Family time is a worthy investment that can boost your child's communication skills and self-esteem. As a result, she may learn more and behave better in school. Try these ideas for fitting in more time with your youngster.

**Maximize minutes**

Sharing simple, everyday moments may lead to conversations about school or friends. Ask your child to help you with dinner. She could make the salad while you peel potatoes. Or sing along with the radio when the two of you are in the car or listening to music at home.

**Have “play dates”**

Join your youngster when she plays. She might teach you the rules for Trouble or Mousetrap, or you could show her a card game you liked at her age. Or pretend with her—maybe she’ll be a veterinarian and you’ll bring stuffed animals for checkups. Taking turns and role-playing build social skills she needs in school.

**Winter wear**

Not too cold, not too hot—your child will concentrate better in school if she’s comfortable. Encourage her to dress in layers so she can remove or add as needed. For example, she might wear a sweater over a T-shirt or a vest on top of a blouse.

**Developing diligence**

When your youngster gives a job his wholehearted effort, he’s being diligent. To demonstrate, suggest that he fold a few shirts before putting them in a drawer and then just throw in the rest. Ask him if he has done the job right. Point out that diligence will give him better results (unwrinkled shirts).

**Worth quoting**

“Hold on to a true friend with both your hands.” Nigerian proverb

**Celebrate history**

For a child, even yesterday can seem like a long time ago. Bring the past into the present for your youngster with these do-it-today activities.

- **Celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day.**
  This civil rights leader helped to change the world. How can your family make a difference? Have each person draw a star on a sheet of paper, then cut it out and write one way to help others on each of the star’s points. Examples: “Make a meal for a sick neighbor.” “Play with a classmate who doesn’t have a lot of friends.”

- **Create a personal history museum.** History isn’t just about others—your family has its own history, too! Let your child turn a box into a museum filled with items that remind family members of “historic” moments. He might include his T-ball award or a photograph of his little sister in a school play.

**Plan ahead**

With your child, list special activities you both enjoy, such as going to a flea market, visiting a nature center, or watching a basketball game. Put these on a calendar so you’ll plan on them. She’ll see that her company is important to you.

Tip: Silence or put away your phone to give your youngster your undivided attention while you chat or play.
This sparkly science experiment will show your youngster how crystals form.

1. Save the shells from 4 eggs that you’ve cracked in half. Have your child rinse them and place into an empty egg carton.

2. Measure $\frac{1}{2}$ cup boiling water into a mug. Your youngster should stir in about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup salt, a little at a time, until it won’t dissolve anymore.

3. Let your child pour 1 tbsp. water into each shell and add a drop of food coloring.

4. Have her check the shells twice a day and record what she sees. Over several days, colorful crystals will form.

5. She could paint her crystals with clear nail polish to preserve them.

The science: As salt dissolves, the water molecules drive apart the salt molecules. When the water evaporates, the salt molecules go back together, forming a regular geometric pattern called a crystal. Snowflakes and diamonds are real-world examples of crystals.