

The Five Love Languages of Children: Quality Time

Welcome back to our series of podcasts on the *Five Love Languages of Children* by Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell. If you're just joining us, this is our third podcast on the third love language, which is quality time. You can find the first two podcasts at fbroswell.org/family and on iTunes. The child whose love language is quality time feels most loved when he or she receives undivided attention. The book gives this scenario: "Four year old Ella is pulling on her mother's leg. 'Mommy, Mommy, let's go play!' 'I can't right now,' Kate says. 'I have to finish paying bills. I'll play with you after that. Go play by yourself for a few minutes and then we'll do something together.'" If your child has ever done this, then you know exactly what happens next. In a few minutes, Ella is back, begging to play. Every few minutes she comes back until eventually Kate is done and they have their playtime together. Ella isn't trying to get on her mother's nerves. What she's doing is showing that her primary love language is most likely quality time, and that her emotional love tank needs to be filled.

- When your child's love tank is empty and attention is the only thing that will fill it, that child will go to almost any length to get what he/she needs
- *Even if your child's love language is not quality time, many children crave the undivided attention of parents. In fact, a lot of their misbehaving is an attempt to get more time with Mom or Dad*
- So what is quality time? Quality time is focused, undivided attention
 - When a child is an infant, they receive plenty of quality time- between feeding, changing, being held by parents, extended family, etc.
 - As a child grows, quality time spent with them becomes more difficult because it requires sacrifice from parents- **it's easier to give physical touch and words of affirmation than quality time- giving a child quality time may mean that you have to give up something else**
 - As children grow toward adolescence, they often need attention just when parents are exhausted, rushed, or emotionally drained
 - **Quality time is a parent's gift of presence to a child. It says: "You are important. I like being with you."**
 - When you spend quality time with your children, you need to go to their physical/emotional level of development- do what they want to do, be where they are
- Factors of Quality Time
 - Most important factor is NOT the event itself, but that you are DOING SOMETHING TOGETHER, being together
 - Doesn't require that you go somewhere special, you can provide FOCUSED attention almost anywhere

- Finding time to be alone with each of your children is not easy, but it is essential
- The key to quality time is found in the values and priorities you as parents determine to cherish and implement in your home
- Quality time should include:
 - Positive Eye Contact- looking in your child's eyes with care is a powerful way to convey love. Studies have shown that most parents use eye contact in primarily negative ways, either while reprimanding a child or giving very explicit instructions. Think about that for a minute. How do you usually use eye contact with your children?
 - You can help keep your child's emotional tank full by using positive eye contact, and not just when your child is pleasing you. It's harder to give loving looks when your child is misbehaving, but it's important.
 - Quality time should also include Sharing Thoughts and Feelings- It means not only doing things together, but also knowing your child better. When you do things together, you can create an environment in which you and your child can talk about more important issues- it's easier to have those conversations when you're doing something together.
 - Quality Conversations- have real conversations about life- talk to your child about some issues that you faced that they are going through too, talk to them about your history, etc. **Children never outgrow a need for quality conversation with parents and other adults.** Learning how to communicate on this level will serve them well in their own future relationships, including marriage. It will show them how to process their own thoughts and to communicate in a positive, caring manner that respects the ideas of others.
 - Because your children will learn more from talking with you than you will probably ever realize, it is crucial that you spend time in healthy conversation with them, no matter how old they are. It's important to keep topics age appropriate though. 😊
 - If you limit your talking with your children to just correction, your child may never learn the value of positive, focused attention. Negative attention alone cannot meet their need for love.
 - Younger Children- with younger children, one of the most effective times to initiate conversation is at bedtime, when they are especially attentive.
 - Bedtime Rituals and Reading stories- All children love stories. Reading to them is a great way to begin your bedtime ritual. Bedtime rituals are important, because

they help keep the communication lines open when children become teenagers. During or after a story, you can pause to let your child identify his/her feelings about the events or characters and then talk about them. Use what's happening in the story to talk about those things.

- **Bedtime rituals that are warm and close, gentle and relaxed, sound just the opposite of the busy world in which many parents live. But don't be a victim of the urgent. In the long run, much of what seems so pressing right now won't even matter, What you do with your children will matter forever.**
- So how do you plan for Quality Time?
 - Mealtimes are natural events around which to plan. Over the years, a regular family dinner hour together can be one of the most bonding experiences that you will have. **Parents are the only ones who can set the schedule for the family and decide when and if certain events will interrupt that schedule.**
 - Consider doing overnight trips once every few months, or even have one parent take one child for a walk while the other parent does something else with the other child.
 - Even something as simple as riding in the car while running errands or going to soccer/baseball games or ballet class can result in quality conversation. There's something about sitting in a car that seems to bring out the desire to talk—and listen.
 - By making plans for quality time, you ensure that you spend time with your kids. Too often we want to do things but get busy and before you know it, a month has gone by. If you plan for quality time, it's easier to make it happen. A by-product of planning for quality time is that you can teach your children how to schedule their own time, that sometimes you have to say no to one thing so that you can do something else.
 - One of the most difficult times in a family's day can be when everyone returns from work and school, tired and hungry, and possibly even hangry. Planning for quality time together also means preparing yourself by finding a way to release the stress of your day, clearing your mind of work things, and focusing on home. If you don't, you may find yourself being short and angry with your family instead of focused on them. You can prepare yourself by playing music on the way home, praying on the way home, or doing whatever you do to help relieve your stress.

- *If you cannot prepare yourself prior to arriving at home, you and your spouse can work out a time for you to have to yourself, before you begin interacting with your children*. This way you'll be able to give good quality time with your family instead of your stress coming out in unfortunate ways.
- If Your Child's Primary Love Language is Quality Time, then...
 - You can be sure that without a sufficient supply of quality time and focused attention, your child will experience a gnawing uneasiness that his or her parents don't really love him/her.
 - For those children who crave time with their parents, and for all the others as well, a parent's gift of focused attention is an essential element in ensuring that they feel loved.
 - When you spend time with your children, you are creating memories that will last a lifetime. You want your children to be blessed by the memories they carry from the years they spend in your home.
 - As parents, you can give such healthy and uplifting memories and help assure your children's balance, stability, and happiness for the rest of their lives by providing them with quality time.
- Ideas for Quality Time with Your Children
 - Instead of waiting until all your chores are done before spending time with your child, include them in your daily activities like laundry, grocery shopping, or yardwork.
 - Stop what you are doing to make eye contact with your child when they tell you something important.
 - Fix a healthy snack together.
 - Find silly things to laugh about.
 - Give older children single-use camera to record meaningful occasions.
 - Turn off your television show to watch your child's favorite show with them.
 - Go to the toy store and play with some fun toys with no intention of buying anything.
 - Ask very specific questions about your child's day that do not have a yes or no answer.
 - When taking your younger children to a park or playground, spend the time playing with them instead of watching from a park bench. Pushing your daughter or the swing or riding the slide with your son creates lifelong memories and communicates love.
 - Instead of screen time, focus on arts, such as singing together or fingerpainting.

- Schedule a specific “date time” with each of your children individually. Put it on your calendar and don’t allow other priorities to take its place.
- Surprise your child with tickets or a trip to a special place.
- If possible, take your child to your workplace one day. Introduce your child to your coworkers and take your child to lunch with you.
- Set aside a special place in the house where you go to play. A walk-in closet can serve as a “castle”, while a place in the garage can serve as a “workshop”.
- Involve older children in vacation planning, researching the internet together.
- Have a campout together, even if it’s just in the backyard.
- Occasionally take family walks or bike rides together.
- Share more meals together as a family, making sure that these meals include conversation.
- Spend a few extra minutes putting your child to bed at night. Bedtime stories, talking about the day, or praying together at night can each be part of your everyday pattern.
- For older children, spend time doing “homework” together—they with their schoolwork and you with any work projects. Tell them what you’re working on.
- Plant something together.
- Make photo albums together on your computer. Talk together about the memories you shared in the process.
- On a rainy day, sit in the same room and read quietly, each of you with your own book or magazine.

That’s it! Next week’s podcast will be all about the love languages of gifts and acts of service. Thanks for tuning in!