



Make the ordinary *extraordinary!*

It can be easy for parents to fall into the motions of life and approach every day, ordinary activities with their children as monotonous and dull or difficult – but if this is the case in your home, you’re missing out on a whole lot of fun!

OzChild’s SafeCare® Educator, Belinda spends her days teaching parents of at-risk children five years and under the skills and knowledge they need to properly care for their children. This program is an evidence-based early intervention model which, in its current form, was developed in Atlanta, Georgia and has been achieving great outcomes for families in Australia.

The program covers three modules: safety in the home, health and wellness; and parent child interaction – with Belinda saying parents were most surprised by learnings from the last module,

“ I’ve seen parents really encouraged by the engagement and enthusiasm they receive from their child after making small adjustments to how they approach every day activities”

It is possible to transform everyday activities with your baby or child into magical opportunities to bond and have fun together. Any activity – bath time, making dinner, getting ready for bed - are all opportunities for you to have a really fun time interacting with your child. These don’t have to be dull activities.

While the SafeCare® program is aimed at supporting vulnerable families, the principles of the program can be useful learnings for all parents. Belinda shares some tips from a section of SafeCare’s Parent Child Interaction module, to help parents make ordinary activities with their little one extraordinary.



Smile, you'll be surprised at how contagious it is

Simply by smiling, your child picks up on your positive and happy emotions and is more likely to emulate them. So when you're with your child and even if you don't really feel like it, try smiling.

Talk it through

Talk to your child – even when you're not actively playing with them – they can't get enough of your voice; it is music to their ears! Engage them in conversation about what you're doing, and they'll likely end up learning language and other knowledge.

For example, while you're pairing the socks, tell them, "I'm matching the socks in pairs. How many socks in a pair? We match them by colour – what colour is this? What's your favourite colour?" and so on.

You'll be amazed by how excited your child is to hear about what you're doing, even the washing!

Or at snack time, "I love biscuits because they're crunchy. We don't always eat food with our hands, but we can with biscuits. What sorts of food would we use a knife and fork for?" This conversation wouldn't fly with another adult, but children love it.

Get them involved

Young children love to help their mum and dad. Rather than shooing them away while you make dinner, give them a task that is age appropriate and get them involved.

If shown properly, children can safely wash and sort through vegetables. They'll feel particularly proud sitting down to eat a dinner they've helped prepare.

High-fives, applause, facial expressions and cuddles are all ways you can praise your child.



Redirection

Redirection is something every parent should master. You can diffuse most situations by distracting your child from behaving in a particular way and shifting their focus.

For example, nappy time can be challenging – especially when toddlers hit the seven-month mark and start flipping and crawling away before their nappy's changed. But knowing this allows you to prepare for it. Have their favourite toy ready to whip out at the part you usually struggle through and distract them.

This redirects their attention from their getaway plan to their favourite toy which they'll gladly play with while you finish changing their nappy.

And then don't forget to give them a high five and kiss their toes! Loving affection goes a long way in making a little one feel happy. They'll enjoy every nappy time which ends with a high five and kiss.

Feedback

We all depend on feedback to learn. Praise and positive reinforcement are the best way to encourage your child to behave a particular way. Always tell them when they're doing a good job and be specific about their behaviour, you have to tell them exactly what they've done good. For example, "you're doing a great job sitting on your chair and eating your lunch."

Children thrive on praise. Don't forget to share your emotion with them too, "I can't stop smiling because it makes me so happy when you stay in your chair at the dining table and enjoy your lunch."

Keep learning, and practicing with your child

Talk to your baby or child in a way they'll respond, in line with their age. Infants depend on body language and expressions to understand, but as they grow into children, they also start needing more verbal communication for direction and praise.

One of the biggest parts of being a parent is actually learning how to be a parent and then learning how to be a better parent which requires constant practice. Belinda says, "I love teaching SafeCare® because we're educating parents when their children are young so they have a whole lifetime with their children to practice these skills and continue to learn and develop to be incredible parents."

As children grow, they constantly require different language and engagement, so as parents we grow with them, we're always learning.

A famous quote from author, William Martin, encourages parents to teach their children about the wonder that can be found in everyday activities,

"Find the wonder and the marvel of an ordinary life... make the ordinary come alive for them. The extraordinary will take care of itself."

This thinking shouldn't be lost on adults either. Everything you do with your child can be a fun experience and an opportunity for bonding. Don't miss the magical moments with your child every day by getting lost in the motions and viewing every day activities as monotonous. With that little bit of extra energy and attention you can create immense joy in your daily routine with your child. It won't take you any extra time. Give it a go, and **turn something ordinary into something extraordinary.**