

Listening 2 Children

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Quality Time: "Wants Nothing" & "Wants Something"

(Good techniques for parents/teachers with children young and old!)

In the late 1990's I had the pleasure of being in one of the last classes Magda Gerber, child therapist, presented. She was founder of RIE, Resources for Infant Educators, based in southern California and author of the book Dear Parent.

The RIE philosophy is based on great respect of infants and young children. Magda states, "Respecting a child means treating even the youngest infant as a unique human being, not as an object." I feel this philosophy is excellent for parents and teachers with children of all ages.

Some of the ways Magda encouraged respect for infants and young children are:

1. Talking to the infant/ young child before picking her up and stating what you are planning on doing.
2. Waiting for a response from your child after you've spoken to her. (Infants WILL respond too if given the opportunity!)
3. Encouraging the infant/ young child to participate during care activities such as diapering, feeding, bathing and dressing.

Quality Time was another aspect of Magda's philosophy. She'd ask, "Do we really know what quality time is all about?" She goes on to say: "It is full, unhurried attention." Magda felt it happened in many settings and was mainly divided into two themes.

"WANTS NOTHING" Quality Time

This is when you do not have any particular expectation; you simply want to be with your child! Just floor sitting, being available with all your senses awakened to the child; watching, listening, thinking of only that child. It sounds easy, but few can truly do it! As I observed classes at the RIE center, Magda, teachers & parents certainly practiced this concept! I've come to call this experience, "watchful observing".

I believe that "Wanting Nothing" time is a powerful experience for both child and parent/teacher at any age. Recently, during my trip to southern California, I had an opportunity to dine

in the restaurant my older daughter helps to manager, and be the "watchful observer" of her in action for over 6 hours! She had to handle a birthday party, a tray falling, a party of 40 and numerous questions from the cooks and waitresses. It was a very busy evening for the restaurant in general. So when she dropped by my table to say hello, she'd apologize for not being able to come and sit with me! But as I told her, that didn't matter. I was just enjoying being a "watchful observer"! Days later, as we reviewed the evening, it gave us much to talk and laugh about.

I'm a strong advocate of "WANTING NOTHING" quality time for parents and children of ALL ages!

"WANTS SOMETHING" Quality Time

This time is when you do have a goal to accomplish something together, such as dressing, bathing, feeling, etc. This too should be regarded as quality time. Make sure the child knows that this time is different from your "Wants Nothing Time" by actually saying something like: "Now I want to diaper you."

If she still wants to play, you may say, we really do need to go to the store, do you want to walk to the car with me or should I carry you? Even the young child can understand your intentions by hearing your tone and your words.

Or for the older child/ young adult, you can say, "I want to talk with you." This lets them know that you have an agenda for the time together.

I invite you to try both types of "Quality Time" with your children, especially, the "Wants Nothing" time. In this busy, fast-paced world, children and adults need time and space to do nothing. By practicing "WANTING NOTHING" quality time, it gives both child and parent or teacher, freedom of mind and peaceful MOMENTS TO ENJOY!

Sharon Ann Wikoff, teacher, educator, EFT Practitioner, has several upcoming workshops, mainly: Reading and Meeting Your Children's Behaviors, Freedom of Movement for Infants and Understanding your Child, Understanding Your Self. She can be contacted at: (707) 543-6355 or through her web site at: www.AuthenticWays.com

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