

Refocusing: What is important in MY life?

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

Each day I have an internal battle about the lack of time I spend with my family vs. the amount of time I spend at work and/or working at home. Inside I know that I need to put it all down and be in the moment with my son and husband. However, I often find myself saying, after this, just five more minutes, I just have to finish this observation, etc. I know in my heart that I need to truly put it down and invest more intentional time with both my son (and my husband.) I must make this a priority and find a starting point to make this a reality.

Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to help myself find the balance and refocus on what is the most important in my life, my family. It was a challenge to do each day, as there is more work to do than there is hours in the day. However, I knew deep down that I had to make the committed effort to put the work away and clear my head to give my family the time they so deserved and needed from me.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered if I put my work down at home and give my undivided attention to my son, what will change? Will our relationship strengthen?

- How will reading with my son for 20-30 minutes help strengthen our relationship?
- Wondering after a week of the first wondering.. How will engaging with my son in an activity (game, playing outside, etc) of HIS choice each night positively impact our relationship?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wondering(s), I had to recognize and admit my downfall in my day-to-day life of being out of balance was my first step. My priorities were focused on the wrong things. Hearing in my head and putting it on repeat– “mom, put down your computer.” “mom, when will you be done.” –was enough. I couldn’t take it anymore and needed to take ACTION, NOW!

I made it my personal goal to spend less time working at home and more time engaging in activities with my son, Colin. It wasn’t easy! Some nights, I had to do work and I had to meet deadlines. However, I made a point on those nights to set a timer and to close the laptop at a certain time. If it wasn’t done, then I woke up extra early the next day to finish it.

Each night Colin and I read together and/or did another activity, such as play game, bake, watch a movie. I tracked our time together on calendars. I simply wrote on each night what we did or if we had conflicting schedules or if he went to his dad’s house, etc. The weekends were not filled in, as I already make it a priority to not work on the weekends & spend quality time with my family.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, 3 important things I learned include:

- I am missing out on a lot of time that I cant get back with my son if I don’t put down my work and make time for him.

- It is a win win when I do put down my work, as I find true joy in my time with my son. I also find myself relaxed and free from the overwhelming feelings of not getting everything done that needs to be done.
- I learned that this time with my son strengthened us and brought us closer together.

Missing out on time with my son was the hardest finding for me to swallow, as this time is precious. He is 12 years old and I am not going to get this time back with him. He is an amazing young man who deserves my time and attention more than anyone else.

Setting aside my daily work was a WIN WIN for him, as well as myself. It allowed me to relax, laugh and breathe deep. I didn't realize how much this would help our relationship, but also help me unwind and de-stress. Our time together is invaluable. This also helped me find a healthier me!

The time I secured for him and I brought us closer together. Each night I would admire him and who he was becoming. I would remind myself that it is this time here and now that he needs and I need to ensure that he continued to open up to me, to trust me and to believe that I was there and will continue to be there for him no matter what.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

This action research was the most impactful learning I have completed all year. This is very hard for me to say and to acknowledge, as it seems like a no brainer. I should always be 100% vested in my son and the time I provide for him. However, sadly I allow myself to let work take over my life. I allow it to be all that I think about and all that I do 24/7. With this, I have realized the importance of putting it down to spend quality time with my son.

In addition to the time that I spend with my son, this also allowed me to see the importance of including the time I spend with my husband. This time allowed the three of us to play together, to laugh together and to ultimately get closer to one another. I was sad at first that it took this action research to make me see the value in TIME. However, I am looking at my glass half full and am truly thankful that it took this to allow me to see the importance of our quality time together so that we can continue to grow closer, especially in these prime years of my preteen son. I am thankful for the focus and attention I am now able to provide my son and husband.

Throughout this journey, I have also reflected on the work of my teachers and the important job I have of helping them find balance and to separate school and home. To ensure that they know when to call it quits and to go home and be a mom or to be a dad to their friends and family! As I continue to reflect on my action research, I often think about Todd Whitaker's work, What Great Principals Do Differently. One of his top 15 of What Great Principals Do Differently is that the Principal is the filter. He shares that the principals set the emotional energy of the building. It is imperative that we as the building leaders work to lead with enthusiasm and joy, despite what we may be feeling on the inside. This action research has truly allowed me to find that joy, to share that joy with my teachers and to lead them to finding the balance they need in their lives to ensure their joy is maintained and hopefully increased.

References:

Whitaker, Todd (2013). What Great Principals Do Differently. New York: Routledge.