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QUALITY TIMES
Wayne L. Misner

Excerpt from the book Men Don't Listen

What is quality time? It is possible that some believe quality time with a significant other or the kids means having and spending a lot of money--maybe going to an exotic, romantic getaway like Jamaica, the Bahamas, Cancun, Rome, the Orient, Australia, Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Los Angeles, New York, taking a cruise, riding in limousines, going to fancy restaurants, Broadway shows, Disney World/Land, and many others.

LET ME SHARE SOME OF MY QUALITY TIMES.

This story involves my daughter Sandy when she turned seventeen years of age. Sandy wanted to get her driver's license. I made a mental agreement with myself that I wanted this adventure to be a pleasant memory for her with her dad. I had heard so many horror stories of parents teaching the kids to drive and having shouting matches, verbal abuse, and refusing to get into a car together ever again. Believe me, this was not easy. Sandy passed her written tests and eye exam and received her drivers permit. We drove first on back roads and eventually in traffic and then heavy traffic. Months passed and Sandy was doing fine in most areas other than heavy traffic (especially trucks and buses) and parallel parking.

Each night, in an empty cul-de-sac, I set up two garbage cans containing broom handles with red flags on each. The cans were spaced wider than a car length. Sandy practiced over and over again parking and pulling out. She just could not master this feat as hard as she tried, even with all the techniques and tricks I could dream up to help her. The night before her scheduled driver's test we tried again. She could not get it. She

started yelling at me. She did not want to do this. She did not want her driver's license. She did not want to go tomorrow and take the driver's test. We stopped practicing, went inside, and I left her alone for a couple of hours. Later that night, we were sitting in the living room. I explained to her that passing the driver's test was not a life or death issue. If she did not pass, we would practice again, try the test again, and keep trying until she eventually passed. Early the next morning we set out the cans and practiced again. The results were not much better than the previous attempts.

We arrived at the motor vehicle inspection station, parked, gave the papers to the proper authorities, and anxiously waited. Our turn with the driving inspector finally came. I waited in an area that was next to the driver's track. I heard Sandy say to the inspector as he got into the car, "I hope I do well, I am so nervous." They drove away as I watched. He had her stop at certain areas, make right and left turns (blinkers on), a few K turns and then to the cones for parallel parking. On her first attempt, she was six feet from the curb. On her second attempt, she was about three feet from the curb. I thought she had just failed the test. They drove around, did some other maneuvers, and came back to where I was and parked.

I approached the car observing the expression on Sandy's face. The inspector was facing her, so all I could see was the back of his head through the window. Suddenly her face lit up with the biggest grin possible. The door opened, both got out, and she was yelling that this was the most exciting day of her life. She turned to the inspector and said, "Can I give you a big kiss?" He smiled and said, "No, no payoffs allowed." From there we went directly to the motor vehicle office to wait the couple of hours it took for her photo to be taken and the license to be issued. Then we went out to dinner and home. What a day!!!!

I remember when my two sons were young and I would have them help me fix something or mow the lawn with me. It would take much more time to get the job done and sometimes, not as well as if I did it myself. Now they are grown and they thank me, explaining that they know how to do these tasks from the experience they gained with me. We also laugh together remembering some of those fiascos. Having children themselves, they have them helping with tasks and are creating their own memories.

I know it's easy for me to say. As people pursue a career, be it a job, school, or whatever, you must make big sacrifices. All I'm saying is try hard to keep some balance. The secret that I am sharing with you is that the essence of quality time is this: QUALITY TIME = "YOU"

Sharing "you" with someone else; the time, effort, patience, love, laughter, and in some cases like the driving test, the anxiety, pressure, apprehension, support, love, more love, and most of all "you" and your time; the time you spend with your significant other, kids, friends, volunteering, Lions, Elks, community services, and the list can go on; this is what quality time is. Give time to those who are important to you; give "you."