



Two-Player Mode

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Dad, wanna play X-box?

If you hear these words, your answer should be, “Yes” every time.

Think about it. As our kids get older, our bonding time with them shrinks precipitously. They get busier with sports, jobs... staring at their phone... and typically have less time for Mom and Dad. In a world where it’s already difficult to pry their eyes from screens, why not join them staring at said screen?

Two-player mode is one of the easiest ways to bond with today’s tech-obsessed teenagers—you and your kid, side-by-side, game controllers in hand, laughing and talking as you venture through a digital world together.

Young people love video games, especially boys. In a recent Common Sense Media study*, they found “teen boys average 56 minutes a day playing video games, compared with only seven minutes a day for girls.” Have you tried to connect with your kids during this time?

It’s like this:

Your son is sitting in front of the TV playing a game. Walk in, sit down, and say something positive. Anything!

“Cool sword!”

“Wow! These are great graphics!”

“Are those his intestines?” (Okay... hopefully you don’t say that.)

The key is to try to connect and encourage your son, not distance yourself as a mere disciplinarian. Don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying let your kid do whatever he wants, play violent video games all day, and ignore his homework. I’m just reminding you that effective parenting involves both bonding and boundaries. Some parents weigh so much focus on boundaries that they never bond with their kid. This hurts the relationship and eventually stifles the opportunity to mentor their kids.

What setting brings out this kind of conversation with your kids?

So yes, there are times when you might need to say, “Okay Chris, remember only an hour of video games on school nights” (or whatever realistic and helpful guardrails you have set up). But make sure this isn’t the only interaction you have. Make a proactive effort to try and catch your kids being good. Walk in on them when they start playing their games and offer some encouragement.

The simple act of “showing up” to watch them play can go miles towards bonding with today’s young people. I found when I sat down and watched my son, he immediately started talking with me. It was the simplest way to connect with my son... period! I would sit down and start watching him play, and next I knew, he was talking to me about school, friends, girls, farts... everything. All I did was sit down and say, “How did you do that?”

If you watch long enough, you’ll typically get the offer to join in.
“Wanna try?”

Some the best conversations I’ve had with my son were during two-player mode.
What setting brings out this kind of conversation with your kids?

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