

room between us and the kids, I always feel a bit claustrophobic when I have kids in the vehicle with me, it's weird I know, but I can't be the only one that feels this way. Now I know a lot of you out there say "Oh I love my children" or your grandchildren or however these bundles of energy are related to you, but for others (myself), and others out there that feel it's a bit stressful to take these kids out and about. It's not always easy for everyone. Anyways, again back to the main point here. When you finally are ready to set out and get everyone geared up for fishing for the first time you need to scope out the landscape. Finding a safe place to set up is always key. You just don't know when one of them might get a bit distracted by let's say a bird, or a squirrel and slip in. So we need to make sure it's a flat area or an easy place to get to and that there is a rail or something that can keep them from falling in the water. All else fails, just put some floaties on their arms, park the vehicle close and tie them to the bumper. Orange spray paint makes them stand out really well too so if you have any. Just joking.

Gear safety is another thing we need to discuss with these children too. If you don't feel like dodging fishing hooks and rods all day I would suggest giving the kids the fishing 101 speech. Remember to always let them know the hook is meant for being in the water and not to be used to grab their siblings shirt and pull on it. I have 3 older brothers I know what it's like being on the sharp side of the hook, not a fun time. Also remember to show them the appropriate way to put the bait on the hook, or if you don't know yourself just grab one of the kids cell phones and look it up on Google. I would hope though in this situation you might have the basic knowledge of fishing so you're not learning along with the children. Another thing to remember is casting. I've seen many rods go swimming because a child forgot to hold on to the rod when casting. This is your job to let them know. We all know kids now a days can beat high scores on their games all day pushing buttons and moving toggles, but to make them actually physically move their arm and cast a fishing rod might be disappointing. If you do lose a rod, just reassure them that it's part of the learning process and you did it once or twice when you were younger. Sometimes a little white lie is okay.

Finally a fish on the line, after all this time the kids are excited and smiles are lighting up the area. Nothing beats a child's smile when they finally get a fish on the line. Help them reel it in if you have to, but remember making them reel it in usually takes longer and prolongs the joy the child has. So unless the kid is flailing its arms around

and screaming for help, let them enjoy it for as long as it takes. Also remember no fish is small, no matter how tiny, inconspicuous, or almost minnow like the fish is, it's always a big one. It's always good to show them they did a good job, and all the struggling they did to reel it in was worth the effort. Even if it did take them ten minutes to reel in a half ounces.

Now hopefully by this time the children have adapted to the environment and haven't melted from the sunlight, and are fully enjoying themselves. Not to say they all will be having fun, but even if you made one smile that's one extra person you have going with you on your next fishing trip, most likely. Every child is different and not everyone will enjoy the trip, but if worm juice, fish slime, bugs, sunlight, water, and a little bit of dirt still can't keep your child from the next fishing trip you have accomplished something a majority of parents today are having problems with. To get a child outside and enjoy the world around them is getting harder and harder as time goes by. I remember growing up going hunting, fishing, getting dirt under the nails, pulling ticks out of my hair, and sweating was part of being a kid. Heck, a bug flying in the mouth and not slowing me down was a sign I was enjoying myself and I got a little extra protein that day. It's sad seeing how much kids want to stay inside and play video games these days. Fishing doesn't seem like much for some people, hell, it can be boring, stressful, dirty, sweaty, and just plain evil. But staying inside the house can be too. I know going out fishing and enjoying the outdoors with my family is why I am the person I am today, and I'm darn proud to say I got worm guts on my face and in my mouth sometimes, despite their bitter, sweet aftertaste. It's how I grew up and I know that my daughter will grow up the same.

If your kids are outside right now playing in the grass and dirt, picking up bugs, eating leaves and gravel, snot bubbles clinging to their faces from all the running they're doing, skateboarding, playing basketball, wrestling, or just outside in general, then congratulations, you've managed to pry their eyes from the television or the computer and that's better than most people have done. Here's something to think about.

22 percent of young children own a cell phone (ages 6-9), 60 percent of tweens (ages 10-14), and 84 percent of teens (ages 15-18). And cell phone companies are now marketing to younger children with colorful kid-friendly phones and easy-to-use features. According to market research firm the Yankee Group, 54 percent of 8 to 12 year olds will have cell phones within the next three years.

■ by Brian Anderson

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