Everyday Moments: Finding `quality time' in American working families

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In today's society many parents, whether single parents or not, are employed outside the home. Working parents may be experiencing guilt regarding the lack of 'quality time' being spent with their children. Society implies that 'quality time' is necessary for strengthening family relationships and togetherness, as well as imparting knowledge to their children. 'Quality time' is conceived as unstressed, uninterrupted special time with children that is important for family well-being. However, in today's rushed pace of modern life there seems to be a 'time famine' as parents work longer hours and children are involved in more structured activities.

Fortunately for working parents, researchers Kremer-Sadlik and Paugh (2007) suggest that such blocks of 'quality time' may not be the only necessary form of enriching family life. The researchers suggest that rather than 'quality time' set aside for children, that there are continuous opportunities for 'quality moments' throughout the day. The responsibility is on the parent to recognize those moments as they often go unnoticed due to their short and unstructured nature. Here some suggestions for utilizing 'quality moments':

- Waiting time that parents share with their children during transitions between activities (e.g. waiting in the car) can be used to have positive interactions with children;
- Waiting in line or for an appointment can produce opportunities for 'quality moments';
- During everyday routines such as folding laundry or preparing meals, 'quality moments' can be created through spontaneous game playing and conversation.

Family members can connect in unplanned moments. While society suggests that 'game night' or 'family night' is ideal, many families struggle to achieve that. Parents can take comfort in knowing that children tend to think of 'quality time' as just 'hanging out' with family members. Parents can learn to recognize the moments that are ever present and enjoy the positive and fulfilling interactions and experiences.