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Studies have shown that what most children want is not “things”; but “time” with the ones that mean the most to them.

Some of the best time you can spend with your grandkids happens without planning. If you are fortunate enough to have grandchildren living close by, you are aware that, there are times; they just show up at your door. Or if they live out-of-town, they may come for a visit to your home; you may try to sneak in a bit of work, your grandchild comes in and just starts up a conversation with you.

Do you have a golden opportunity or an interruption? How you react will help define your relationship with your grandchild. So, let's say, you take the opportunity to truly engage in the conversation, coming eye-to-eye with them, commenting, asking questions and discussing ~ all the time “building” that bonding. Soon the child is off again, and you have an overwhelming feeling of joy at just what took place, so unplanned. No matter what time you spend with them, 5 minutes or 25 minutes, becomes quality “time” for them, and for you.

So here are a few more ideas to draw from that can allow some other quality time for both of you, and they don't cost much more than your time, (for most of the ideas):

1. Be a tourist in your own town ~ or your grand child's town.
2. Star Gaze ~ talk about the constellations.
3. Schedule a visit to the local library; for some quiet time to read together, take turns reading to each other, Choose a book with no words & make up the story. Check for other events that the library may offer.

4. At your home, or at theirs, take special opportunities to play games. (www.familyfun.com is a great resource for fun family time ideas and games.)

5. Dance together; make homemade instruments and play them; or listen to “children’s” music (www.nancymusic.com has free downloadable songs, sheet music, and words to her very simple but fun songs.

6. Watch for musicals, artistic or spiritual events hosted various groups, or “blossoming” performers. Schools often have performances that may have a day to present their performance at no cost.

7. If you have a Parks and Recreation Department or a National Park near you, they may offer activities you can join. You may want to check with the local Chamber of Commerce for less advertised activities in your area.

8. Visit local Zoos, Museums or some less frequented places.

9. Letterboxing/or geo-texting are both fairly “new age” activities. Surf the internet to find out more about these, and to discover if there are any available in your area. Fun for all ages.

10. Go for bike rides, take walks together just to talk, letting your grandchild take the lead in what is discussed.

11. Try taking a “detective walk”, look for interesting out-of-the-ordinary objects as you go along, and after you have collected several ~ weave together an entertaining story with all of the objects you “discovered”. (You may wish to wear gloves, or have hand sanitizer.)

12. Garden together; maybe offer a small spot that is just for your grandchild to grow whatever they would like, especially if they can visit often enough to “tend” the garden.

13. Collect old greeting cards, the fronts of cereal boxes, or a full page picture from a magazine. With assistance, especially for the very young, help them cut out a puzzle, then put it together.

14. Take a regular size paper plate, tape a regular paint stick to the back of it, blow up a balloon, then “bat” the balloon around. For additional fun, make one for yourself. Create a fun game.

15. Spend some time in the kitchen ~ (Kitchen time often takes a bit more planning than being spontaneous, you both may become quite creative. Besides helping you, they could learn some “science” skills [transforming ingredients into something else] and “math” skills [measurements] at the same time. If they are younger, pouring, sifting, dumping, stirring, are all skills that help them develop.)

16. Take part in local festivals, celebrations, holiday festivities, or other cultural activities that may differ from your background ~ exploring “new worlds” together. Learning about new places, and even new foods (another kitchen idea).

17. Crafts are almost always a hit, especially if the craft itself is fairly simple, so that the child does not become frustrated or bored. An older child may like to learn a new skill along with the “crafting”; beading is fun for most ages. Using either beads, or noodles, or cereal. Plastic boondoggle works for all ages, or a pipe cleaner.