



## FAMILY MATTERS

# HOW TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH YOUR *kids*

Get children involved with home projects and using tools to build a lifetime of skills.

BY TIM ALLEN

Fast-paced lifestyles, career demands and responsibilities at home often don't leave enough time for a very important aspect of our lives. You guessed it – our kids. If you're like me, your home project list is probably being added to, rather than completed. We all know that seasonal home projects can be a pain, but what if I told you these projects can actually create *more* opportunities to spend time with your kids?

There are a bunch of ways to do this while accomplishing home improvement and maintenance goals. This way, your kids get the attention they want and a sense of pride from helping mom and dad with household projects. I also believe it is this "helping hand" role which builds kids' interest, skill and creativity

for tackling their own building projects in the future.

Bill Doherty, a professor of family and social science at the University of Minnesota in the U.S., and author of *The Horizontal Family*, agrees. "Rituals – activities that are repeated, co-ordinated and have emotional significance, are the primary way that children feel connected to their parents," he says.

Besides providing an activity for the whole family, home projects also can give children a sense of accomplishment. "Working-together rituals are an ideal way to build a parent-child bond and teach life skills," Doherty says.

He adds that it's ideal to invite children to help with an activity that the parent is



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already going to do. "For example, a father who does woodwork should invite his child to accompany him; or when fixing things of the child's, always have the child help." Additionally, projects shouldn't be forced or turned into a disciplinary situation. "As hard as it is, parents sometimes have to bite their lip and sacrifice efficiency if the main goal is connecting with the child."

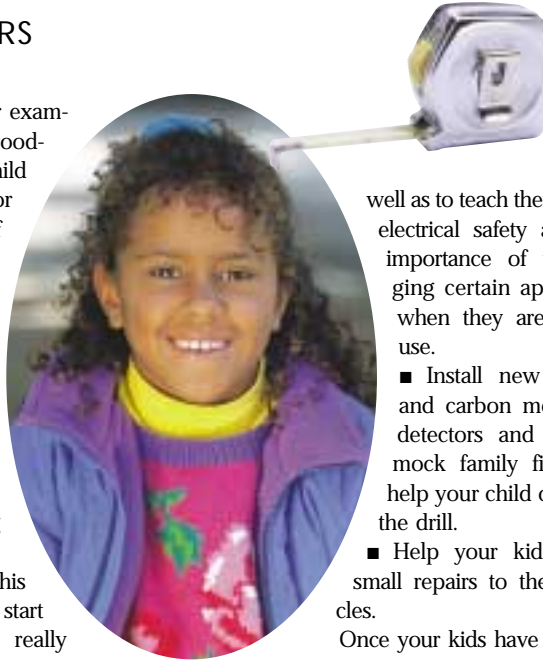
A good way to avoid this possible frustration is to start with small projects and really encourage your kids to stick with it. I find it helps to stay with them and remind them what the project will be like when it's finished.

Here are my ideas to help get your kids started in being the proud "little helpers" we know they can be.

- Buy kids their own tool kit. Now, a remodelling project or room addition may be a bit ambitious, but involving

the kids in some way, and using their own tools, gives them a special sense of belonging and accomplishment and enhances their creativity. A sense of ownership also is established by giving children their own tools.

- Use seasonal home improvement projects, like checking electrical outlets, as a time for your kids to be "little helpers," as



well as to teach them about electrical safety and the importance of unplugging certain appliances when they are not in use.

- Install new smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and hold a mock family fire drill; help your child organize the drill.
- Help your kids make small repairs to their bicycles.

Once your kids have demonstrated interest, skill and consistency, you can introduce them to more advanced projects. Beef up their tool kits to include other creative accessories, such as paint, paint brushes, tape, coloured paper, markers and string. When projects are finished, take photos of the masterpieces and display them proudly around the home.

Remember, be patient. Let kids experiment with things their own way, even if it isn't the right way. With kids, there are no wrong colours or themes. Just smile and know that improvement is on the way. 🌟



- *Tim Allen, star of TV's Home Improvement Show (as Tim the Tool Man Taylor) founded a company called Tim Allen Signature Tools in 1996, to take something he personally loves – tools – and turn it into a venture to help children and families. The company produces tool and project kits for kids as well as tools and accessories for adults.*