

# Epoch Times

## A Parenting Secret Weapon: The 30-Minute-Per-Day Rule

Quality time spent together shapes a child more than any material investment ever could.



What's the world's most valuable resource?

It's not cash or gold or silver. It's not real estate. It's not even books (and I'm speaking as a bibliophile here). It's time. Time is our most valuable resource because it's the most limited. Once lost, it's lost forever. There's always more money to be made or more houses to be invested in, but our time is finite, and it runs out quickly. Furthermore, it's the resource by which we acquire all other resources, which makes it the most powerful one of all.

Without time, we can't experience or enjoy anything else in life. Time is the very medium of life itself.

At the back of one of my journals, I have a list of habits I want to develop. I focus on one or two at a time, and once they've worked their way into my routine, I move on to the next.

One habit was on this list for quite a while: play with my daughter every day. I kept telling myself that after I'd established a good reading habit or a good exercise routine, I'd move on to daddy-daughter time. It's not that I wasn't spending any time with her, but it wasn't a regular daily habit.

"I'll make it a habit later," I thought. "I have plenty of time." I went on like that for about a year. Suddenly, my daughter was 3 instead of 2.

### **Actions Speak Louder Than Words**

I once heard a saying: "Our priorities are what we do. Everything else is just talk." We show what we really care about by what we spend our most precious resources on. If we're unwilling to actually commit time to a certain activity, then it can't be all that important to us, even if we act like it is.

This truth hit me in the face one day, and I realized that there was no excuse for not immediately implementing more regular playtime with my daughter—not next week or next month or next year. Today. If my family was really one of the top priorities in my life, then I ought to commit time to them before anything else—even reading. Everything else was just talk. So I did.

In the book “Raising Good Kids: Back to Family Basics,” Ray Guarendi, clinical psychologist, father of 10, and parenting expert, wrote: “Time is the framework upon which all other family success hangs.

“It takes time to talk out troubles. Time to discipline consistently. Time to convey, ‘You matter to me.’ It takes time and much repetition to teach character and morals. There are no shortcuts. If you skimp on time, you shortchange most everything else.”

This is the hard truth: What children need and want most of all is their parents’ presence. Presence proves love, provides guidance, and creates memories. Presence generates opportunities for important conversations that might not happen otherwise.

Philosophy professor John Cuddeback, writing for the Institute for Family Studies, [agreed with Guarendi](#).

He wrote, “Children ‘need’—in some important sense of that word—regular and meaningful interaction with both parents, even if in unequal quantities, and they need to experience such presence as the normal and dependable context of their day-to-day existence.”

This time together didn’t have to be complicated to be meaningful: playing a game, going for a walk, cooking and eating together, working together. These simple activities—if conducted without distractions, with a presence that isn’t just physical but is also emotional and mental—bear immense fruit in the child’s life.

Tania Johnson, a registered psychologist and play therapist, [wrote](#) for the Institute of Child Psychology: “A parent’s grounded presence whispers, ‘You are safe. You are loved. You are seen.’ These quiet messages, repeated in the ordinary rhythms of daily life, become the foundation upon which a child’s confidence and resilience are built.”

## Confirming Our Instincts

Hard data back all this up. [A study](#) conducted at the Inner Mongolia University of Technology found that the amount of time a child spends with parents directly correlates with his or her overall well-being.

Dongxu Li and Xi Guo, the study’s authors, wrote: “For every additional hour of companionship, the probability of below-average well-being was reduced by 0.21 [percent], the probability of average well-being was reduced by 1.68 [percent], the probability of above-average well-being was increased by 0.31 [percent], and the probability of having excellent well-being was increased by 1.62 [percent].”

They found that “the more time parents spent with children, the higher their children’s well-being will be.”

This seems to be the case in my experience so far. Spending 30 minutes of dedicated time with my daughter each day has had many benefits. First, it’s helped me connect with and

understand her better while providing us both with lots of laughs. Second, it seems to have improved her mood—not just during the dedicated play or reading time, but throughout the day.

Finally, she's been behaving better in general than she did before I implemented this strategy. She's more likely to listen and less likely to whine or complain. One reason might be because acting out often results from a child's desire for attention. So if she's receiving enough attention and is confident of my concern for her via our dedicated playtime, she doesn't feel the need to seek attention as she otherwise would.

A bit of focused parent-child time each day seems to be a parenting secret weapon. It makes all aspects of parenting easier and contributes to the child's well-being—which, after all, is what every parent desires.

It isn't glamorous or revolutionary. Sometimes it's even tedious, especially when I feel pressured by a long to-do list. But when that happens, I try to pause and remind myself: "This is the most important thing on my to-do list right now. This is the top priority. So prove it by committing time to it. It'll pay off immensely in the long run."