

Dad, Would You Rather Have Joy or Cash?

I know nearly all dads, me included, are challenged by the daily struggle between work and family as they compete for our time, attention and energy. Maybe the better question is, “Is your life reflecting your priorities?”

I like how this was addressed a few years back by Jonathan Clements in the *Wall Street Journal*, where he looked at some studies related to the question, “Can money buy happiness?”

To sum up the findings, money does make a difference in a sense of happiness for people who have a very low income. But for people who do have enough to meet their families’ needs, wealthy people did not report being any happier than people who earn an average living.

In addition, people with higher incomes were more likely to be anxious or angry, and they tend to spend more time working, commuting and engaging in other activities they consider to be “obligatory”—all of which are associated with lower levels of happiness.

Clements interviewed several experts on the whole work-family challenge. He summarized their insights into four action points—and I’ve added some thoughts more specifically for dads. These are worth considering:

1. Keep your commute short. Commuting reduces your time at home—not to mention that driving in traffic can be a big source of stress. Taking a job closer to home or moving closer to your job might make sense for you.

2. Choose time over money. As you grow older, you realize *time* really is the most precious resource. Cutting back on work time, even if you’re earning less money, allows you to spend

time with your family and do other things you enjoy. And eventually you'll realize that your relationships are what matter most—not all these material things or making money, which is what we often spend our time on.

3. Be sensible with leisure time. Whether you cut back on work time or not, be a good manager of the time you have left in your week. Trade solo, passive activities for more active things you can do with your family members or friends. Your opportunities to spend time with your kids are disappearing faster than you realize, so *make the most of them*.

4. Spend your money wisely. Material things wear out and/or their excitement quickly fades. A better investment might be activities and trips with loved ones, because they are more likely to create cherished memories and provide more lasting satisfaction.

You can read Mr. Clements' entire article [here](#).

Dads, true joy comes from loving, connected relationships, and the sooner we realize it—and act on it—the better. We must not strive to succeed at everything else in life at the expense of our family members.

So, would you rather have joy or cash? Answer the question with your actions—today and every day. Enjoy your kids. They're among God's greatest gifts.

More Action Points for Dads on the Journey

- Is your child facing a specific challenge or approaching a special opportunity? What adjustments can you make in your work schedule to be there more to support him or her?
- Make sure there are some times every week when you silence your phone, put away the laptop, turn off the TV, and simply focus on your child.
- Talk with your wife, or someone else who knows you well,

and ask: “How can I show my children that I’m committed to them?” (Then ask your kids, if you’re brave.)

- Make a commitment to be there with your child at a key point during the day—dinnertime, bedtime, breakfast, or maybe reading together.
- Look at your goals for the next ten years. Are there things you can sacrifice or put on hold for the sake of your family?

What adjustments have you made to make sure your family is getting your best time and energy? Please join the discussion by leaving a message below.

Carey Casey is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a nonprofit organization dedicated to changing the culture of fathering in America by enlisting 6.5 million fathers to make the Championship Fathering Commitment. NCF believes that every child needs a dad they can count on, and uses its resources to inspire and equip men to be the involved fathers, grandfathers and father figures their children need. Subscribe to his weekly email tip by clicking here: [I want tips on how to be a great dad who loves, coaches, mentors and inspires my children.](#)

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