

Wake-Up Call

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At breakfast one morning, John sat glumly playing with his cereal.

“What’s your problem, child? Why yuh not eating?” said Mom.

At first John said nothing. Then, after some prodding, he cried, “I feel like a ghost, Mummy!”

“How could you be a ghost when I feed you and clothe you and provide all your school needs?” was Mom’s curt reply.

Mom had missed the whole point! John was a child who played cricket for his school and a club. That afternoon was one of his big matches and, once again, Mom had a meeting to go to which would prevent her from seeing John play. In fact, John couldn’t remember when last Mummy or Daddy, or any significant adult in his life had come to see one of his matches. There was always work or meetings or groceries or the gym or classes or just plain old tiredness that got in the way.

This is the season of school Carnival parades, sports days, swimming galas, concerts, and awards ceremonies. Many schools use these occasions to raise much-needed funds and they often send tickets home for each family. In far too many cases, these tickets are returned or, even if they are paid for, they are not used, and halls and sports fields remain half empty as children sing/run/swim/... their hearts out to no one but their teachers and their peers.

Whether deliberately or not, these are also occasions to bring families together to celebrate the talents and skills of the young ones. Unfortunately, these opportunities for good, healthy, uplifting endorsement of our youth are often lost in our world of busy-ness. I am fully aware that parents today have many more and varied responsibilities, and that work, church, and community make more, and sometimes unreasonable, demands on our time. I also acknowledge that parents need to take care of themselves with a little personal time for mental and physical health.

However, I often have to advise parents not to get so caught up in living that they schedule their children out of their lives. This becomes even more of a possibility as children become teenagers and we have gotten tired of dropping them off and picking them up from every activity, and we think we need some “down time.” After all, they are now old enough to take care of themselves! Contrary to popular belief, much of the research says that even through adolescence, our young people still need our attention, appreciation, praise, and guidance. Just as we do, they also need someone to ask, “How was your day?” and give them a pat on the back.

In addition, each child should be surrounded by a network of caring and supportive adults, be they parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, godparents, group leaders, or religious leaders who share pleasant experiences with them. Although everyone may not be able to attend every occasion, at least one or two need to be available to show youngsters that the good times matter. Research, common sense and, experience will tell us that if they don’t get our attention in a positive way, they will attempt to get it in a negative way.

So, parents, please, please, please take some time to celebrate the good deeds, positive exploits, and polished skills of your children. From time to time, sit through their extra-curricular rehearsals, practices, and activities. Don’t wait for them to ask. Go to their concerts, recitals, and

shows. Cheer them on at the competitions and festivals that showcase their talents. Most of all, love them for the good, because we don't want to cry with or for them in the bad.

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