◇ **Chapter 32**
◇ **Skillful Parenting**

MAKING TIME FOR CHILDREN

An essential part of parenting is taking time to listen to children's ideas and concerns, talking with them about life's experiences, and nurturing their social, emotional, and intellectual development. There are many opportunities for this "quality time," such as reading a bedtime story to a child, going for a bike ride together, or helping with a homework assignment. Although it may be especially difficult for working parents to find the time and energy for quality time, it is very important to do so.

Directions: Read the following situations involving working parents. On the lines below, explain how these parents can reset their priorities so they have more time to spend with their children.

1. Rena wants to be a "superparent" who does it all. When her daughter needed a costume for a Halloween party, Rena bought a pattern and material and stayed up late at night sewing it.

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2. Jim, a father with two young children, is active in several volunteer organizations. He attends meetings several evenings a week. Jim says there is a shortage of volunteers and feels guilty if he does not help out.

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3. Keeva can't stand a messy house. She likes beds to be neatly made and sinks to be sparkling. Keeva spends most evenings picking up after her family.

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4. Chang is an avid sports fan with a ten-year-old daughter. He likes to spend most weekends watching one game after another on TV. Chang says that watching sports helps him unwind after a hard week at work.

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5. Norris works until 9:00 P.M. three nights a week. However, he feels guilty about not spending more time with his children. Norris often gives them expensive toys and clothes to make up for not being around.

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Enrichment Activities

POSITIVE PARENTING

Raising a child who will grow up to respect other people as well as himself or herself is a very important parenting goal. Here are two techniques that help children feel good about themselves as they learn acceptable behaviors and how to make decisions.

Be Positive!

Replace statements that contain "no," "don't," and "never," with positive ones. For example, instead of saying, "Don't throw sand!" you might say, "Shovel the sand into the bucket." In this way you are discouraging the undesirable behavior as you replace it with an acceptable one.

Negative comments damage a child's self-worth. For example, when a child refuses to share her toys, a negative comment such as "Don't be so mean!" is heard by the child as "I'm mean." Labeling her as mean doesn't help her learn how to share. What could you say and do instead?

Involve Children in Decision Making

One father lets his young son choose the shirt he wants to wear from a selection of three. This allows the child to feel involved in the decision-making process. It is also less likely that getting dressed will turn into a battle of wills. However, have you ever heard a parent ask, "Are you ready for a nap now?" Few children will say yes to that question! A better question might be, "Would you like to read a story or play a game before your nap?" The child still has a choice, but not about taking a nap. Once a child has made a choice, a parent must calmly follow through so the child will learn to trust the parent. A nap must follow the story or game.

How would you handle the following situations?

1. Your four-year-old daughter and a friend are playing, and it's time to go home.

   a. What question *won't* you ask, and why?

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   _____

   b. What question *will* you ask?

   _____

2. You are babysitting for seven-year-old Kim. His parents want him to finish his homework before he watches television.

   a. What question *won't* you ask, and why?

   _____

   _____

   b. What question *will* you ask?

   _____

3. What might happen if children are allowed to make choices, but then their decisions are disregarded?

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Focus In

Consider whether the two strategies described on this page would be effective with teenagers as well. For each strategy, describe a situation in which it might work and why.