

Talking Tips FOR PARENTS

The theme for November/December is “The Best Gift.” Let’s brainstorm about the “best gifts” for your family. These ideas apply to choosing gifts for nieces and nephews as well.

- **The secret of “The Best Gift.”** The best gift you can give your child is your time and attention. Sorry, that doesn’t mean sitting with your child on your lap while you mess with your computer or phone and/or watch television. It means turning off the television, hanging up your phone, and logging off your computer or tablet. Now you can give your child undivided attention.
- **Does “The Best Gift” always have to be a thing?** No. It could be a zoo membership or a fall membership to a pumpkin patch that has all kinds of play areas, or a membership to a children’s museum. These are the type of gifts when you are giving of yourself and your time, and these are the gifts that are the most meaningful for your child.
- When I asked my 9-year-old granddaughter what she wanted for her birthday, **she told me that all she wanted from me was “a whole entire day with just the two of us!”** I was blown away, honored, and really touched. We have been planning our day with breakfast or lunch out, shopping, maybe a movie. She said I didn’t have to buy her anything because my time with her is what she wanted. She wanted to go to a bookstore to spend a gift certificate if we had time. What a great idea. I was thinking that **families could write a gift certificate for each child to spend an entire day with just Mom or Dad or Grandma or Grandpa.** You could watch a movie together, bake cookies, make lunch together, go for a walk, and not really spend an extra dime. But how much fun for the lucky child. **That would be the VERY BEST gift EVER—for both of you!**
- When you evaluate a toy or other item your child is requesting, **look at it carefully for its playability.** What will he do with it after he rips the wrapping paper off the box. Is it something that will stimulate his imagination? Is it something that you can talk about together while you play? Or is it something like a dinosaur that walks...and walks...and walks. Well, that was fun for about five minutes.
- **When you evaluate a toy or other item your child wants,** is it a toy or learning activity that will inspire his creativity, his imagination, and his spoken language development? Check it out. Are the necessary people and accessories included in the box? What can your child do with them? What can you say about them as he is playing?
- You could make a coupon for your children something like this:

Mommy and Daddy promise to turn off our phones, computers, tablets, and TV when we come home every night Monday-Thursday until your bedtime. We can talk, do homework, practice your piano, read a book together, or play until it’s time to get ready for bed.

