



Connecting Families through the Clouds!!

Even as our world seems to be “grow smaller” our children and grandchildren seems to be living further away. Careers and interests now have our children living not just in another city or state but in another country. For all members of the family at all generations this is a loss.

We lose time together, shared holidays and special occasions, quiet time, teaching moments, developmental milestones which no picture can adequately capture.

One new, invention which can be a great asset to families, is the latest technology via the “Cloud”; internet programs which allow families to visit and share “face to face”. It is well worth the time and expense for family members of all generations to invest in and learn to use the new hardware and software programs. My favorite is “SKYPE” (skype.com)

Often families are at a loss as to how to engage in communication via the computer. Here are some suggestions based on age and development.

General Suggestions:

- * Have defined days and times for visits. This gives everyone a schedule on which to depend.
- * Be realistic about time and attention by age and development. Some visits will be longer and more engaging. Some will be shorter. Just go with the flow and keep staying connected.
- * Plan some activities to do ahead of time based on the children/grandchild’s ages and interests

Ideas based on ages and interest

- * **Reading stories** is great at all ages. Change the type/level of book by age and interest
- * **Singing songs**, especially with hand motions, engages the whole family and creates family traditions. Use children’s songs for the younger set and “camp” songs for the older ones

***Toddlers/Preschoolers:** Help support learning by engaging in counting items, naming colors and shapes, identifying common items, identifying body parts through songs and games

Game idea: “What’s in Grandma’s purse”: Take a purse or tote bag and put items from your house in the purse. Let children identify the object as you pull each out. Talk about the item.

Elementary School Age: * Support school learning by helping with school assignments and projects. * Assist children in using new spelling words in their conversation. * Discuss science concepts and history facts comparing them to the “old” ways when parents/grandparents were young. * Share family stories about the child(ren), parents and grandparents.

Teenagers: * Read the same books as they have in school. Discuss plot, character development, theme. * Stay informed about sport, club activities and interests. * Engage in conversation about current events based on interest; sports, politics, science. * Share a hobby, join a program together; fantasy sports, computer game, *Play cards or board games.