

## adventure

## exercise &amp; fitness

**Time To Walk The Kid**

Jeff Thayer

Parenting technique and theory has been dissected and studied, judged, and assessed from every conceivable angle. However, I have yet to see a single study, theory, or book that views parenting from the perspective of the fitness professional. You see, we fitness types have a very simplistic view of the world. Of course everyone has problems, but there's nothing under the sun that can't be made better by exercise. Not to say problems will be solved, but to us simple fitness folk, if you take all your difficulties and challenges and add exercise to them, things will improve. This applies to the challenges of child rearing as well.

My professional advice, a fitness professional that is - Go For A Walk!

Too simple, right? I don't have a PhD. in Childhood Development. I don't have a Harvard study to back me up. What I do have is a broad perspective and a talent for ignoring lame excuses.

Adults of all ages love to start sentences with "these kids today," and one of the most common endings to that sentiment is, "never walk anywhere, they're always in a car being chauffeured." I often add that they don't bike anywhere either, if they even know how. Kids are getting heavier. Today's generation is the heaviest in history with childhood obesity rates rising annually. Reason #1 to walk with your child - Burn some energy; Reason #2 - Get the old folks to stop complaining.



A walk is a chance to talk, even if your child doesn't say a word.

Another popular complaint these days is that kids spend too much time in front of the TV or computer. Studies and statistics bare this out so here's another reason to get out and walk. Every minute you're walking with your kid, they aren't in front of the TV or chatting online. Also, don't forget that mindless activities like watching TV are hot spots for kids to be eating empty calories like snacks and sodas. If you and your kids are out for a walk, neither of you can be home crunching on chips.

Parents are a powerful influence upon children, not just with words, but with actions. When your child sees you walking or doing some other form of exercise this helps them to form positive feelings about such activities and encourages positive patterns of behavior. Not to mention it's actually good for you to be out walking, kids aren't the only ones getting heavier these days.

The benefits of my plan aren't just physical. Many people feel the idea of quality time with kids, especially as they age, is foolish. It isn't. Even if you walk with your teenager and they don't say a word or even put up some fuss, don't fall for it. You're taking time to be with them, you're there to hear them even if they don't say anything, and they notice. This time with your child can help foster positive feelings of self worth, not just because they're being more fit but because you're spending time with them that you don't "have to."



Staying indoors with video games isn't helping conversation or fitness.

The walk is not just a means to an end. There are many enjoyable points along the way for kids of all ages. You may be surprised how many more things you see while walking with a child. Different shape clouds, trees swaying, birds chirping, other people walking, many things that adults look right past catch the attention of kids. As you establish a rhythm and the comfort level grows in your activity time, the lines of communication open and curiosity blossoms. Walking in the woods or on the beach can lead to many exciting questions about the environment and the area in which we live. Varying your route also has the effect of keeping kids from getting too bored too quickly. Remember you're dealing with the "now" generation.

There's nothing magic about walking, "go for a walk" is easily replaced by "go do something." Jogging can be very nice with older or more athletic kids. Play a round of golf, go biking, or play a game of tennis or basketball, any

physical activity that you can do together and both enjoy and share will fit the bill perfectly.

The physicality is important. Not just because it's good for you and your son or daughter but because it's one more thing for you to share. When kids are younger it gives you a chance to help them learn and develop skills and coordination, stamina, and comfort with their body. When your kids are older the physical setting for your interaction can be a great common denominator to bring you together. Teenagers are often shy or reticent to "hang" with their parents. A sport or activity gives them the cover they may need to feel comfortable.

Everything from the proverbial clothes on the back and roof overhead, to encouraging a love for reading and learning, to fostering strong character and feelings of self-worth, parents are far and away the largest and most powerful influence on any young person's life. A personal trainer's advice for staying relevant in your child's life - Take A Walk!

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