

# My Children Deserve My Time and Attention

My last post, “Must My Kids Play with Your Kids, Just Cause?” made for quite a lively conversation on Facebook. It seems to have been quite controversial for some well-meaning folks, which wasn’t my intention, at least not with those particular people. I take full responsibility for that. I often write for one type of audience (individualists, nihilists, and other cretins) and share my work with others without realizing all of the missing contexts.

Perhaps I can clarify some things here, I hope I can, but I’m sure not everyone will agree with me on everything. How fun would that be? Not very fun, but if they did, the world would be in perfect harmony, *obviously*, because my opinions are the best (aren’t yours?), but to each their own. (The proceeding was sarcasm, I hope you know!)

Do I love my children unconditionally? Yes, and I wrote as much in that post. My love for them is unconditional. They don’t need to earn it, nor do they need to sing and dance every time they desire my attention. I give it freely and fully and believe wholeheartedly that approaching our children in this way is absolutely necessary for their emotional and mental well-being and development.

Concurrently, I expect them to give me their time and attention when requested so long as they can give it. I expect as much from anyone I have a relationship with. But this expectation was not pulled from the ether. It was an evolution if you will. I chose to have children. I made that choice soberly and with due consideration, as much as I could give with my limited knowledge. I parented them how I thought I should have. I later decided, due to an increase in my understanding, that some of my parenting practices were incompatible with my parenting goals. So I changed them. And all the while I’ve been providing for their needs as best as I knew how. Thus I believe I have earned the right to their time and attention.

And they deserve mine. When I wrote that I would leave the room if one of my children were acting annoyingly, there’s a broader context there that I missed relaying. I would never leave them when they were having a difficult time, just because it might be grating. Absolutely not! I’d hold them and comfort them and help them through it any way I can. That’s my commitment to them, one which I’ve made over and over, and they are fully aware of and have come to expect it. I do this almost every day!

But that doesn’t mean it’s always possible, especially the older they get and the less necessary, I believe, it is to be present when they are upset. Maybe the time hasn’t come yet, but I believe it will, that my children must learn that a very good way to get over stress is to step away and calm themselves. This probably doesn’t need to be taught. I think it’ll be a natural by-product of my soothing and comforting them while they’re still growing. As

may be the prevention of developing an entitlement mentality.

I sure hope so. In the end, the post was not meant to provide a look into how I parent my children. It was meant as a lesson in all of the other kinds of relationships they will have the opportunity to create. I don't want my children feeling superior to others, that they are owed something from them. I want them to learn that persuasion and negotiation, kindness and acceptance, are the best ways to make and keep friends. That when they view others as an opportunity for mutual benefit, as versus someone to be used and then discarded, they will develop better, stronger, and longer-lasting relationships with others. And from these, I hope they are happier and more fulfilled.