

## **Parenting: Save your money and get on the floor**

Good parent-child relationships cannot be bought. Good parent-child relationships are a by-product of spending **not** money, but time together.

Many parents say they spend “quality time” with their kids, but when looked at more closely, it seems this phrase can take on a different meaning – ***I don’t spend much time with the kids, but when I do, I spoil them by buying them things.***

Parents whose quality time consists mainly of buying their children things are at risk of building their relationship on the basis of purchases and are at risk of developing a sense of entitlement (meaning that what you give them is theirs and therefore your responsibility to give to them or you are a bad parent) in their children. In time, their children do not want to spend time with a parent if that parent isn’t spending money on them. Given the rise of this situation, the parents then begrudge the relationship with their children and feel they are being taken advantage of. Sadly though, this is how some children have been trained to relate to their parents.

An important indicator of quality time is actually **quantity** of time spent with children. Children, whose parents spend time with them as opposed to spending money on them, learn to value the parent for **who** they are, rather than **what** they may purchase. Instead of purchasing things as the basis of the parent-child relationship, activities can be substituted, particularly activities that are inherently fun for both parent and child.

The process of developing a good parent-child relationship starts when children are young. Bath time and feeding time can be fun activities as is peek-a-boo and making faces for the wee ones. Come toddler age, going for strolls, playing on the floor and looking at picture books can be entertaining. For the preschooler, running around outside, walks to the playground or visiting the library can form the basis of spending time together. School age children enjoy throwing a ball, playing sports and going for bike rides together. Given parents have continually spent time with their kids, come teenagers, even they enjoy time with their

parents. Their time can be spent talking about life, exercising, and even listening to music together.

Throughout, have at least one meal a day together as a family. This provides opportunity to stay connected and discuss how things are going in your child’s life. In fact, limit the activities the child has outside of school and outside of the family to one activity during the school week, and possibly one activity on the weekend. That would mean you will have the dinner meal together at least five times a week.

In terms of self-esteem, like a good relationship, it cannot be bought. Self-esteem is also a by-product, most notably, of a good parent-child relationship. Those parents who concentrate on developing a good relationship with their kids through spending time, not money, tend to have kids with better respect for themselves and respect for others. These kids learn that they must be of value; otherwise, their parents wouldn’t spend so much time with them. They also learn that it is the relationship that matters, not the purchases.

If your child is costing you money, take a good look. It may be that you are building your relationship on the basis of purchases. Your child may even be fueling that fire by making you feel guilty for not buying them things, but if you give in, then for sure, you will only be valued for what you buy for them. So, continue to bring yourself and let that be joyful, entertaining and caring. Spend your time with your kids listening and doing things together.

Tell a baby *peek-a-boo* and he looks at you, buy him a toy and he looks at the toy. Do you want your child to have a relationship with you or the toy?

Now get on the floor and play.

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