

KIDS NEED SPACE

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As parents, you probably realize that aliens abduct your kids' brains at about 12 years of age. Although it looks like your child sitting across the dinner table, nothing else remotely resembles that dear little Johnny or Jane you fondly remember. Let me assure you that if you have put in the hard yards in the early years, the aliens will bring that bright sunny, funny child back to you again around 18 years of age.

Today I want to discuss kids AND space, not kids IN space. Kids need space. They need space from all sorts of things and for all sorts of reasons. Young children share rooms but once they get to preteen years they need their own space and privacy. By then they are beginning to realize that their personal stuff is not everyone else's business. That is not to say that they can do whatever they like in their own room. The room belongs to the parents who need to make it clear that they can enter their kids' room whenever they like – after knocking of course.

All kids need peace and quiet and time to themselves. Busy schedules and full households do not often allow for kids to sit and unwind. I am not referring to sitting in front of the TV, computer or video games, although a short time with these activities helps them relax. When kids are left to their own devices, they can think without interruption. They can read, play, invent, write stories, dream up great plans for tomorrow and even take a nap.

As kids develop they need less direct help from parents. They don't need or want you hovering over them telling them what to do all the time, over-protecting them or overwhelming them with your expectations. They need time to develop their own thoughts. If they never get this opportunity they may never realize they have a great brain that can think up fantastic things. I heard yesterday about a friend of mine who has been helping her sister by taking the kids to the park to play. The five-year-old wanted to go home, so he could play with his video games! How sad for this little boy to have never really experienced the great outdoors with all its possibilities.

How do you schedule in personal space for your kids? In the weekends, after chores, you can set aside an hour for each child to do their own thing, alone. After school, they will be tired and it is fine for them to get a snack and just do something mindless for a while like watching a TV program. However, after homework and chores, they can have 30 minutes to do their own thing alone.

Kids need to be coached into some purposeful activity in their own time. We have a friend who takes his kids to the library every week and they borrow books. In their personal time these kids go to their rooms, listen to music, read, knit, play with their toys or just lie on their beds and rest.

We gave our daughter things like egg cartons, buttons, paper, glue, and felt tip pens. We left her to herself and she would come out with crocodiles and other wonderful creations. She has become a graphic designer. Our son needed more help to get his imagination going, but he gravitated towards anything with knobs and dials. He is now an IT Manager with a B.Sc. in Recording Industry.

Who knows what potential we are masking when we do not give our kids space and time to themselves so they can find out who they really are?

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.