

What is CouchTime?

Quick Reference Bullet Points of CouchTime with a much more detailed explanation below:

- Schedule 10-15 minutes, 3-5 times a week, during a time of nonconflict to discuss expectations, share ideas, and find solutions for your marriage, parenting challenges, weekly routines, and more.
- CouchTime is held someplace comfortable (like a couch in the family room) where you can sit close to your spouse and talk with your children nearby so they can observe Mom and Dad engaging as a unified team.
- CouchTime is not after the kids are in bed, on a date, while doing dishes, working in the yard or stealing a couple minutes during a soccer game.
- It may take a while to work up to 10-15 minutes. Especially if you have young children. It took us three weeks to get up to 10 minutes with two boys 3yrs & 5yrs.
- Prepare for CouchTime – Have special CouchTime only toys/activities, have a visual timer and set the expectation for CouchTime behavior, “Mommy and Daddy are having CouchTime for ten minutes and when we are finished, we will have a big family hug. So you need to show Mommy and Daddy self control and play quietly for ten minutes.”

CouchTime is an intentional [Time of NonConflict \(TONIC\)](#) for effective and productive communication between Husband and Wife. That’s the short answer...

However, CouchTime is much more impactful and beneficial than just a communication tool. It serves as a multi-faceted vehicle for fostering a meaningful and thriving home life! Without a doubt, CouchTime has been the single most beneficial and supportive practice for our marriage, our parenting, and the overall well-being of our children.

Over the years we’ve had many parents ask us to provide more insight regarding CouchTime. So we thought it might be helpful to provide a little more detail regarding the why, when, where, and how of CouchTime.

The Why of CouchTime

Many couples today struggle to “get on the same page” as their spouse. Between work, kids, activities, and other life commitments, couples tend to go into reactive mode just to keep their sanity. Unfortunately, that leaves little time to really connect in a meaningful way. And when they do connect, it tends to be during a time of crisis or conflict - the dog is loose, the baby is crying and the older kids are fighting. Sure, situations may get resolved in the moment, but it is at the expense of communicating real long term solutions.

CouchTime encourages couples to dedicate 10-15 minutes, during a time of nonconflict, for open discussions about family matters. It provides a space to talk about expectations,

share ideas, and find solutions for your marriage, parenting challenges, weekly routines, and more.

Consider this: If you spent 15 minutes, 4 times a week for 4 weeks having CouchTime, you would have spent an hour a week or 4 hours a month “getting on the same page” and making progress toward creating a thriving marriage and home environment. When was the last time you and your spouse sat down for even an hour to talk about these things?

The When of CouchTime

Finding a time of nonconflict to communicate with your spouse is critical to effective and productive CouchTime. If you are mentally preoccupied with thoughts of work, emails, phone calls, etc., you will not be fully engaged. That’s why committing to finding 10 to 15 minutes is so important. For us, it has always been right after dinner. This allowed us time to unwind from the day and gather our thoughts before we chatted and began our evening activities. For other families we know, their time of nonconflict was before dinner or in the morning before breakfast. And for others, after bath time or just before bedtime.

While there is some benefit to having CouchTime at a consistent time of day (especially if you have younger children), the most important thing is to find the time to have CouchTime at least 3-5 times a week. On weekends, we had a different CouchTime than during the week. We shifted our CouchTime to right after breakfast before the day's activities got started. Then, when our boys got older and involved in activities, we would have a special Sunday Night CouchTime and plan our CouchTimes for the week.

The Where of CouchTime

CouchTime doesn’t necessarily have to be on the couch. But most families have a comfortable couch and that helps to create a relaxed environment to visit with your spouse. Over the years, we have also had CouchTime in our den/study and at the kitchen table keeping in mind that we were fully engaged with one another (not on the computer or cleaning up) and our boys could see us talking.

Children playing or doing homework near you is very important and offers significant corollary benefits to your parenting. When children see Mom and Dad having a calm rational conversation, it provides them with tangible evidence that Mom and Dad are doing ok. Children, especially young children, can have a subconscious underlying fear of Mom and Dad's relationship which can result in them not sleeping at night or misbehaving during the day.

Security in the marriage relationship is just one of the several benefits that CouchTime provides for children and parents. Training self control and patience is another inherent benefit of having CouchTime, along with mitigating the dangers of child-centered and entitled parenting by demonstrating unity and bond between Mom and Dad.

The How of CouchTime

If you have young children or babies, getting them used to CouchTime can be a challenge. They typically want to be a part of Mom and Dad's communication party. They will interrupt and get fussy to get your attention focused on them again. That's why it's important to explain to them (several times) why you are having CouchTime; telling them that because we love you so much, Mom and Dad need a few minutes to talk because we love each other very much!

Using the term "CouchTime" and announcing that we were having it helped our boys a lot as we started out. But there are some other things you can do as well. Plan a designated activity for the children to do while they watch you communicating. Maybe they have some special toys reserved to play with while you talk. You can also set a timer so they can see how much time is left. You may have to start off with only 5 minutes and work up to 15 minutes, which is what we did initially. Keep in mind that ultimately you want your children to obey you and provide you the uninterrupted space for you to have your quality CouchTime.

Here are some parameters we used early on for CouchTime and how they evolved as our boys got older:

- 1) 15 minute time limit. This forced us to plan out our discussion topic(s) ahead of time. Sometimes we might go past a few minutes or finish early. Once the boys got into elementary school, we had no time limit. We had CouchTime in the family room, while they did homework at the kitchen table.
- 2) 3-5 times minimum per week. Consistency is so important and we felt that we could easily commit to having CouchTime at least 4 times a week (Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday). Today, because it has become a valuable habit for us, we might have CouchTime every day or even twice in one day!
- 3) Sometimes there are intimate topics (not age-appropriate) that need to be discussed or perhaps a topic begins to become "heated." That's when we recommend "CouchTime After Hours!" Don't put off those discussions, just have them after the kids go to bed.
- 4) Don't skip CouchTime due to travel. Rich traveled a lot for work, so we would have a designated time when the boys were awake for "Phone CouchTime." We would talk first and then Rich would talk with the boys. Today, we can Facetime!
- 5) Don't give up! It was a little hard getting started. It's challenging to stay consistent with busy schedules, vacations, in-laws visiting, etc., but we never gave up because the benefits were so huge. Our marriage prospered to a new level, our boys derived security, and it created a healthy home environment.

There are so many benefits to CouchTime and we only touched on a few that immediately impacted us. But it is important to note that CouchTime also concretely demonstrates to your children what proper communication looks like and that our marriage relationship is the priority relationship. Child-centered parenting has become so prevalent in today's society and we are made to feel like terrible parents if we don't spend every waking minute focusing on our children. Please remember that you and your spouse were a family before your little blessings came along and your relationship needs to remain a priority. So give your children the gift and security that comes from a healthy marriage. Give your family the gift of CouchTime!

CouchTime and Family Conversation Cards are available in our [Store](#) and offer a fun way to add variety to your discussion time. The cards provide some interesting questions along with quotes from a variety of people and The Bible. Use the quotes to dig deeper by asking, "What do you think he/she meant when they said this?" and "What does this quote mean to you and how does it apply to you or your circumstances?"

[Available on the OneFamily Website](#)

[SignUp Page](#) to receive our daily encouraging and thought-provoking quotes and Tuesday Letters that offer practical marriage and parenting tips and advice. This is a great way to supplement your CouchTime and Family Conversation Cards!

[Resource Page](#) for more marriage & parenting tools, assessments and strategy ideas.

[Events Page](#) to sign up for one-on-one coaching or mentoring, online and in-person classes, seminars/workshops and special events.

ONEFAMILY

Equipping, Encouraging & Sustaining
you for your marriage and parenting
journey!

onefamilyhwl.org