

NEWSLETTER

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CELLPHONES AND PARENTING

I recently read about an aghast witness to a family dinner in a restaurant where the mother answered a cell phone call and ignored her family during dinner. I recently received two questions from grandmothers worried about mothers ignoring their children to talk on their cells. And a Google search of cell phone addiction? Over a million hits.

My loyal readers know that I repeatedly tell parents about the three essential Parenting Vitamin A's--Affection, Acceptance, and Attention. All kids need these "vitamins" like they need vitamins in their food so they will thrive. Most parents know how to show affection and know the importance of accepting their children for the unique person they are.

Attention is the tricky one. Parents are so busy today, so adept at multitasking, and so intent on taking the kids along whenever possible in order to be with them that they may forget the difference between BEING with their children and being ATTENTIVE to their children. Add a cell phone to the mixture and the kids can truly feel left out of the parental attention loop.

Recite the attention mantra: Every Child Needs Some Undivided Attention >From Each Parent Every Day. Undivided, or focused attention, is when you are NOT doing anything else, you are at the child's level both literally (on the floor) and developmentally, you are doing what the child likes to do and at the child's pace, and you are so focused on your child that you can easily pick up the child's cues.

Sorry folks, you can't be attentive to your kid when you are on the cell phone. Some states have passed legislation banning the use of cell phones while driving. If they made me Dictator of Parenting I would ban the use of cell phones when parenting. I know that's not realistic but I have two suggestions: limit cell calls to essential ones when you are with the children. And turn them off when you are providing your child with his or her daily quota of undivided attention, the essential Parenting Vitamin A your kid needs.