

Why Parents Should Take Up a Hobby with Their Kids

Ask almost any set of parents how life is and they'll let out an exhausted sigh and sputter, "Busy!" Between [sports, clubs, and media usage](#) many families feel maxed out, exhausted, and pulled in multiple directions.



So why do families persist in these activities?

There are likely many reasons, but I would wager that the most probable stems from a fear of missing out. A fear that their child will not get into college on a sports scholarship because they didn't take Johnny to soccer practice in 2nd grade. Or a fear that Susie will miss out on key aspects of socialization if she foregoes her dancing class.

But the kids enrolled in many of today's normal extracurricular activities may be the very ones who are missing out. In fact, it appears that those who devote their free time to more traditional, hands-on, home and family based activities may actually be the ones who gain an important foothold for future success.

Such is the implication of findings released by the International Journal of Science Education. The research found that children are profoundly influenced to go into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) careers later in life by the scientific-related hobbies they do while young. This was particularly true if a family participates in the hobby with the children. Reporting on these findings, *The Guardian* [notes](#):

"The research looked at a cohort of almost 3,000 adult hobbyists in the US who took part in 10 hobbies – astronomy,

beekeeping, birdwatching, robotics, environmental monitoring, falconry, gardening, home brewing, model building and rock collecting.

It found that in several groups, more than half of the adult hobbyists reported first participating in their hobby during their youth. The study said the data 'illustrates how crucial childhood experiences are to encouraging lifelong explorations in Stem'.

... Family was rated as the greatest influence on hobbyists involved with gardening, rock and fossil collecting and beekeeping."

Given this information, *The Guardian* encouraged schools to foster hobbies such as these in order to interest more children in advanced career fields.

Such a practice certainly can't hurt... but what if simply encouraging these type of hobbies is not the secret sauce? It's just a theory, but is it possible that the success stems from the family influence and bonding time which these hobbies provide?

No matter where one goes, it seems that society is bent upon giving parents subtle hints that they are not enough for their child. Because of this, parents feel they have to ship their children off to experts in schools or other organizations and then stand watching from the sidelines. In doing so, however, they often miss out on developing a good relationship with their children, one in which conversation is easy, advice is given and received, and trust is built.

Such a relationship is one which the philosopher John Locke [encouraged](#) every father to build with his son, the reason being that it brings about the maturity that every parent desires in a child:

“The sooner you treat him as a man, the sooner he will begin to be one: and if you admit him into serious discourses sometimes with you, you will insensibly raise his mind above the usual amusements of youth, and those trifling occupations which it is commonly wasted in. For it is easy to observe, that many young men continue longer in the thought and conversation of school-boys, than otherwise they would, because their parents keep them at that distance, and in that low rank, by all their carriage to them.”

America is having an [adulthood crisis](#). Is it possible this crisis would disappear if more parents were willing to simply spend time with their children, doing hobbies and enjoying the conversation, bonding, relationships... and even the maturity which grows out of them?

[Image Credit: (U.S. Air Force [photo](#) by Airman 1st Class Jason Wiese)]