: Do not allow the child to paint heavily on the sheet or it will be scratchy after it is washed. When rewashing the sheet let them soak in fabric softener to help soften the sheet.

Different uses for the painted sheets: If you do not like the idea of the child sleeping on a painted sheet, you can hang the sheet over a table for a playhouse. Mark on the sheet what each side of the sheet will be in terms of front, back, side, side, and top. Then lay the sheet out and let the child paint doors, windows, flowerbeds, etc., to make a playhouse cover (or a fort, or fire station, or barn, or a fairy princess castle). Then when the child wants a playhouse simply set up the table and cover with the sheet. Remember it does not matter if the flowers look like flowers. All that matters is what the child sees flowers where the glob of paint is.

Supplies needed: Sheet to fit your child's bed or over table depending on how you choose to use it. Paint that will NOT wash out and is non-toxic. Paint brush.

Hopscotch

There is always the lost art of hopscotch! With some simple sidewalk chalk you can spend the day at a park or at home teaching your child the fun of a hop, skip, and a jump. But watch out because one day when I did this in front of the apartments I lived in and half the Mothers on my street ended up playing—we all giggled like little girls and WE ended up having fun, too!

Supplies needed: Sidewalk chalk and a sidewalk to hop and have fun on

Kimberly Hargis owns and operates Mom's Break PMS. Printables Madness Syndrome n. 1 : a chronic condition characterized by an uncontrollable urge to find Free Printables on the Internet: sometimes known as PMS. Please visit

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At-Home Mommy – Entry Level

By Sherri L Dodd

When I left my high-tech corporate job to be an at-home mom, I had no idea of the changes I was going to encounter. No, I am not talking of the usual baby stuff like not freaking out when food or something worse gets rubbed on my nice clothes...if and when I get a chance to where nice clothes. Nor am I talking about the fact that I could no longer have extravagant and expensive knicks-knacks on my coffee table. What I am talking about is something else...and someone else. I am talking about having to relate to those other, more seasoned, at-home mommies.

Sure, everything seemed okay. Friendly glances at the park followed by a short spurt of conversation, but getting into those little cliques are just as tricky, if not more difficult, than the ones I encountered,

Mommies and Me Special Time

and came to master within the corporate environment. Though I was efficient in my conversation and quick with my wit; though I laughed at the right jokes and wore appropriate attire; and, even when I stood in the widest opening of the park letting everyone see that I was available for chat, the mommies shied away from me. My best bet is that they probably gathered in a far corner to chuckle over my desperation. Heck, I may have even laughed at me too had I not been distracted by the small hovering cloud of post-partum depression.

You can liken this to the city gal in the country. There are many movies with a similar story line about the loud and obtrusive outsider that everyone sees as the square peg. While she may want to fit in, she knows from the get-go that it is going to be a long journey, due to all that tension she feels from her new peers. That is where I began to find my thoughts. (And let me tell you, if you think your co-workers in their Armani suits are pretentious, try a mommy-clique in t-shirts and capris. I kid you not, they can be downright condescending.) While acceptance is hard, it is a form of closure, and after a year or so, I decided that I was just not going to fit in with the bobby-socked, sneakered mommies littered throughout my day.

But, then...and here is the light at the end of the tunnel...something happened. To this day I cannot tell you how we came across each other, but I was invited to a play date by one of the sneakered-mommies. There, I met another mommy. The playdate started slowly and was light in discussion. But, it was consistent...and stayed consistent on a weekly basis. I began to look forward to my sessions. At the time, I did not know much about them, but every week that knowledge grew. To make a long story short, the friendships stuck. These days I do not always see them as much as I used to, but it is more of a hectic schedule issue than a lack of want. As well, more mommies came and I am proud of my little mommy network that I have slowly gained. Good-bye Armani, hello Gap.

A few times since, I have seen a new mom on the playground fresh from corporate, possibly on a trial period of this new career. I observe what those other mommies must have seen in me. There is a look of uncertainty on the face of an entry-level at-home mom. Perhaps it is a mix of "Am I doing the right thing (I loved my work, not to mention the money and acknowledgement), "I absolutely did the right thing (the proof is toddling before me) and "How the heck did I get here (What a completely different world). This uncertainty is projected in facial expression as well as through actual conversation. I reflect and believe that my uncertainty mixed with a mild case of PPD must have made

me real stimulating conversation. No wonder they ran the opposite direction. As well, trying to bring a corporate mentality into the position of at-home mom was another stumbling block. I looked at building the new relationships as a strategy to accomplish and, subsequently, master. When really what it takes to build relationships with other at-home mommies is genuine honesty and a grounded sense of self. Only after that takes place and solidifies can a dash of cattiness be added. But, the details on that topic are a completely different article.

The next time you encounter a corporate mommy grasping for the sense of her new entry-level position, have patience and compassion. Yes, she could quite possibly start off awkward and maybe even insulting, but most likely, she wants to succeed in this new career. Mentor her in a non-invasive way and she is sure to become a great friend.

Mommies and Me Special Time

Sherri Dodd is an ACE–certified Personal Trainer and Lifestyle and Weight Management Consultant. She is also the creator and author of Mom Looks Great – The Fitness Program for Post Partum Women. With over fifteen years of exercise experience, she is dedicated to a life of fitness as well as encouraging others to seek healthy habits and a better quality of life.

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