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Doctor's Journal

Parenting - Taking Time for Bonding

“But doesn’t everyone have to keep up their house?” the exhausted woman asked when I challenged her to decrease her stress level and get to know her small children better by allowing her house to clutter up and her dishes to stay in the sink all day (or longer) if need be. I told her I didn’t know any parents that I felt were well bonded with their kids who had a clean house. I don’t think the two can really go together. There just isn’t time to be doing dishes after every meal and picking up toys after toddlers all day if you are ever going to play with them. The reality is that no normal person makes the beds every day unless company is on the way over, and any of us with small kids just step over toys all day and pick them all up once or twice a week. Everyone who cares to have a conversation with their spouse or sit down to a long board game with their child has hair all over their bathroom floor and rarely (if ever) dusts! Sure, you can be a martyr and sigh repeatedly while you go about cleaning up the whole house at night after everyone is in bed, but you’ll get no reward for this- except stored up anger and resentment, as well as a distant marriage and kids you don’t know. So, I encourage you to stop living by whatever silly standards are left in your head as a repetition of, or a reaction to, your childhood home and learn to just BE with your family instead of DO so much! This way, you won’t have to become that parent of yours (with whom you rarely communicate) who valued image over relationship. Happy Bonding!