Quality vs. Quantity: The Importance of How Parents and Teens Spend Time Together in Building Stronger Families
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Background

Parents and teens wish they could spend more time together because they enjoy each other’s company. The Center for Parent and Teen Communication (CPTC) at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia partnered with YouGov to conduct focus groups and survey a national sample of parents and their 13-17 year old teens about how they spend quality time together. And some of the results may surprise you!

Credits

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Parents and teens wish they could spend more time together.

87% of parents wish they could spend more quality time with their teen, and 63% of teens wish they could spend more quality time with their parents.
55% of parents and 39% of teens say their other responsibilities get in the way of spending quality time with one another. While those responsibilities may pose a challenge, they aren’t insurmountable.
It’s about quality time, not quantity of time.

This is great news because all families can act on this and most ideas don’t cost a thing! Parents and teens both prefer to keep quality time simple, often focused around everyday tasks that don’t require much planning or a significant time commitment:

Top responses for parents on how they like to spend quality time with their teen included watching movies or television shows together (76%), just talking (68%), making meals together (67%), enjoying nature (66%), and even just running errands together (64%). Playing video games or board games (60%), enjoying sports (46%), and even household chores (43%) also made the list.

Teens’ responses mirrored those of parents, with top ways to spend quality time together including watching movies or television shows together (74%), making meals together (65%), just talking (60%), playing video games or board games (60%), and yes, running errands together (59%)! Teens also added learning a new skill or hobby together to the list (38%).

“Simply just spend more time with them. Like I strengthen my relationship with my parents just by living life, right? Like maybe on the weekends we all go grocery shopping together or something. Just running errands together. Maybe the car doesn’t have gas, so we go get that together. Just simple tasks together.” — Focus group teen
Parents are getting creative about finding common ground that creates bonding time with their teen. 86% of parents and 56% of teens would take up a new activity if it would allow them to spend more quality time together.
You won’t regret the time you spent together. When parents were asked to look back on their teen years and reflect on the relationships they had with their own parents, the top responses for what they might change were “I’d spend more time with them” (42%) and “I’d talk with them more” (42%).
5 ways to spend quality time together

Teens value parents’ guidance and enjoy spending time with them. Remember, it’s about spending quality time together, not the amount of time spent together. Here are five ways for parents and teens to make the most of their time together.

1. **Watch movies, TV, or play video games or board games together**

   Different types of media play a key role in the lives of teens. These can be great ways to learn more about your teen’s interests. Movies and TV shows can prompt conversations about difficult topics such as mental health, social injustice, substance use, and more. It can be easier to have these talks using characters from the show or movie as examples.

   “I've always tried to find what he's interested in and do it myself. When he was little it was Minecraft, so I got on Minecraft. Then it's Rocket League or this or that.” — Focus group parent
5 ways to spend quality time together

2. **Just talk!**

If busy schedules are getting in the way of spending quality time together, set aside some time to chat and be with one another. Nearly two-thirds of parents and teens said “just talking” was one of their preferred ways for spending quality time together.
Run errands, make meals, and – yes – do household chores together

Believe or not, more than one-third of teens said doing household chores together was a good way to spend quality time together. Make some of these activities feel less tedious by including your teen. They can be golden opportunities for teaching teens how to cook, fix things around the house, and maintain a clean home. These are skills they can apply to their adult lives.
Almost half of the parents and teens in our survey mentioned enjoying sports or nature as a way to spend quality time together. Take a hike, a walk in the woods, play catch, or just watch your favorite sports teams together on TV or in-person. Exploring nature can build a sense of awe in teens. Sports can teach teens the importance of leadership, perseverance, and learning from mistakes.
Learn a new skill or hobby together

More than one-third of teens said they would like to spend quality time with their parents by learning a new skill or hobby side-by-side. Consider taking a class to build your skills or exploring a new hobby together.
YouGov Methods

The recruitment survey for the focus groups was fielded to YouGov’s proprietary panel of US respondents. This survey determined whether respondents were eligible to participate in the study, explained the nature of the study, obtained consent from participants, and collected information on respondents’ availability to participate in focus groups. Based on the availability of respondents who indicated their interest in participating, invitations were sent out to panelists for one of several scheduled focus groups. The focus groups were led by senior YouGov staff members, using a discussion guide developed by CPTC. All focus groups were hosted on Zoom, and were recorded. Following each event, the video recordings were professionally transcribed. At the conclusion of all focus groups, YouGov delivered transcripts and notes from all sessions. YouGov staff members also met with stakeholders at CPTC to debrief and discuss key findings and recommendations for the quantitative survey fielded subsequently.

For the quantitative survey, YouGov interviewed 507 respondents, who were then matched down to a sample of 500 to produce the final dataset. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, and education. The frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the November 2020 Current Population Survey (CPS) 1-year sample, with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file). The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, and region. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles. The weights were then post-stratified on region, gender, and a four-way stratification of gender, age (3-categories), race (4-categories), and education (4-categories), to produce the final weight.

For more information on YouGov’s privacy protocols, data security, and data storage, please see their Compliance FAQ.