

The gift of time

It's a difficult present to find, **but well worth it**



Erin Harrel
of Cape Coral is
the mother of
three children.

As I sat on the floor trying to see the television over Maggie's head, I heard her little voice: "Mom, aren't you going to play with me?"

At that moment, I realized I was missing out on genuine mother-daughter time.

Jude and Riley had left an hour earlier for the ball field and Maggie was forced to stay with Mom, much to her displeasure.

I offered to play a game of Memory. You remember the one: The players turn over cards two at a time trying to make a match. Of course, 4-year-old Maggie just flips until she finds a match. Occasionally, she lets you take a turn, but mostly you just watch as she beams from ear to ear, finding pairs of animals or shapes on the little cardboard squares.

I have played the game a million times (maybe more), but this night was different. As I sat on the floor watching Maggie adorned in her favorite princess t-shirt and "High School Musical" pajama pants, I realized how much she was enjoying my company and I hers. You might say it was a bit of an epiphany.

Let me explain.


I spend countless hours with my children: driving them to school, picking them up, helping with their homework, sitting at the ball field, watching Irish step dance and even sleeping with them when the scary

monsters come out from under the bed. Sometimes I feel like I can't get a minute to myself. There are days when I can't even use the restroom without a friendly visit. (They never seem to mind the fact that I'm on the toilet. What is that about, anyway?)

However, on this particular night, I realized I rarely spend "quality time" with my kids. Now, I realize the term "quality time" is up for much liberal interpretation, but if you just take a few moments to really enjoy and listen to your kids, you might find a whole new meaning for "quality time."

After about 20 minutes of the Memory Game, Maggie started rubbing her eyes and began to give up on our brief moment together. After cleaning up the game, she retrieved her nightly books and cuddled in my lap. It was wonderful. It was only about 30 minutes, but it seemed like hours of laughter and sure to be years of memories.

I vowed that night to take time to really enjoy my kids and to stay focused on what really matters through the holiday season: my family! It's not an easy task. Time always seems to slip away, but it is certainly something I am willing to make sacrifices for. Life is short and unpredictable. Take time to make the most of it. You deserve it, and so do your children.

Have a safe, wonderful holiday! 



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