

Spiritual Tip

Give the Gift of Your Attention

By Rick Warren

We live in an ADD world. It seems like everybody's got Attention Deficit Disorder because our tools and technology have left us perpetually distracted, and we no longer pay attention to the people around us.

When you walk into a meeting, how many people are sitting there looking at their phone and texting? Our heads are always down, engrossed in a video or word game, and our earbuds keep us from hearing the people around us. How many times have you been in a restaurant with friends, but you're more concerned about your "friends" on Facebook or Twitter?

If you want to have happier relationships, you need to learn the lost art of paying attention.

The Bible says in Philippians 2:4, "Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested in the lives of others" (NCV).

This doesn't come naturally, does it? By nature, I may not care what you're interested in. By nature, I may want the attention on me, not you.

But the greatest gift you can give somebody is your attention because your attention is your time, and your time is your life. You're never going to get it back, and that's why it is so precious when you give it.

This is a simple but powerful tool in growing strong relationships. Are you interested in what your kids are interested in? Do you listen to what your partner has to say? Do you give your coworkers your attention when they speak to you? Do you notice your neighbor as you walk by him in the morning?

Learning the lost art of paying attention is an act of love. It will transform your relationships and help you live a happy life.

Talk It Over

- How has social media kept you from developing relationships with the people you live and work with?
- What are some ways you can turn your attention to the people around you today?
- How do you show others that you are truly paying attention to what they are saying or doing?

Marriage Tip

An Eight Cow Wife

By Janel Breitenstein

An old story told from the island of Kiniwata relates the account of a man known as Johnny Lingo. The youngest and strongest man from the island, Johnny shocked the islanders by paying the father of his bride not the traditional two to three cows for his wife, or even the four to five cows for an exceptional wife. For Sarita, he paid eight.

No one could understand: "It would be kindness to call her plain. She was skinny. She walked with her shoulders hunched and her head ducked. She was scared of her own shadow." Eight cows!? The entire island laughed at the audacity.

Curious about the story, writer Patricia McGerr visited Johnny's home. She was fascinated by what she describes as the most beautiful woman she'd ever seen. She wrote about this in a Woman's Day article, "Johnny Lingo and the Eight Cow Wife": "The lift of her shoulders, the tilt of her chin, the sparkle of her eyes all spelled a pride to which no one could deny her the right."

When McGerr later pressed Johnny Lingo for his reasoning, he explains, "Many things can change a woman. Things that happen inside, things that happen outside. But the thing that matters most is what she thinks about herself. In Kiniwata, Sarita believed she was worth nothing. Now she knows she is worth more than any other woman in the islands ... I wanted an eight-cow wife."

Now, for obvious reasons, please do not immediately tell your beloved, "Hon, you're an eight-cow wife." But remember that, at least in part, a man's impact may be measured in the joy and character of the people closest to him.

The way that a man sees his wife, the way he cherishes her, has a lasting effect on her beauty within and without.

How does your wife feel about you and your relationship to her? How do you want your children to remember your acts of love for their mother?

Parenting Tip

Piling On

by John K Rosemond

In football, "piling on" occurs when defensive players continue to fall on top of an offensive player after he's been tackled. Because it's unnecessary as well as dangerous, "piling on" is illegal-in football.

In parenting it's perfectly legal, but then in parenting "piling on" does not refer to tackling a child and then falling on top of him/her and refusing to let them up! It refers to dispensing multiple consequences over a prolonged period of time for one offense. As such, the child is reminded of and punished for the offense over and over and over and maybe even over and over again. Piling on is very effective at establishing a permanent memory; therefore, it is a highly effective means of dealing with misbehavior-one of the most effective, in fact.

But don't let yourself become carried away with it. Always keep in mind what I've said earlier and can't say often enough: the more you use one discipline method, the less effective, over time, it will become. Mix it up!

As you will see, "piling on" should be reserved for relatively major offenses, but it can also be used, with discretion, for small misbehaviors you want to nip in the bud because you can foresee them growing into potentially huge issues in the future.

"Well, John," a reader asks, "since any small misbehavior has the potential of becoming big, aren't you saying piling on can be used for just about anything?" Yes, it can be, but a lack of discretion is likely to result in overuse. Beyond that, all I can say is you're just going to have to use your common sense where piling on is concerned.

Let's say nine-year-old Johnny Swashbuckle, angry at his mother for refusing to let him ride his bike to the shopping center with a friend (whose mother has given permission), calls her a "jerk." Whoa! Because there's really no meaningful consequence she can levy on Johnny at that very moment, she takes a deep breath and says simply, "Well, isn't that interesting!" and continues to go about her business, even whistling a happy tune.

Two hours later, another of Johnny's friends comes over and asks if Johnny can come outside and toss a football back and forth.

"Can I, Mom?" he asks.

"No," she says. "Sorry."

"Why?" he asks, pointing out that he's done his chores.

"I guess I'm just a jerk, like you said," she says, and walks away.

Johnny follows her, assuring her that he's sorry and will never call her a jerk again. Really. It just slipped out. He didn't mean it.

"Good," his mom says, and goes about her business.

After a moment or two of confusion, Johnny asks, "So can I go out?"

"No."

"But Mom! I'm sorry! I promise I'll never call you a jerk again!"

"Promise?"

"Yes, Mom, I promise."

"Good. Are you sorry?"

"Yes, Mom, I'm sorry. Really."

"Thank you."

"So can I go out?"

"No."

"But why?"

"Because when you commit an offense against someone, an offense of disrespect, as you did to me when you called me a jerk, saying you're sorry isn't enough. It's fine, and it's the right thing to say if you're really and truly sorry and not just trying to get something, but it's not enough. When you commit an offense against someone, you have to pay a price. You have to suffer punishment. That's the way it is. So, I appreciate that you're sorry, and I believe you are going to try and not ever again call me or anyone else a jerk, but you still have to be punished. So you can't go outside with Billy, and that's that."

Two days later, on a Saturday, Johnny gets a phone call from a friend who asks if he wants to go to the afternoon matinee.

Johnny goes to his mother and asks her permission. She says no.

"Why?"

"Because you called me a jerk two days ago, that's why."

"But you already punished me!" Johnny exclaims.

"Your punishment isn't over yet," Mom calmly explains.

"But this isn't fair!"

"If I was nine years old, I would think the same thing."

"I told you I was sorry!"

"And I thanked you."

"I told you I'd never do it again!"

"And I think that's great."

"Mom!"

"Johnny?"

"What?"

"You can stop now. You're not going to the movies."

The next day, Johnny asks if he and a friend can go fishing at the local pond after church.

"Sorry, no."

"Why?"

"Because you called me a jerk three days ago."

"Mom!"

"Johnny?"

"What?"

"You're not going fishing, and you're going to bed right after supper tonight."

"But I didn't do anything else!"

"I know, but I'm going to make sure you never forget calling me a jerk."

"But I told you I'm not going to call you that again!"

"Good." And she walks away.

Two days later, on Tuesday, Johnny reminds his mother that she has to take him to soccer practice.

"You're not going to soccer practice."

"Why?"

"You tell me."

"Are you kidding?" Johnny exclaims. "Is it because I called you a jerk last week?"

"Bingo."

"Mom! When are you going to stop punishing me for that?"

"When you stop acting like every time I punish you it's unfair. None of your punishments have hurt you as much as it hurt me when you called

me a jerk. So, when you stop acting like being punished is unfair, I'll stop the punishments."

"Okay, Mom," Johnny says. "It's not unfair."

"That's better."

"So can I go to soccer?"

"Nope," she says.

"But if I don't go to practice, I can't play in the game tomorrow!"

"Is that unfair?"

Johnny barely stops himself from saying that yes, it's unfair. He thinks for a moment. Then, with great resignation, he says, "No, Mom, it's not unfair."

"You're getting there!" Mom says.

Two days later, after missing the soccer game, Johnny comes to his mom and asks if he can go outside and ride his bike around the neighborhood with a friend.

His mom fixes him in her gaze. She asks, "If I said no, would it be unfair?"

Johnny ponders that for a moment. Finally, he says, "No, it wouldn't be unfair. I would deserve it for calling you a jerk."

"Thank you. Yes, you can go bike riding with your friend."

Let me assure you, dear reader, Johnny Swashbuckle will never, ever call his mother a jerk again. In fact, he will never again call her by any inappropriate nomenclature. In fact, he will forever be extremely careful how he speaks to his mother, and his father, and later, his girlfriends, and later still, his wife.

Caution!!! Use piling on sparingly, selectively, with great prudence. If you overuse it, it will lose its effectiveness and all you will accomplish is creating a very resentful and probably very rebellious child.

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