



## Physicians and Family: Making Time for What Counts

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You devote considerable time and energy to your medical practice, but what about to your family?

Young boys and girls grow up with the best chance of succeeding in life when they have two loving, caring parents. Certainly, a single parent raising children can do a wonderful job. Many single parents perform everyday acts of heroism when you consider all that they do.

Suppose you are married and have children, or are married and will have children, were married and have children, or will be married and contemplate having children sometime in the future. With that in mind, what kind of family goals do you have and what type of goals might be appropriate for the whole family, i.e., where every member gets to offer input?

### **An interrelationship**

Many of the goals you have for your family life are likely to be interrelated with the other major goal areas of your life. For example, one of your goals might be to provide for your children's education, buy a new home, and be able to retire with grace and ease when the time comes.

Any financial goals you choose to pursue for you and your family need to be initiated as early as possible. All benefits, including compound interest, accumulating principal, even the discipline to start saving and investing in this manner, are all facilitated when you begin at as young an age as possible.

If your child is in grade school now, and you want to be able to send him to college, it will be much easier if you start early. If your child is 13 years old and you have five

years to save, in order to accumulate a given sum you'll have to put away three times or more the amount than you would if you had started when your child was age three. Hey, it's just the way time and money work.

### **A more active interest**

Suppose your goal is to take a more active interest in your family's activities. This means spending more time with them, actually conveying your interest, and being a good listener. Many people say they want to be more involved with their family; they want to spend more time with their son; they want to attend their daughter's recital. The reality for too many physicians, however, is much different.

If they're lucky, they catch the last 10 minutes of the recital, spend a scant three minutes per day actually listening to their spouse, barely know their son, and so on. Is any of this slightly familiar to you?

The key to pursuing goals in a variety of areas is balance. Nowhere is this more clear than in pursuit of family goals, because your family members are more likely than others to let you know when you're not upholding your word.

Another common goal area is family vacations. How often would you like to go away with your family? Once a year, twice a year, quarterly, monthly, perhaps even biweekly? Suppose your goal is to take an extended vacation of between three days and six days quarterly. Perhaps during each of the eight other months in which this time away is not taken, you also seek to go on at least one weekend venture.

Reaching this goal would involve a good deal of planning, making reservations, coordinating schedules, allocating funds, ensuring that projects and tasks at work are taken care of well in advance of departure dates, and coordinating your children's academic schedules and other responsibilities accordingly.

In many respects, how your family operates is representative of how your life operates. Do you want your children to greet you enthusiastically when they come back from visiting friends or some after-school activity? If they don't regularly do this, then you might want set a goal of greeting them daily, or at some other interval, with open arms when you return from work or time away.