

# QUALITY vs QUANTITY TIME WITH KIDS

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

For a couple of decades now the catchphrase has been, "It's not the quantity of time that we spend with our kids that's important, it's the quality time." I am not sure where the statement originated. The person was probably leading a very busy lifestyle while trying at the same time to create a healthy family life. I remember that feeling well. We packed so much into our days when our kids were young that I feel tired just thinking about it now!

Soon after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, at a time when everyone was revisiting the quality of their relationships, a Catholic Priest and a Rabbi surveyed over 4,000 adolescents. They were simply asked what they most wanted from their parents. The overwhelming majority said, "TIME". If we were to look back at our own family memories, what would we most remember? For me it was my Dad playing 'hide and seek' with us. For my husband, Brian, it was the hours spent every Saturday gardening together with his Dad and his brothers. They competed to see who could grow the biggest and best vegetables.

Last night I saw a great story on ABC's Nightline. It was about a boy who survived a plane crash. He said that his father was determined to include him in all his outdoor adventures. His father had taught him all kinds of sporting type activities at a very early age. The most inspiring message to his son was, "Never give up!" When the boy was about nine years old his father took him on a plane ride with a couple of adult friends. The weather closed in and poor visibility caused them to lose their way. They crashed into a mountainside. When he gained consciousness he realized he and a woman passenger were the only ones who were alive. Of course, it was devastating to realize his father had perished, but he knew he had to get help for the wounded woman passenger. They walked together for some time with the boy helping her to stand up, but then she slipped on ice and fell to her death. Now he was alone – really alone!

Then the boy realized he wasn't afraid. He said he was able to keep calm because of all his wilderness experience. He kept walking until he found a road and subsequently some people to help him. He didn't give up! Thirty years later he decided to tell his story. The Nightline interviewer asked why he had waited so long. "I didn't really appreciate the value of what my father taught me until I had a son of my own. I want him to experience the great things in life that I can teach him, just as my father taught me."

'Quality time' means putting our own stuff aside and giving our kids our undivided attention. It might be listening to what happened in their day. It might be showing them how to master a particular activity like riding a bicycle, flying a

kite, sewing a dress or making cookies. It might be teaching them that that failing is not a bad thing but a learning experience. It might mean just being silly together. It certainly means taking an interest in their stuff and encouraging them to dream and attain goals. Quite honestly, I don't think that taking that level of interest (quality time) can be achieved without spending quantity time with kids.

So how on earth do we manage to spend quality and quantity time with the pressures we face in today's society? First of all we have to create a family plan and schedule collective and individual time with our kids. Be interested in what they say and do. Take time to make time. From experience, I know that kids grow up quickly and are off our hands before we realize it. Wouldn't it be a shame if we didn't take advantage of creating many memorable events in our children's lives from toddlerhood onwards? We can all do it. It just takes a little effort, but pays huge dividends! Be encouraged.

We would love to hear stories that have created great memories from your childhood and youth. Take a moment to write it down and email us a copy.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at [sally@forefrontfamilies.org](mailto:sally@forefrontfamilies.org). We invite you to also check out our website at [www.forefrontfamilies.org](http://www.forefrontfamilies.org) and our blog site at [www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com](http://www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com) for further assistance.