

Bonding with the Universe.

As parents, we often worry about what our children are getting excited about. We hope we can guide them to "bond" with healthy things like a love of learning, of family and of healthy social activities. But we also worry they will bond with the wrong people like internet stalkers or the wrong crowd at school. Wouldn't it be great if we could harness that tremendous energy and desire to latch onto something and bond with it and help our children "bond" with the universe through a love of astronomy?

Kids love to get excited about what you are excited about. So there lots of ways you can "spring" the fun of astronomy on them that will jump start them on a long and happy exploration of the hobby of astronomy. Here are a few to get your imagination going.

* Work it into an evening in the backyard. If you know the night sky will be particularly exciting the night of a big family barbecue, plan to have some blankets out there. Then as everybody else is playing Frisbee, just lay out a blanket, lay flat on your back and start staring up into the sky with a binoculars. Like the old prank of staring at a far away spot to get people's interest, your kids will see what you are doing and what to know what is going on. As you let them take a peek, their curiosity will take off like a wild fire and they are hooked.

* A surprise visit to the country. Sometimes it is hard to see the vast display of stars from within the city. So if you announce that you are going to show them a surprise one night and have them pile into the car, their curiosity will be going wild as you leave the city. When you find that quiet park, field or lake side spot, all you have to do is point up and say "just look" and the magnificence of the night sky will do the rest.

* A special Christmas gift. You can buy your children an affordable and durable beginner's telescope along with some easy star maps written just for kids. Imagine when they open this exciting gift and want to know how to use it. Don't be surprised if you are setting up the new telescope in the snow to show them the great things they will see in the cosmos with the gift that Santa wanted them to have. The gift of astronomy.

* Unleash the power of a meteor shower on them. You can keep your eye on the events that are predicted for the sky watchers in your area. When the next big meteor shower is about to explode over your area, watch the weather for a clear night and get your kids excited about what they are about to see. As the lights begin to go off over head and you create fun and interesting narration to this dramatic display, the children will be addicts for life for the great experiences that can be had as students of astronomy.

* Plan a surprise event in with something you are already doing. For example, on vacation, you can plan your route on a cross country trip to bring you within visiting distance of one of the great multimillion dollar telescopes

in this country. By contacting them ahead of time, you can be sure they are conducting a tour that coincides with your visit. Just imagine if they can look up at a telescope that is bigger than their house and maybe look through the eyepiece as some amazing cosmic sight, it will be the hit of the vacation.

Astronomy is a great activity to introduce on a family camping trip. As the family sits around the fire after a fun night of camping, all you have to do is just look up and go "Wow, look at that!" When those little heads look up, they will look back down changed children, children in love with the stars.

Astronomy is a healthy passion for your kids and one they can grow with their entire lives. And there is probably no better gift you can give them than the love of the stars, of science and of nature that is all wrapped up together when your kids bond with the universe through astronomy.