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Looking at TIME differently

The most important lesson I've learnt these last few years as a father is just how precious time with my child is. Some say that "time is money"; but the truth is that time is lot more valuable than money. While money can be lost and then regained, once we miss the opportunities to spend time with our children while they are still young, these opportunities are lost forever.

I remember a scene in the movie "Hook", when a busy father has no time for his children and is given a sharp reminder by his wife who says something along the lines of "we have such a small window of time when we have precious moments with our children, now while they are the ones who want us around; and you are not being careful, and you are missing it."

The challenge is that working fathers face a never ending stream of things to do in work that are all labelled "URGENT". The tendency is to push "time with our children" to the back of the queue.

In the end it's all about perceived consequences. Sometimes we perceive our work to be more important and urgent because we know that the consequences of failure to be dire and immediate ie." I may not meet my targets, I may get reprimanded by my boss, I may not get my promotion, I may not get my bonus."

Unfortunately we find it easier to overlook the consequences of not spending time with our children. We are tempted to think; "It doesn't really make a difference, I can do it next week, it's not very urgent."

I have come to realize that it really DOES matter whether I spend time with my child. I have to remember that my daughter is more affected by my absence than my colleagues, or my bosses, or my clients. At this critical stage of growth for my daughter, every day brings with it numerous learning opportunities and it is important that I help facilitate this learning process.

My responsibility to my daughter should take precedence over all things. I can blame no one else. I have control over my time and I should choose to protect my time with her.

Looking at JOY differently

My daughter has taught me how to enjoy the simple pleasures. Sometimes as adults we have forgotten how to have fun. Perhaps life has become so complicated and we have made life so complex that we have forgotten how to be fulfilled and satisfied.

For example, the materialistic side of us has conditioned us to believe that the more we spend the better we feel. It feels sometimes that only the rich have all the fun. The grass is always greener on the other side and we spend our days unhappily reflecting on all the things we want but we can't have. It's a cycle of dissatisfaction and honestly a waste of valuable time.

My daughter, free from these complexities and negative reflections, seeks out joy and excitement in what is available, what is present, what is in the moment. A pile of stones in the garden, a puddle in the park, a few sticks on the ground, can become a source of great enjoyment and entertainment. Free, simple, satisfying.

Sometimes I find myself so immersed in my responsibilities as an adult, especially the need to acquire wealth to support the family, that I have no time or energy to enjoy that wealth. But my child reminds me and teaches me how to stop and enjoy the moment, enjoy all the things I take for granted; the peace, the humour, the nature, the taste, the sounds, the stories, the mysteries, the touch, the love.

Looking at SUCCESS differently

Parenting has become such a competitive pursuit. Parents seem to be clamouring to "produce" the most successful child, the smartest child, the strongest child, the most talented child.

Like any other parent, I certainly feel the pressure. There is a great temptation to see our child as a "show case" for our parenting skills. The logic is, the more capable the child is, the better the parent.

I've had to learn not to place pressure on my child for the sake of defending my own pride. Child centered parenting requires me to focus on the needs of my daughter, not my own.

It's not about how impressive my child is but how healthy and happy she is that matters.

In the end of the day, what is success? Is it about comparing my child with other children, or is it about whether my child is living a full life?

Upon reflection, I have come to the conclusion that my role as a parent is to provide the environment, opportunities and encouragement that will enable my child to develop into a person who is in a position to realize their potential and live a life of meaning and significance.

She will not be perfect, just as I am imperfect, and she will not always succeed, but through the ups and downs, hopefully she would have developed the strength of character and resilience of will to accomplish all her dreams and goals.

I have realized that when we take such a long term and holistic view of our role as parents, it helps us avoid a lot of petty and unnecessary squabbles and worries. Then we focus on what really matters. It also takes a lot of pressure off our shoulders as parents. We don't need to be always comparing ourselves to and competing with other parents. It's not about us, it's about our children.

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