

Family Matters

Take time to enjoy the special people in your life

My child arrived just the other day. He came to the world in the usual way. But there were planes to catch and bills to pay. He learned to walk while I was away.— Harry Chapin, *Cat's in the Hat*

In the non-stop pace of our daily lives with multiple places to be at once and never-ending demands on our time and attention, it can be difficult to find time to spend with our children.

Even with an extra day on a long weekend or over holidays, we are tempted to cross off some items on our to-do lists. Sometimes I actually have to schedule time with my children. After they have gone to bed, I am always struck by how much fun they are.

Then I question if, in the rush of daily life, I am forgetting that. Do we spend enough quality time together?

As a parent, I try to teach my children generosity through the modelling of good will, volunteer work and donations to charities.

However, to the definition of generosity, a focus could be added to time.

Instead of all the presents or dollars spent, we could put more effort into spending quality time playing, reading, cuddling, and talking with our children throughout the year. Planning a family vacation together or an impromptu picnic or tea party can be excellent chances to spend time with our children especially over summer vacation.

With such busy lives, it's easy for parents to be physically there but not really "present." Of course my children love a trip to the dollar store, indoor playground or arcade, but they speak much more often of impromptu movie nights and sleepovers, baking muffin mania, crazy fashion shows, dance move party or Twister championships.

As the summer holidays approach, a thought for parents is: Have you planned to spend



quality time with your children no matter their ages this summer? Summer is a wonderful opportunity to spend time with children...finding out what they would like to do, planning an adventure, picnic, fishing or sports time, or something of mutual interest. It shows respect that you care about their interests, spending time with them and getting to know them as people, especially as they get older.

Well, he came home from college just the other day. So much like a man I just had to say, "Son, I'm proud of you. Can you sit for a while?" He shook his head and he said with a smile, "What I'd really like, Dad, is to borrow the keys. See you later. Can I have them please?"— Harry Chapin, *Cat's in the Hat*

Often it seems unbelievable that children grow up so quickly (especially after a long day) but then I think back to when mine were born, and it seems impossible.

It's a reminder that children are young for a very short snapshot of time and, as parents, we don't want to look back in 15 years with regrets about things we wish we had said or done. I doubt there will be regrets for not purchasing the latest and greatest toy, but what about those missed games, cuddles, adventures, stories and talks?

No one has yet realized the wealth of sympathy, the kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The effort of every true education should be to unlock that treasure.—Emma Goldman

Written by Jan Pettigrew, a volunteer Board Member with the Dufferin Parent Support Network, certified teacher/school volunteer and mother of two beautiful children.

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