

SETTING PRIORITIES

by Sally and Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

We all have a need for significance, to be noticed for our talents or our efforts, to achieve, to succeed. Our schedules get filled with “to-dos” for maintaining our corporate success, recreational priorities, hobbies, and social lives, and before we know it, our children are affected—there’s not time for what really matters at the end of our journeys. There is nothing wrong with ambition, but if our efforts become detrimental to our marriage or our children, our priorities need to be examined.

Read what was quoted in the April 2002, edition of the Reader’s Digest in an article entitled, *How Do You Find God? –The Search for Meaning in Everyday Life*.

“When something happens to shake our culture – like terrorist attacks, or the dishonesty that wiped out more than ten thousand 401(k)s – we pause, not merely from fear. A deeper self-examination is going on all over the country. Love, family and faith are emerging. The new appreciation for time spent with those we love poses a great spiritual question to materialistic yuppies and workaholic careerists, and that question is this: Was your life before September 11 really working for you?”

The authors, a Rabbi and a Priest, then relate a story they heard about a workaholic CEO, speaking at his retirement dinner to a group of young executives. “I know you want my job, and I’ll tell you how to get it. Last week, my daughter was married, and as she walked down the aisle, I realized I did not know the name of her best friend, or the last book she read, or her favorite color. That’s the price I paid for this job. If you want to pay the price, you can have it.

After September 11th, Rabbi Gellman and Monsignor Hartman asked a group of children to name the very best gift they could receive. Overwhelmingly, the kids replied, “More time with Mom and Dad.”

What is quality time? We hear it said that quality time—giving full attention to another person—is more important than quantity time—simply being “present.” All family members need time with one another, so how can parents give enough time to their children? Create a family plan:

1. Determine work/school/practice times and all family members’ activities.
2. If the activities are greater than the 16 hours in the day you have available, then prioritize activities (eliminating some if necessary) to allow for the most important time: family time, one-on-one time, etc.
3. If a job is keeping a parent away from the children, then proper consideration should be given to changing circumstances to allow for the times that are most important.
4. Separated or divorced parents can work on a similar system of blocking out time for their children.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also

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