

THE THINGS YOUR KIDS WILL REMEMBER ABOUT YOU

My wife Ashley and I just had our fourth baby. Having a new baby in the house has made me feel more nostalgic than usual and I've reflected back on my own childhood. I've thought about the memories that stick out in my mind and I think about the memories I want my own children to hold onto. I want to be intentional about every precious moment.

Jerry Seinfeld jokes that, *"Babies sole purpose is to replace us! That's why their first words are, 'Mama, Dada...Bye Bye.' "*

It's a funny joke, but also an important reminder that life is short and our time with our kids is going to go by fast. With that in mind, I want to make the most of every minute and create the kind of legacy that will endure long after I'm gone. This isn't a morbid thought, but rather an important way to stay focused on what matters most with every minute we have with our kids.

As parents, we tend to stress about things that don't matter all that much. Our kids probably aren't going to remember every detail of our home decor, or how perfect our landscaping looked or whether our refrigerator was stocked with name brands or generics. **Let's focus on what really matters.** If you want to know what your kids will remember about you, here it is:

4 things your kids will remember about you:

1. The times you made them feel safe (or the times you made them feel unsafe).

There's a vulnerability and a need for protection in the heart of every child. Your kids will remember those moments you chased the monsters from under their bed or held them after a nightmare, but they'll also remember the times when your temper became the monster they feared. Your kids are probably going to see you angry sometimes, because that's part of life, but make it your mission to make your children feel safe and secure at all times when they're with you.

2. The times you gave them your undivided attention.

Kids measure love primarily by your attentiveness to them. The times you stop what you're doing to have a tea party, or go outside to throw a ball, or jump on a trampoline with them, will be memories etched into their minds and hearts forever. Take the time to do the little things with your kids, because in the end, they'll be the moments that matter most.

3. The way you interacted with your spouse.

Your kids are forming their views of love in a large part by watching how you treat your husband or wife. Strive to have the kind of marriage that makes them excited to get married someday. Give them the security that comes from seeing their Mom and Dad in a committed, loving relationship with each other.

4. Your words of affirmation AND your words of criticism.

A child's heart is like wet cement and the impression made early in life will harden over time. They'll base their sense of identity, capability and even self-worth largely upon the words you speak to them in those formative years. Part of your job as parents is to correct and discipline, but even in correction, let your words be full of love, encouragement and positive reinforcement.