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Quality Time

your children need it, and so do you

I mention kids a lot in my articles, mainly because they are an important part of life for most. There's also the obvious fact that children are the future. They will eventually rule the world and it would be comforting to believe they will treat it and us in a considerate manner. If they don't, it is quite possibly our fault because we failed to teach them properly.

Sure, there is formal education, and we send them off to school believing they will be taught all they might need to know; but like charity, the best form of learning begins at home. From the earliest age children rely on parents and carers to set those guidelines which will prepare them to cope and function within an ever-changing society. We may well think we are succeeding with respect to behaviour, respect and so on; but there is an aspect that is often shelved because it is inconvenient. What does this have to do with healthy living? Especially when it involves the kids, anyone experiencing stressful family relationships shouldn't need to ask. What's the answer? Quality time.

We've all been there and know what it's like having to attend school week after week, plodding through homework instead of doing something neat and interesting; and when all of this is finished, after a fashion, we just need a friend to share these important quality times. And who better than Mum and Dad? The problem is, both seem to be busy doing their own things. They are always saying we could do better than playing video games; then that's exactly what they tell us to do when we want to spend time with them and they claim they have none to spare.

Should there be a grandparent or two on hand, they sort-of fill the gap; and, although they do tend to repeat the same stories over and over, some of them are entertaining. Neither do they talk down to us, despite being many years our senior. It's a different story with older brothers and sisters, particularly when they have been deputised by our parents to keep us occupied. This is when we learn about resentment and impatience, attitudes seemingly essential for when we grow up. In the meantime, however, we are just kids who want something more than being constantly dismissed as nuisances. We want to spend quality time with the most important people in our lives.

Being honest, my hero is my Dad; gone now, but one person I truly admire. Thinking back, though, he spent very little time with me when I was a lad. Being a musician, he worked late and I rarely saw him; but I was cheered to awake in the morning and discover the candies he always left on my little tin drummer-boy beside the bed.

Although I never thought about it then, I would have been over the moon if he'd been there himself, just the two of us, man and boy talking about stuff that mattered only to us.

Mum did fill the gap, though, and my sister. The two of them were really my best friends of those growing years and I am grateful for that. Unlike so many these days, I didn't miss out; and that is something I wish to rectify. So, I am making an appeal. It won't cost anything in monetary terms, just a little effort and some of your time.

Should one of your children say: "Can you help me with my homework, Mum?" put on hold whatever you are doing and come to the party. Most importantly, make it very clear that you are truly keen to learn what they are learning and you have likely forgotten. Encourage them to help with the cooking, or brushing the dog. As for Dad, the office-work you brought home could surely wait while you join the fray partnering your offspring to fight demons and ghouls on the X-box. And both Mum and Dad might even be able to stomach watching an episode or two of the kids' favourite TV shows with them.

And so to bed... Children love stories and we have just the way to tell them in our Moonberry Pie series. You can leap right in, or read the introduction first to get some idea of what real story-telling is about. You see, there are no pictures you can point to. YOU have to make it all happen with the way you tell it; and if they ask for descriptions of scenes and characters, you'll have to be prepared up front.

This is only a suggestion, mind. Maybe you can find your own way, but do try. Quality time with your children is a very small window. Make the most of it while it's still open.

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