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## **The Simplicity of Connecting with our Children**

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### Author Note

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Abstract

Connecting with our children is something that many parents struggle with but often overthink. It is often through being purposeful and present that we create times to connect. To help parents and children find fun ways to connect, I wrote a book showing a mom and son doing everyday activities together. In addition to completing a reading of this book to local families in my community, I also created a brochure that provided a list of activities as well as some of the benefits of connecting with our children. At the completion of the reading event, we had a Q and A session which gave the children and adults an opportunity to share what kinds of things they like to do together and what they wish they could do more of.

## **Introduction**

As a single mother of five children, all still in the home, finding ways to connect with my children is always on my mind. The difficulty of prioritizing my time in a culture of busyness can be challenging. When I first decided to create a project centered around connecting with children, it was for selfish reasons. It would be an excellent way to spend more time with my children. As I began to dig deeper into the idea of connecting and the lasting benefits, I wanted to share what I had learned with others within my community.

## **Innovative Approach and the Creative Process**

Taking my passion for spending more quality time with my children and turning it into a service project took some creativity. The first step I took was to ask myself, “how might I connect deeper with my children while helping others?” Asking this question has become my initial step for problem-solving and seeking a creative resolution. It is a question that can help me break apart a problem and build a solution. It has become my go-to question, and this project was no exception. In addition, I sought out disparate perspectives by gleaning information from different websites, religious organizations, single people, children ages 4 to 13, moms, and dads. Many ideas arose, and I established a list of ways to connect with children. From the list, it was merely a decision on which was the most promising. An either/or option arose. Either I set up a community event where parents and children could connect or host a parent night where I lecture on the benefits of connecting with children.

The problem was the ideas did not feel creative. So my second foremost step in my creative breakdown was reaching out to someone outside my circle. In so doing, they were able to help me see my problem through a different lens and help generate new ideas on how to make

it more intriguing to both my intended stakeholders and me. The creative process brought me to an either/or statement. Either I write a blog or write a book. Both of these options were more intriguing. I began breaking down and outlining a new project, and as I did so, I continued with my “how might I” questions. The question that helped me design a more creative outlet was, “how might I create an environment for connecting that stretches both the children and adults intellectually?” The solution I created was to write a book for children. In addition, I would have a Q and A discussion with the kids and parents after the reading. This solution would meet the needs of both adults and children.

### **Emotional Intelligence**

When I began breaking down how I could complete this project, I decided to organize a community event. The problem with this solution is it was not indicative of who I am. I may have been able to complete it but would not have enjoyed the process, nor would I think it would have been as successful. Being self-aware and recognizing where my passion lies were critical to the success of this project. I am an introvert and obtain my strength and peace within. Finding a project I could complete and then share with others was the best option.

Considering the emotional intelligence of my audience was essential in deciding how I would share the knowledge with them. The struggle came from the different emotional intelligence needs of the adults and children. A threefold approach is the most effective way of meeting each person at their level. The book would meet the needs of the children, a brochure would meet the adults' intelligence level, and a Q and A session would meet the requirements while providing an outlet for each party to hear the perspectives of the other.

**Creative Thinking**

The process I chose for this project was unimaginative and creative if one can be both things. I decided on an original way to communicate the message by writing a book and combining outlets. However, I needed to develop an innovative solution. My approach was unique in that I used a time already allotted for storytelling to reach those through a book I wrote that centered on ways to connect with our children. In addition, adults and children were engaging in a Q and A discussion. They were listening to ideas from all ages and generating ideas together. Lastly, I provided information to the adults and children about the benefits of connection by passing out a brochure they could take home and use for ideas on future activities with their children.

**The Innovative Solution**

For this project, I wrote a book about my son and me and the many things we do daily to connect. The book had simple activities like playing hide and seek and more adventurous activities like riding a bike. Each page had a little hidden Cordell (the main character) that the children and parents could find together. On the back cover, I also included a question to get parents to talk to their children about what they love doing with each other. After reading the book to the group, we then sat down and talked about the kinds of activities in the books that they already do, what activities they would like to do, and how it makes them feel when they get to do those activities and when they do not. The adults also discussed what they enjoyed doing with their children, what things held them back from doing the activities, and how they could be more purposeful with their time. At the end of the event, each adult got a brochure with over thirty ideas for activities to do with their children and several benefits it creates.

This approach was more innovative than others because it showed parents the ease of

connecting by being an example of how you can write a book, sing a personalized song, dance, go for a walk, etc., with your children. It also provided a relaxed atmosphere for a multi-generational discussion to hear differing perspectives on the importance of connecting and how it makes us feel.

## **Results**

There were positive and negative results from completing the project through the outlet of writing a book. Seven families were provided a time to connect and a list of many more to do in the future. Having a list allows the families more time to spend together and avoids time-consuming research. One hundred percent of the participants said they wanted to do another event like the book reading event with their children. The parents also said they found at least one new thing they planned on doing with their kids at home and could list at least one new thing they learned about the importance of connecting with their children. The event was a success. However, the downside was that I only reached a few families, and the focus was on younger children, so older kids and teens were left out. The book was about a son and his mom so fathers may have felt slanted, and it may have caused sadness for children who did not have a mother to read a book about how much fun the boy had with his mom.

As a parent and stakeholder in this project, there were several benefits to me. Expanding my knowledge on the benefits of connecting with my children was one of them. Another was finding practical ways to communicate with them, and lastly, completing an activity that allowed me to connect with my son (writing a book together). The parents benefited by receiving information that they could take home. The brochure gave them a list of activities they can do with their children as well as details on how connecting with our children can benefit them. There was also a list of resources for finding more information on connecting with their children. The event also

provided a time and space to do several activities to connect with their children, including reading together, doing a scavenger hunt, and having an open dialogue time to listen to their children's thoughts. The last stakeholders were the children. This project provided them an outlet to do something fun with their parents outside the norm. Not only can they sit and enjoy a story, but they also get to provide their opinion on what matters most to them when it comes to spending time with their parents. Their parents, other adults, and I listened to their thoughts and opinions about how to connect.

The event was a success based on the surveys the parents and children filled out. I would have liked to have reached more than just a handful of families. Initially, when I reached out to the two libraries, they expected between ten and fifteen families to attend. The low turnout was the biggest disappointment. On the other hand, I was not expecting such positive feedback from the event, and to have received one hundred percent of those who filled out the survey saying they would attend another event was motivating. In addition, I had one of the libraries ask if I would do another event at their location in conjunction with their daytime storytelling hour. It was great to see that kind of community support.

### **Different Approaches**

There were many possible approaches to this project and many more I had yet to consider. I could have created a youtube channel where each episode showed me connecting with one or more of my children. I could have written a blog providing activities and an outlet for deeper information about the benefits. I could have started a group that met to discuss how to connect more deeply with our kids within the community. I could have gone to the schools and had Q and A sessions with the kids about connecting with their parents and provided ideas on



how they could create and initiate the connecting process. I could have focused on connecting with teens instead of young children. All of these would have reached different audiences and produced different results.

## **Conclusion**

The completion of this capstone project has taught me several things. First, networking is for more than just sales. As I was seeking a location to complete my book reading, several people offered to help and get the word out. Some people offered suggestions of places that might be willing to help. Not having to do all the legwork was extremely helpful. Recognizing the importance of networking was a significant takeaway for me. Second, emotional intelligence is not just about being able to read people. A huge lesson for me through my experience was the importance of knowing yourself and having self-awareness. When I first began the project, I needed more self-awareness to choose something that would not have been exciting or provided me with joy. Margaret Sass told me, “always choose what you love,” and that small statement sparked a desire within me to discover what that was and design a project around it. Though I could not reach as many people as I would have liked, I put my heart into it, and the comments from the surveys show that the audience could feel the passion.

My time in the interdisciplinary professional studies program has taught me the importance of reaching out to those outside my area of focus, how integrative thinking sparks creativity and innovation that can solve problems and create new methods, the importance of goal setting and planning, and how vital emotional intelligence is to the process. The experience I have gained is far-reaching. The benefits will help me professionally, socially, and personally. I look forward to taking the lessons learned and implementing them in future projects.



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### **Project Links**

<https://www.storyjumper.com/book/read/141475271/63582c1707f5c>

[Event Flyer](#)

[Brochure Reading Event](#)

[Book Reading Survey](#)