

## Fathering Matters

Often when fathers think of family time, we think in terms of time spent with everyone together like in a meal or going to the zoo. In our minds, we think that since we are already spending so much time every day and especially every weekend together, why do family members still say "We don't spend time together?" Well everyone knows it's quality not quantity time that matters. One father shared with me his secret of how he spends quality time with his family. He dates his kids and wife individually.

John has two kids and he would put aside time in the week to have breakfast, or meals with each one of them. This is fixed and announced. He tells me this plan came about when one day his wife told him that the older child felt that he loved the younger one more. So John decided that he would spend equal time on a one-on-one basis so that the kids would experience equality of love from him. It worked surprisingly well because he also learnt to pay attention to each child and realized the difference it made to individual bonds. He said "I used to think that as long as I am spending time with the family, I am bonding with them. I have since realized that bonding is a one-on-one connection. Very different from being with the whole family."

I learnt from John that quality time is not just about availability but also about attention. We always hear people say "My door is always open". Why so few walk-ins? Because there's no attention given. Maybe instead of busying our weekends with family meals, fathers may find converting some of these meals to individual family dates, so as to spend quality time.

Have a great meal.

Centre for Fathering