

TIPS FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS OF ELEMENTARY-AGED CHILDREN

How to Prioritize PDF: Playtime, Downtime, and Family Time

The research is clear: children need playtime, downtime, and family time (PDF) every day for healthy development. Below are some suggestions for ways to incorporate PDF into your routine to proactively support children's well-being.



PLAYTIME

Play is so much more than simply having fun. Research suggests that play — especially when it is freely chosen, unstructured, and personally-directed — is linked to increased cognitive skills, physical health, self-regulation, language abilities, social skills, and empathy.

- **Protect unstructured play time & allow it to be self-directed**
- **Make sure kids have regular (tech-free) playtime with other children**
- **Encourage outdoor & imaginary play**
- **Allow children to solve challenges without adult interference**



DOWNTIME

Downtime is time beyond structured activities or academics to relax, daydream, read, or just be. Research suggests that kids need downtime throughout the day — and enough sleep at night — for their physical and emotional health. Not getting enough sleep has serious consequences for learning, development, and emotional regulation.

- **Prioritize consistent bedtime routines & getting 9-11 hours of sleep**
- **Build in time between school and any after school activities for snack and rest**
- **Help children wind down with calm activities before bed**



FAMILY TIME

Research shows that when kids are part of a family unit that spends time together, they are more likely to feel supported, safe, and loved unconditionally, as well as have increased self-esteem and better academic outcomes. Strive to gather the family for 20-25 minutes at least 5 times per week (family meals, outings, and game/movie nights all count).

- **Unplug during meals, before bedtime, and during family activities**
- **Commit to simple family traditions & rituals**
- **Involve kids in organizing, & doing family service projects / activities**

SCREENTIME TIPS

- Limit screen time & preview/co-view age-appropriate content
- Avoid media 30-60 min. before bedtime & put screens away at night
- Model healthy media use. Unplug during meals, before bedtime, and during family activities.

