

GEMS and Why Kids Need Them



BY: **KIM DEMARCHI**

Intro Q: Parents are very busy people! They have tasks to complete, schedules to meet, carpools to drive, laundry to fold, and appointments to make! They rush to finish one task only to start the next

“must do” on their list. Where and how do they find the time to actually be present with their children? Here to discuss ways to do just that, we welcome back

Q: Is it really that difficult to find the time to spend with your children?

Kim: I think for most parents we are so focused on doing things FOR our children, such as packing lunches, arranging play dates, attending their sporting events, planning

their birthday parties, etc..., that we actually lose sight of giving them focused attention, the one thing children truly need.

Q: Why do they need focused attention and what is focused attention exactly?

Kim: Children are like little gas tanks that need to be replenished many times a day. Giving your children focused attention fills up their tank with connection and love. This focused attention is called a GEM....a Genuine Encounter Moment. A GEM is attention with direct personal involvement that focuses on the uniqueness of your child. It's all about being in the moment and in their world.

Q: What does that look like? Can you give us an example?

Kim: Let me first show you what it isn't: (Do role play with host....she is the child and brings me, the parent, a caterpillar to

show me that she has just found)

Redo the exercise providing host a GEM.

Q: So, what are the steps in providing GEMS?

Kim:

1. Get on the child's eye level.
2. Make friendly, loving eye contact.
3. Lovingly touch.
4. Give 100% focused attention. Focus fully on what the child is saying and not about what you are going to cook for dinner, or the phone call you forgot to make. Try to feel what your child is feeling.
5. Give a “heart” response instead of a “head” response. i.e.: “Wow, that is so beautiful. Tell me more.” vs. “That is going to go through metamorphosis and will turn into a Monarch butterfly that then migrates from the North to the South.” These are not times for lectures, advice, or lessons.

Q: It sounds like giving your child the GEM, actually might save parents time!

Kim: Absolutely! In usually just a couple of minutes, a parent can help a child feel loved, valuable, listened to and important. We ALL need to feel those things on a regular basis. When their little gas tanks are full, usually they go off happily back to their world of wonder and parents get to go back into their world.

Q: But, parents are really busy! Do they have to give their children GEMS every time they come to them?

Kim: No! There are times I simply can't in the moment. It is humanly impossible to do this every time your child comes to you. If you can't do it, acknowledge your child's request, give a time frame when you will be available, and then keep your word. If you said 5 minutes, don't stretch it to 10.

Q: So, how many times a day should parents provide these Genuine Encounter Moments?



Kim: Basically, the more, the better. If you aren't doing any, shoot for one. If you are doing 5, do 6. I try to get in several each day with my kids. I have definitely noticed that when I give them this kind of focused attention, they have little need to use misbehavior in order to get attention.

Q: Parents are advised to spend more time with their children, but you are suggesting it is the quality of time and not the quantity of time that affects the feelings of being loved.

Kim: Exactly! Many parents are with their children physically, but mentally their focus is elsewhere. Togetherness without genuineness is not togetherness at all. “Busyness” cancels out “all here-ness”. When you are “all here”, it says “I care!” to the child. They matter. Parents can ask themselves, “Does my behavior give priority to things and schedules or to human beings and relationships?”

Kim DeMarchi, M.Ed., Certified Parent Educator and Certified Family Coach, is a Tualatin resident, married with 17 year old boy/girl twins, and has been an educator for more than two decades. Kim is trained and certified through Positive Discipline, as well the International Network for Children and Families in a program called Redirecting Children's Behavior. Kim is active in supporting her local parenting community by providing workshops, coaching families and writing articles for our newspaper. Kim is a monthly guest on KATU's Afternoon Live and AM Northwest. She also blogs twice a month for Knowledge Universe's KinderCare online community. Kim's goal for you is to help reduce conflict, foster mutual respect, and create deeper communication and connections with your loved ones. She can be reached through EmpoweredParenting.com.

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Tuesday, April 17th, 2018 • 7:00 - 8:15pm

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