For Kids, Quality Time Spent With Parents Counts

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Many people believe that if parents spend more time with their children, these kids do better. But findings from a new study published in the Journal of Marriage and Family conclude this might not necessarily be the case, the Washington Post reports.

For the study, researchers reviewed “time diaries” from a diverse sample of children, ages 3 to 11, across the United States in 1997. Scientists followed up in 2002 with the same kids as teenagers to assess their academic achievement, behavior and emotional health.

Next, researchers evaluated the amount of time parents spent interacting with their children. In addition, scientists also included in the assessment time when both parents were present but not interacting with their kids.

Findings showed no relationship between the amount of time parents spent with their kids and positive outcomes for the children. “In an ideal world, this study would alleviate parents’ guilt about the amount of time they spend and show instead what’s really important for kids,” said Melissa Milkie, PhD, a sociologist at the University of Toronto and one of the report’s authors.

But Milkie noted one key finding that showed when time a parent spent with kids could be negative. This was when parents (particularly mothers) were stressed out, sleep-deprived and feeling guilty.

Still, family time is important. Several other studies showed that reading to a child, sharing family dinners and engaging with kids one-on-one were all proven to have positive outcomes for kids in the long run.

Studies also show that skin-to-skin contact early in life can help improve kids’ development. Click here for more information.

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