

Family Matters

Volume 1: Issue 1

A Publication of Valley Victory Church



Welcome to the first “Family Matters” e-letter.

Today we look at an article by Mark Goulston, in which we find wisdom and insights into connecting with our kids.

Dear Mark,

We met at the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year event in Palm Springs a couple months ago where I was one of the regional winners in technology. You remarked that it was too bad that my children didn’t get the same kind of undivided attention that I gave to my company, which was my real “firstborn” child. We laughed at the time. After I returned home I realized it wasn’t so funny and I didn’t want to be a remiss dad.

My business does need me there to survive and succeed right now, whereas my kids have my wife to pinch hit for me. Actually that’s being too generous to myself; she doesn’t pinch hit, she plays mom and dad to them and I’m just making excuses. I wasn’t that close to my workaholic father and I don’t want to repeat the pattern with my kids. Any suggestions for how to give my kids quality time when I’m always rushed?

-Ina Rush (used with permission) Portland, Oregon

Dear Ina Rush,

I could tell you that life is about choices, but I’m guessing you’d like some constructive tips so that you can grow your company and also do your share in helping your kids grow up. I do have some advice on how to make the most of the little time you have.

These suggestions address what I believe is a parent’s most important responsibility-teaching your children self-reliance and preparing them to be effective in all aspects of their life. To do this you might want to instill in them the 3 P’s of preparation: perspective, perseverance, and patience. Here’s how to do it:

Perspective: The real bedtime story. If you still read a story to your children at night, add this exercise: Ask them: “What was the best and worst thing that happened to you today?” Listen to what they say, and respond with “Wow, that’s great” to the good stuff, and “Gee, really, I’m so sorry you felt upset by that” to the bad stuff. Don’t give advice unless they ask for it. Then ask them: “What are you

most looking forward to tomorrow and what are you most nervous about? Hear them out the same way as with the first question. Follow up this exercise by telling your story. This exercise helps your child develop perspective to see that both good and bad things happen every day.

Perseverance: When your children tell you about a situation that has clearly upset, scared, angered, or hurt them, resist the temptation to quickly reassure them. Instead, give them a word for what they seem to be feeling by saying: “That must have scared/angered/hurt you, didn’t it?” If they agree, then calmly ask them: “How scared/angry/upset, etc. did you feel?” They may only say, “Really bad” or “Very” but in that moment of saying it to you, they will feel safe, less alone, and relieved, and they may even cry. This is a great way of establishing a sense of comfort and calmness in your children after which they will be more open to suggestions and advice. The formula is: Comfort first, Coach second. This exercise will help your children develop the ability to comfort and calm themselves when they are older and enable them to persevere through rough times.

Patience: Do this exercise once a week with your entire family when you’re having dinner together. Ask everyone to talk about something they did in spite of not wanting to do it. You should start the ball rolling. For example, you might say: “I went to this meeting I didn’t want to go to, tried to make the best of it and actually met someone that might help me in my job, and I never would have met that person had I not gone to the meeting.” Then have your husband and kids share something. This exercise helps your children develop tolerance, cooperation skills, and flexibility. It also will make them accept that people have to do things that they don’t always want to do, and because everyone has to do this it’s fair and part of life -- and having patience when things don’t go your way works better than having a tantrum.

These steps do not excuse you from spending a certain amount of “face time” with your children (perhaps equal to the “face time” you need to spend with investors when a telephone call won’t suffice) and even experts are not immune from your dilemma.

I remember years ago when my kids were small. They had a nickname for me: “Hi kids, bye kids, love you kids.” I used to laugh when they would teasingly taunt me, but like you, I also realized it wasn’t funny.