

25 Ways to Show Your Kid You're an All-In Parent

1. BE PRESENT

Put down your phone. Close your laptop. Tune in and be fully with your kids when you're with them. This is harder than it sounds, which leads me to...

2. LISTEN

Listening is a discipline most of us aren't very good at. Showing our kids we're interested in all the little stories and recollections of their day (even if it's mostly super important information about Spider-Man or their latest obsession) builds confidence that they have our attention for the bigger things later. Whether or not your child is a talker, keep showing up so they'll realize you're there for them when they need to talk. (Also, teenagers usually decide to talk late at night when you're ready to collapse into bed, but it's worth staying up for.)

3. BE A PERSON OF YOUR WORD

All-in parents earn their kids' trust through integrity. This means doing what you say you'll do and being who you say you are. Be careful to promise only what you can fulfill, and if you must break a commitment, take that seriously and own up to it. This not only sets an example for your child but communicates how much you value them.

4. ADJUST YOUR SCHEDULE TO YOUR FAMILY'S

We often work hard because we love our kids and want to provide for them. But if we work so much that we have too little time with them, we need to reconsider our motives. Kids spell love: "T-I-M-E." It won't always be possible to set your own work schedule, but as much as it depends on you, do all you can to give your family as much time as you can. If you can't adjust your work hours, take care to prioritize your off time and be focused on what matters. Also, many families could live on less income if they adjusted their lifestyle, giving the family more time together.

5. SHOW UP WHEN THEY NEED YOU

You can't be everywhere, and your kids will understand that. But do your best to be there when they need you most: Mornings and evenings. For the games, shows, and awards. At the principal's office and after the breakup.

6. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Kids need healthy parents. They feel more secure when we're rested, balanced, and happy. In her book *More Than a Mom*, Kari Kampakis said, "Wellness helps you become the best version of yourself so you can bravely and boldly serve God." So true! No one but you can give your kids a happy mom or dad. Make it a priority.

7. BE ALL-IN IN YOUR MARRIAGE

More on this in chapter 5, but it's too important not to include here. A healthy marriage is one of the greatest gifts you can give your children. If you're married, invest in your marriage daily.

8. INVEST IN THINGS THEY LOVE

Get interested in what interests your kids. If you let them play video games, learn something about the games they love. When our fourth son decided he loved to golf, the sport was foreign to Dave and me. Dave invested time into learning about the game--reading articles and studying the best players. Levi felt his dad's commitment to him through that effort.

9. HAVE FUN WITH THEM

Next to T-I-M-E, I would say kids spell love F-U-N! The average kid laughs three hundred times a day compared to a measly seventeen times a day for us adults. Laughter connects us and unites us. It builds memories, and it's healthy. Most of all, having fun with our kids shows them we enjoy them, and that fulfills a desire of every human heart.

10. GIVE THEM LOVING TOUCH

God made us to need physical touch, and kids crave a parent's affection. Even as they grow up and may pull away physically, yours will still need your loving touch. I made a "hug a night" rule with my oldest son when he became a teenager, and it was a ritual I think we both needed as he grew into independence.

11. HUMBLY ASK FOR FORGIVENESS

None of us will get parenting or anything else right all the time. And when we own our mistakes and ask for forgiveness, were both modeling something important to our kids and showing them that we value and respect them.

12. PARENT ACCORDINGLY

Be a student of your child and show them you know them, well. From their favorite color to how they might like the stuffed animals placed on their bed...from their favorite music to a treat that will bless them after school. Little things are often the big things.

13. WRITE A NOTE

Leaving thoughtful or encouraging notes for your child is a great way to communicate your love and commitment (even when they don't feel like talking!) It doesn't have to be fancy. Something as simple as, "I'm proud of you!" "Good luck in your game today!" "I'm praying for you" will show your support. You might leave a silly riddle or joke, a Bible verse, or an inspirational quote. The written word is powerful!

14. TAKE YOUR CHILD ON A DATE

You can plan a monthly or quarterly date with one child at a time. Or just be spontaneous and take one of your kids for a treat after school. The goal is to be intentional: Put your phone and other distractions away. Focus on that child. This is a time to enjoy them and get to know them better. Remember, kids spell love: "T-I-M-E".

15. HELP THEM OUT WITH A CHORE

Yes, I really said it. As big of a fan as I am of kids doing real work, we can express our love and support (and appreciation for what they do) by coming alongside them and saying: “Hey, let me help with that!” Dishes, laundry, raking the leaves...when you step in to help they feel your support!

16. DREAM TOGETHER

Kids love to dream and one way to be all-in is by dreaming with them! Dream about great things they may one day do or places they’d like to go. Dream about their future job or family. Dream about the difference they might make in the world as God leads them in the years ahead!

17. READ TO THEM

From birth (or even before experts suggest!) reading to your child is healthy and bonding. My teenagers have even enjoyed me reading to them! Tell your child you are all-in by committing to reading together consistently.

18. LAUGH AT YOUR CHILD'S JOKES OR SILLINESS

Without realizing it we can sometimes parent robotically; we go through the motions and get the job done, but we can tune out emotionally. Kids naturally laugh, a lot. An all-in parent will take the time to laugh with them! Enjoy their jokes and their silliness.

19. TEACH YOUR CHILD SOMETHING YOU'RE GOOD AT

Oftentimes parents have specific skills but unless their child shows interest, they may never bring them into what they love the most. It can be great to take the time to introduce your child to what you’re good at — be it wood work or baking, or art or gardening. They may not love it, but they might! And what they will know is that you want to share the things most sacred to you...with them. That’s all-in parenting!

20. ASK THEM FOR FEEDBACK

Kids have opinions and concerns, and they often go unheard. Asking your child for their thoughts on family matters is a loving gesture. You might ask them to chime in on a holiday plan, an upcoming vacation, how the chore system is going, or what they'd like to watch for the next family movie night.

21. CARE ABOUT THEIR BURDENS

It's easy to shrug off a child who has child-size problems. When our kids are stressed out over 4th grade math or a difficult soccer coach, some of us parents have the tendency to belittle their problems. Whether we say it or not, we might be thinking, "I wish long division was my biggest problem — count your blessings!" But let's remember that our kids' issues are big to them...and then come alongside them to listen and support them. Brainstorming how to best respond to a difficult coach or the lunchroom bully might just be the biggest "all-in" message your child hears this week.

22. FREELY COMPLIMENT THEM

Depending on your personality (and love language) you may or may not feel natural at giving compliments. But I suggest you practice it and learn it because KIDS NEED IT! The world will beat our kids down plenty. Coming home to a parent who tells them they're beautiful, they're smart, they're awesome and amazing...will hit a place deep in our kids' hearts. Compliments are free. Use them generously!

23. ENJOY SOME QUIET TIME, TOGETHER

Pack up your work (bills, notes you need to write) and have your child pack up their school work and relocate to a quiet coffee shop to be "work buddies." Conversation is not necessary, just doing life together is enough.

24. TAKE A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

Pull out the baby book or photo albums and spend a few minutes reminiscing about your child's early years. Kids typically love to see old photos of themselves. (just don't pull them out in front of their friends!) Use this as an opportunity to affirm their character - things you've always loved about them, and areas you've seen them grow. Reminding them of the history you share is a way to express your life-long commitment to them.

25. TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT GOD'S ALL-IN COMMITMENT TO YOU, AND TO THEM

Live a life of faith, showing your kids what it looks like to recognize your own need for forgiveness and grace every day. Our commitment to, and reliance on God will point our kids to the security that only comes through a relationship with Him.