

## How To Make The Most of The Time You Have With Your Child {10 Ways to Transform Their Life, Your Life, and Your Relationship With Them}



In early November of 2014 I wrote a simple blog post. It was about a jar full of 936 shiny, copper pennies. The jar and its \$9.36 were a gift; one to remind me of the fleeting days I am given with my children—and a challenge to invest those days wisely. Each penny represents one week, and every week I remove a penny from the jar. It's a heart-wrenching practice, as I witness that jar growing emptier all the time. I wrote out my thoughts surrounding this jar and its lessons, and then I clicked “publish”, to my blog.

{Please take a moment to read the original post here: “[How 936 Pennies Will Forever Change How You Parent](#)”}

In the following weeks, as I read over comments and personal stories from parents hoping beyond hope to spend their pennies wisely, as well as from those lamenting pennies already lost, or spent frivolously, I began to see my own penny jars in a new light.

Each Sunday came and went, and with it I pulled a penny from my original jar, and deposited into a second jar I had placed on my desk, one to represent “spent” or “invested” pennies. With the original penny jar growing lighter and emptier faster than I could imagine, my weeks began to look different.



The jars have given me, like so many others, a visual reminder. They call us to be breathing more life into our time with our children—because it is dreadfully limited.

If you are like me, then you struggle constantly with whether or not you are investing in your time with your children wisely, and to its fullest capacity—or whether you are losing your pennies among the couch cushions.

Whether your babies are still in diapers, or driving themselves and their friends to movies on the weekends; and however you feel about how you have spent your pennies thus far—here are 10 ideas for how you can begin investing your pennies better today. So go and make those weeks more abundant, and rest confidently knowing that as you drop each one into the new “invested” jar, that it is being well spent.

## 10 Ways To Make The Most Of The Time You Have With Your Child

- 1) **Apologize daily** - or at least as often as necessary, which for most of us is at least daily. Our kids absolutely need to know that we have flaws too. We mess up, and we need to model what humility, grace, and forgiveness look like daily.
- 2) **Read a book a day** - Just focus on one—it will lead to more. Your little one won't want you to stop, and you won't want them to leave your side. For older kids, continue to read with them—articles of their interest. Buy them a magazine or book about their interests, and show interest in it yourself.
- 3) **Journal for your children** - Keep a journal for each child—it's never too late to start. If your child is close to leaving home, then perhaps just write a long letter. Write about specific reasons you are proud of them, your hopes and dreams for them, prayers, wisdom you're learning, and scriptures. Give it to them when you give them their jar of “invested” pennies when they leave home.
- 4) **Play at their level** - Nothing calms my sons' tantrums faster than when I stop doing whatever I'm doing, and simply sit on the floor with them. I don't even need to do anything. I just sit down, and they make up the play. They just want me to be present. With older kids, this simply looks like joining them at their level. Watch their TV show with them, join in their activities when they allow you, play a board game. Just be present with them.

- 5) **Make them laugh everyday** - This may be harder if your children are teenagers, but it just takes a little practice. My dad gave this charge to my husband at our wedding: "Make her laugh every day." My husband has stayed true to that commitment, and I am a much better off person because of that. Your children will thrive in a house rich in laughter.
- 6) **Tell your children daily:** 1) I really enjoyed doing \_\_\_\_ with you today. 2) This is one reason I love you \_\_\_\_\_. 3) This is one reason I am proud of you \_\_\_\_\_. This will stretch you to see your child more clearly, to be looking for those reasons.
- 7) **Let them choose the activities** - Allow them to create the game and enter into their imagination. For older kids, this simply looks like being interested in their interests, and listening to them rather than just speaking to them.
- 8) **Create a "no media" time** - Block out an hour an evening when no phones, laptops, TVs, or screens of any other sort will be used. Use that time to be together; play a game or read. Begin in a small way today by turning off your phone during dinner hour.
- 9) **Become more thankful for them** - Every week as you withdraw your penny from the jar, write down 5 specific ways you were thankful for your child the past week. This may not affect them directly (unless you eventually give them that list), but it will certainly benefit them as you begin seeking out those ways to be thankful for them, and seeing them with a more grateful perspective.
- 10) **Invest in yourself** - Spend time taking care of your physical, mental, and spiritual health. When you are healthy, it helps you lead your children in healthy lives. Begin by starting your day reading a book or listening to a podcast that will inspire and encourage you live more fully, or by exercising. This models a priority of health to them, as well as gives you a better start to the day and a better mindset for parenthood.

We can't do all of these things every day, and the beautiful thing about parenting is that we don't have to do them all in order to be a good parent.

We just have to keep our focus on always being present—full in the moment and aware of those little ways we can invest daily in our children. And then, the most important part—we need to give ourselves grace for those days when we don't feel we measure up; for those days when we question how well we are spending our pennies.

This is parenthood: Beauty in the imperfection which reveals to us our need for grace and forgiveness.