

Respect and the Time Factor

Category Family Series

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Today was a special day for Sammy and his classmates. It was show-and-tell day when Sammy and his fellow sixth graders each took turns making a brief presentation to the class. Their assignment was to bring something from home, present it to the class, and tell everyone how and why it was special to each of them. Sammy and his classmates had spent the last two weeks preparing for this day and everyone seemed excited.

And so, Sammy's teacher began calling on each student to make a presentation. They each had three minutes. The curiosity level was high as the whole class paid attention to each student to discover what was special to him or her. Peter, one of Sammy's classmates, had presented an autograph card of his favorite professional baseball player. He had received it as a birthday gift a few weeks earlier. He—Peter—loved baseball and he spent as much time as he could watching his favorite professional team play on TV. Beth showed off a picture of her brand new bicycle, with purple trims, also a recent birthday gift. The bike was special to her because she could ride around the neighborhood with her friends and have lots of fun.

Finally it was Sammy's turn. He stood up with excitement with a large envelope in his hand. He stood before the class and brought out four pictures printed on large-sized paper. He began with the first picture saying, "This is a picture of me and my Dad reading a book together." He gave the picture to his teacher, Mrs. Browne, much like each student had done before him. She looked at it briefly and walked alongside each student, holding the picture in front of her as she showed it to them.

Sammy continued, "This one is a picture of me and my Dad playing my favorite board game. I am pretty good at it, but my Dad wins sometimes." Mrs. Browne made her round again with picture in hand.

"This one is a picture of me and my Dad having a debate. We were talking about something we saw on TV and I was trying to show my Dad how I would have done that thing differently if I was the one doing it."

Finally, Sammy revealed his last picture. "This one is a picture of me and my Dad fixing my old bike. My Dad taught me how to fix the handle bar and how to put a new chain on so that the bike would work again. I gave the bike away to a place that collects bikes for children that do not have one."

"Very good Sammy," said Mrs. Browne after showing the last picture to the class. She followed, "Tell the class why these pictures are special to you."

"Because they show me and my Dad doing things together. We spend time everyday...well, almost everyday doing something together and I enjoy it. I always learn something new from my Dad." Sammy then sat down and prepared to listen to the last two presentations for the morning.

Studies have shown that parents have the most influence over their children right from a very early age. Two of the most common methods by which parents influence their children are through observation and through interaction. Both methods take time.

Over time children watch and observe their parents engage in a variety of discourse and other actions, and their perceptions become forged—their minds become programmed. As I discussed in *The Top Ten Laws of Respect at Home – A Family Guide* (soon to be out), this continuous process can shape the engine of respect—the child’s value system—positively or negatively.

Also, parents instill the essence of respect in their children through direct interaction. The only way for a parent to positively influence a child through interaction is to spend time with the child on a regular and sustained basis. Such time, if well spent, will cultivate habits and will forge a

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child’s perception leading to a strong value system. From the illustrative story, we see the power and the impact of the time spent with Sammy (by his Dad). This investment in time—by Sammy’s Dad—will go a long way to establishing, strengthening, and sustaining a strong sense of respect in Sammy for years to come.

Hoping that a child will learn the essence and the lessons of respect without an investment in time is like planting a seed and not watering it regularly. It may grow, but it will be deprived of much needed nutrients. And the result will surely become evident later.

About the Author



Niyi Taiwo is the founder of EKTIMIS and the lead editor for the EKTIMIS eLibrary articles. He is the author of several books, including the EKTIMIS Top Ten Laws series. He is a continuous improvement expert with over 21 years of industry experience – operational, management and consulting. He holds an undergraduate degree from WPI and a master’s degree from RPI. He is a certified Lean Expert and an ASQ-certified Six Sigma Black Belt.