

Priorities for Parents

In an age where we face constant attention for our time, talents and resources we have had to learn to prioritise - work out what is important to us for our family at this stage of our life. The same is true for parents - so I would offer two priorities for parents.

1. The relationship with your spouse

The sense of security and belonging this will generate in your child will help them grow and mature and at the same time it will demonstrate what it means to have a strong healthy marriage - their future husband/wife will be very thankful for that. There can be a tendency for children to pit one parent against the other but if we put the highest priority on our relationship then they will know that mom/dad comes first, The children will realise that they will grow and develop their own independent lives but parents are together for ever.

Affirm your relationship verbally, regularly and in front of the children - an occasional weekend away together is a good idea too.

2. Good Communication

Do whatever it takes to retain open communication between yourself and your children. It is good to set specific times for one on one outings - to the cinema, or a restaurant or sporting event - give them your undivided attention. As young people get older they realize communication - good communication - has the following ingredients:

- Time
- Physical space [as opposed to phone calls, emails or SMS]
- Undivided attention
- Openness
- Listening and
- Respect.

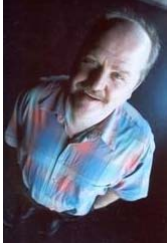
Avoid neglecting your teenager - after all you only have them as teenagers for 6 or 7 years. No, I don't mean stop playing golf - I mean play golf with your son and/or daughter.

Of course we realise that these need to be balanced with the necessity of work and going to earn the necessary finance; and sometimes that may mean that you are away from home on business trips. Here are four short keys for when you have to be away from home

- a) Let your children know where you are and when you will be back. We have a friend who posts his schedule on his refrigerator in his home in England for all the family to see. Not that it stopped his daughter wanting a ride home from college when she phoned her dad he was in Sweden!
- b) b. Keep in touch - in these days of instant communication it is simple to do - SMS seems to be the best way to get a message to our youngest daughter.
- c) Keep your promises - if you said you would bring something, or phone, or be home at a certain time then make sure you follow through - it will destroy some trust if you don't.
- d) When you do get home spend time with them - that is the strongest method of communicating that you care.

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About Nigel

Nigel has been paid to work with young people since 1991 and did it voluntarily before then. He actually believes he hasn't been to work since then because he enjoys himself so much. He is available for private consultation and coaching as well as having resources available e.g. **Understanding Teenagers A-Z**.
