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Finding quality time

It's a difficult feat but very **beneficial**

As children grow and become more active with friends and more engaged in activities, finding quality time becomes increasingly difficult.

The meaning of "quality time" varies from family to family. I like Wikipedia's definition: an informal reference to time spent with loved ones (e.g., close family, partners or friends) that is in some way important, special, productive or profitable. While most parents know the "value" of this important time, it all too often gets neglected during busy times.

Researchers says the time families spend together has severely decreased in the last 10 years. The current generation of children are being called "digital natives." Their ability to plug in and play at any given time creates a barrier for parents to create quality time. For example, riding in the car used to be a perfect opportunity to find out about a child's day or listen to the exchange with a sibling about the goings-on at school.

Today, children are often tuned into iPods, Nintendo systems or other multimedia devices while in transport.

The other significant contribution to lost family time emanates from the need for both parents to work. A recent article in U.S. News & World Report depicted a dad telling his story of losing his high-powered executive job. While this was a financial upset to the families' life style, the father said, "It



Riley and Maggie enjoy a round of Go Fish with my mother before bedtime. It's one of Maggie's favorites.

was one of the greatest blessings." The father had no idea that he had missed his kids growing up. He had missed his daughter's birthdays, proms, soccer games, and he noted, the most important of all, "family dinners." It had been seven years since he had eaten dinner on a regular basis with his family. While getting laid off is not the easiest way to find quality time, it certainly demonstrates the importance of setting priorities.

Spending time with loved ones

and family is an incredible experience. Enjoying your child's smile or cute anecdotes can be a powerful healing tool during stressful times. This special bonding time also lays the groundwork for pre-adolescent and teen years when children tend to clam up a bit. If you have laid a solid foundation and taken the time to express the importance of quality family time, psychologists say your child is less likely to become reticent during the teen years.


Photo special to SWF Parent & Child

However, it takes effort to plan uninterrupted, focused time with your family. Older children might resist spending time or find the activities planned are not enjoyable.

Engage your children in the decision-making process, letting them help choose what you do and when. Entice them by letting them stay up late on a Friday night or have a special treat. A root beer float is always a hit at our house.

Keep in mind that quality time does not have to

cost money or be an extravagant event. Playing cards, hide and seek, or even playing video games with your kids can result in a great time for everyone. Just remember: No matter what you do or when you find time to do it, spending time listening, learning and enjoying your family is one of the most important things parents can do for their families' long term happiness and stability.

P.S. Thanks, Mom, for reminding me of the value of quality time. 

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