

Parenting Tip: Quality Time And Kids

By Christina McGhee

There's no doubt that the daily grind can seriously impact the quality of our relationship with kids. Whether you are rushing to get to school on time, hassling over homework or trying to get everyone into bed, it's easy to slip into a pattern of being full-time taskmaster. Pair that with you own list of to do's and one on one time with kids often gets lost in the shuffle.

It's been said that relationships are a lot like bank accounts, meaning you want to make more deposits than withdrawals. To keep your relationship with kids in the black, make sure one-on-one time isn't getting overlooked.

Over the next week, sit down with your calendar and evaluate where you can block out at least 30 minutes of quality time with each child. If you're parenting together in one home, consider using the *divide and conquer strategy* so each child has some QT with a parent. The following week, you can switch it up and swap kids. For those parenting apart or parenting on their own, take advantage of times when one child has a lesson or event and use that pocket of time to do something with the other child.

You can also let children know your plan and develop a schedule where each child gets to have an evening with you. For example, you might arrange for one child to stay up a little later while everyone else goes to bed.

While it can be hard at times to fit it all in, making one-on-one time a priority has big benefits. Not only will it strengthen your relationship but you also may find that some of the day-to-day child rearing battles ease up too.

Christina is also doing a series of Parenting Apart webinars this month on dealing with divorce and children. More divorces are initiated in January than any other month. In one survey, 95% of children said they felt like they received little to no information about divorce from their parents. Are you struggling to find the right words, wondering what to say and what not to say to your children?

Join us for January webinars with parenting and divorce expert Christina McGhee for proven strategies and tips. Webinars are easy to access and interactive as you prefer. Go to <http://www.divorceandchildren.com/parentingapart/texas-pta-webinar> for details, topics and times.



What You Should Know About Synthetic Marijuana



There is new data out today from the [2011 Monitoring the Future survey](#), and it includes some important information for parents and communities across the country. According to the annual household survey, one in nine high school seniors reported using "Spice" or "K2" over the past year. That means synthetic marijuana is now the second most frequently used illicit drug, after marijuana, among high school seniors.

So what do we know about these synthetic drugs?

First, they're dangerous. Poison Control Centers operating across the nation have reported over 5,500 calls relating to synthetic marijuana as of October 31 of this year. That's almost double the number received in all of 2010. We also know that state and local public health departments note that these drugs cause serious adverse health effects, including agitation, anxiety, nausea, vomiting, tachycardia (fast, racing heartbeat), elevated blood pressure, tremor, seizures, hallucinations, and paranoid behavior. Making matters worse, these drugs are often marketed as "legal" substances. They are sometimes labeled as "herbal incense" and sold in small pouches or packets over the Internet, in tobacco and smoke shops, drug paraphernalia shops, gas stations, and convenience stores.

There's still a lot we do not know about these drugs, but here's what we do know: We must all work together to respond to this emerging threat. The good news is that over the past year, the federal government has taken comprehensive action to address this challenge:

- The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has convened several working group meetings to bring public health and safety agencies from across the federal government together to share data and coordinate the federal response to reduce the threat these drugs pose.
- In March, the Drug Enforcement Administration used its emergency scheduling authority to ban the sale of the chemicals used to manufacture K2 and Spice.
- We are also working with Congress to pass new laws aimed at reducing the availability of these drugs. Just last week, the House of Representatives passed legislation that would ban synthetic drugs, including those marketed as "bath salts." (And at least 38 states have taken action to ban the chemicals found in K2 and Spice, as well.)
- Over the next few weeks, ONDCP will reach out to a nationwide network of public health and safety organizations to provide them with the latest information we have on this public health problem, raise awareness, and spur action at the local level.

We will continue to address this threat. But parents, too, must take action. Parents are the most powerful force in the lives of their teens. That is why we ask that all of you take time today to talk to your teens about the serious consequences of using marijuana - in whatever form it may come, including synthetic forms like K2 and Spice. As always, we'll have additional information on our website, including these resources:

- [2011 Monitoring the Future Survey Highlights](#)
- [Synthetic Marijuana Fact Sheet](#)
- [National Institute on Drug Abuse Press Release](#)
- [Monitoring the Future Survey Findings](#)

Note: *In the 2011 legislative session, the Texas Legislature passed SB 331 to address the use of this substance, making possession illegal.*

Source: *The White House - Office of National Drug Control via email on December 14, 2011.*

McAfee Teen Safety Test: How Safe Is Your Surfing?



Challenge your teen to test his or her Internet surfing habits with this [quiz](#) from the McAfee security company. Then, take it yourself and compare your scores. Think you know your way around the Web? Well enough to stay safe from spyware, spam, scams and identity theft? Are you willing to put yourself to the test?

If you've been a victim of an online scam, you can report it to [IC3](#), the Internet Crime Complaint Center.