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Everyday Settings and Family Activities

Everyday science learning is not really a single setting at all—it is the constellation of everyday activities and routines through which people often learn things related to science. What distinguishes everyday and family learning from the other venues represented in this volume is that a significant portion of it occurs in settings in which there is not necessarily any explicit goal of teaching or learning science—at least not part of an institutional agenda to engage in science education. In many situations, scientific content, ways of thinking, and practices are opportunistically encountered and identified, without any particular prior intention to learn about science. In this way, science learning is simply woven into the fabric of the everyday activities or problems.

An individual could be asked to make a health-related decision, contingent on a set of scientific concepts and complex underlying models, while keeping a routine doctor's appointment. A family might stumble across a science-related event—like a robotics or science fair put on by avid hobbyists—while on a weekend outing. An individual may have to learn about some detailed aspect of computer technology in order to resolve a problem with a computer or network. A group of children might decide to construct an elaborate treeshouse one summer, necessitating that they develop a deeper understanding of materials and structural mechanics. Or community members may decide to canvass their neighborhood to educate and involve others responding to an environmental hazard that has been uncovered. As each of these examples illustrates, moments for science learning and teaching surface in people's everyday lives in unpredictable and opportunistic ways. The research reviewed in this chapter raises intriguing questions about how such everyday moments can figure importantly into a

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