

The Online Parenting Newsletter vol.6 no.11 Nov, 2005:

TIME THIEVES

"Where does the time go?" Everybody complains about being too busy these days.

Parents, when surveyed, all say they wish they had more time to spend with their kids. And kids, when asked what they want from their parents, reply they wished their parents would spend more time with them.

Americans work more hours on average than people in other industrialized nations. But that's not the only reason parents are in such a time bind. We are being ROBBED BY TIME THIEVES!

Time thievery crept up on us before we ever realized what was happening. And it won't do you any good to call the police, we have to find our own creative solutions to getting some of our time back.

Where do the sneakiest Time Thieves operate? In two areas: COMMUNICATIONS and CONSUMERISM.

Suppose you are a busy parent trying to telephone a local hospital to schedule a test that your child's doctor recommended. What you are faced with varies, but before you can do your task you get something like: "Welcome to Blank Hospital. Si habla Espanol oprima numero dos. Your call is important to us and may be monitored for quality assurance. If this is a medical emergency, hang up and dial 911. If you want to make an appointment with your doctor or cancel an existing appointment press 1. etc, etc, etc."

It has taken me more than 20 minutes to make an appointment. I pity the mother with triplets.

The communications industry is out to get busy parents another way: telemarketing. How do they know you just got home, your toddler is trying to flush a purple dinosaur down the toilet, and the water in the asparagus has just boiled out? Beats me but they always call at one of these moments. The Do Not Call list has helped but new telemarketers sneak in and political and charitable organizations are exempt.

Don't get me started on spam. I have two e-mail addresses so I get twice the crap. Because spanking is one of the keywords on my parenting website, I get more than the average amount of disgusting porn.

What can parents do to stop the communications industry from robbing them of time to spend with their kids? Automated telephone messaging is here to stay so be organized, gather all the numbers you might need before you dial, and never ever forget your mother's maiden name. Waiting on the telephone is a great time for multitasking (as long as you are not on a cell phone and driving). I go through my mail, look at my e-mail, and input stuff on my computer. You could read to a toddler, nurse a baby, or log on to parentkidsright.com and brush up on parenting skills!

I have fantasies about the entire community organizing to combat the frustration we all feel consumerism. I tell all telemarketers that I never do business with or contribute to any organization that disturbs me at home. What if we all did that? Maybe some of them would stop robbing us of time with our families.

Consumerism is another big Time Thief! Think about all the time it takes to purchase something. You spend time thinking about it or looking at ads or catalogs or figuring out which stores have sales, driving to the store or stores or going online or calling the catalogue company, finding the darn thing, deciding on a specific purchase, paying for it, taking it home, spending precious minutes struggling to open containers that are either shrink-wrapped, double-packaged, or sealed with guaranteed finger nail breaking tape, unpacking the item, recycling the applicable packaging, finding a place to put the item, and finally either balancing your checking account or figuring out how to pay your credit card bill.

You do the math. It adds up to a lot of time that you could have spent hanging out with the kids. Plus whatever you bought adds to the clutter which is in itself a great time robber. Bottom line: buy less, enjoy your family more.

My advice to parents is:

- 1) simplify your life
- 2) downsize your consumer spending
- 3) discourage telemarketers
- 4) when you can't do a damned thing about it, get over it

Roll with the punches as anger only adds to your stress levels.
Use the time you rescue from a Time Thief to enjoy being with
your children.