

TAKING TIME

by Rebecca Wolf



Editor's Note: Rebecca Wolfe is a home economist with Penn State Cooperative Extension in Lehigh County. Her column replaces "Back Home" written by Michelle Rodgers. Michelle, promoted to assistant regional director for the Capitol region, no longer has time to write the column.

Rebecca writes: When I was invited to share some thoughts with you about today's family, the stresses it faces and the ways we can strengthen it, I considered many approaches. But above all others, the recurring thought was: "Quality family life is a matter of taking time"--time to listen to a child, time to unwind after a stressful day at work, time to plan a major purchase, time to create a romantic surprise for a spouse. I hope that you will enjoy this column, and I hope that the thoughts I share with you during the coming months will encourage you to take time for yourself and your family.

Will You Read Me A Story?

This past holiday I spent some time at my parents' home and enjoyed a bit of nostalgia as I read a book that my Mom used to read to me each holiday season. What happy memories it brought to mind!

I also thought about a comment my friend had told me recently, "There's going to be no such thing as books for kids growing up today... just TV and videos."

Do you remember during story time as a child nestling in the arms of a loving adult and finding yourself magically carried to the imaginary world of your storybook? The winter months provide an ideal time for you to renew that tradition with your own family.

Not only is reading aloud a good activity for family time, it also promotes development of a young child's language, imagination, observation skills, and attention span. This is one of the best things a parent can do to help a child succeed in school. Reading together also allows a parent to reinforce values and communicate love to the rest of the family.

Reading can be fun for people of all ages. As your family grows, allow children to read to you or read silently to themselves. Remember, your example speaks louder than words. When is the last time you read a book JUST FOR FUN?

Here are some suggestions for your family?

With toddlers and preschoolers:

Allow them to sit close to you and look at the pictures. Encourage interruptions for questions or for a second look at a page. The

youngest children will simply enjoy browsing through books. They are fascinated with the hinge action of the binding. The fun of "reading" a book is in turning pages, opening and closing the cover, and looking at the pictures. (Don't be surprised if they also want to chew the covers!)

Two to four year olds enjoy fast-paced books with rhyme, rhythm, and repetition. They love participation books and books with exaggeration. Try *Hand, Hand, Fingers, Thumb* and others by Dr. Seuss or *The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash* by Trinka Hakes Noble.

With elementary school-aged children:

Select books about real-life situations. *The House on Maple Street* by Bonnie Pryor and *The Mare on the Hill* by Thomas Locker are two good stories to share with these children. Children this age still enjoy listening to you read. They can scratch your back, paste trading stamps in a book, or draw while listening.

With young teens:

These individuals often have hobbies. The *Eyewitness Books* published by Alfred A. Knopf help them explore a variety of topics. *The Tripod Trilogy* by John Christopher, *Matilda* by Ronald Dahl, and *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls offer a mixture of humor, adventure and sorrow.

With adolescents:

Teens enjoy books about relationships -- love, friendships, and families. Look for books about the challenges of growing up. You may also encourage a teen's reading by giving him or her a magazine subscription.

Suggestions for the entire family:

- Limit TV watching. Avoid making it look like reading together is taking away TV time by saying, "The TV set goes off at 8:30. If you want a story read before bed, that's fine. If not, that's fine, too. But no TV after 8:30."

- Make a trip to the public library a part of your family's routine. If you need help, ask the librarian for suggestions.

- Don't just read books. Also read newspapers, package labels, lyrics on CD covers, advertisements.

- Give books as gifts. Mail one to a friend in a distant town. You can frequently buy used books inexpensively. You can also sell or donate your books to others once you've read them.

Want to create memories that last? Want to invest in your child's future? Want to remind yourself about the lighter side of life? Take time this week to read with your family.



Farm Show visitors enjoyed the good taste of lamb when Julie Maust, Lamb and Wool Queen, handed out samples.

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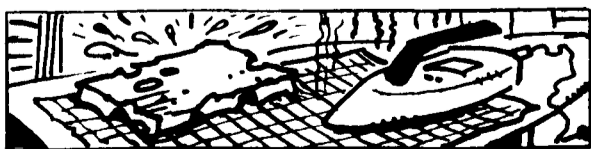
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