

## Parent Participation Packs a Punch

Looking for a few good reasons why you should become more involved in your child's care? Consider this.

- Parent involvement is one of the key components of high-quality child care.
- Participating in the childcare's programming makes the facility and the caregivers more accountable to parents.
- Increased participation creates a forum for openness and communication between the caregivers and the parents.
- Children who see their parents trust and enjoy the facility and caregivers are themselves more trusting and willing to participate in activities.
- Knowing more about the centre and caregivers helps parents to feel confident in their child care arrangements.
- Children learn by example, parent participating teaches children the value of community involvement.

"That's all well and good," you say, "but I don't have a lot of time, I can't just pick up and leave work whenever there is a field trip or theme party." The truth is, no one expects you to.

It is the little things that parents do to help out that packs the biggest punch.

Parents' busy hands, strong backs, new ideas, and expertise enlarge the daycare's capacity in many areas. You certainly don't have to wait to be asked to help. Caregivers and director's welcome your offers to join the board of directors, leave little notes or interesting articles on the bulletin board, and bring in scraps of material, wool or other craft supplies.

They cherish your offer to be the official "cake baker" for birthdays and holidays. They'd love for you to show up for that Saturday morning outdoor play-yard "face-lifting" session, or for you to attend, even help to organize "parents' night."

And if you enjoy puttering with your computer, you might consider putting together a newsletter for parents and caregivers. Certainly no one would object.

Or you could simply spend an extra ten minutes before or after hours to tell your caregiver how much you appreciate her work, that silly joke you heard at the office, or some little bit of information that would enable her to take better care of your child.

Caregivers, whether they work in a large centre or at home, want you to help in whatever way you can. Participation shows you care. It builds trust and respect. It helps you and your caregiver meet on common ground where no one feels intimidated or unappreciated. We all get a little judgmental at times. It helps to remember that you and your caregiver must work together in harmony for the benefit of your child. Participation, in even the simplest form, works towards that end. It's like that warm smile at the end of a hard day that says, "Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

*~Your child care provider*