

WHAT MATTERS

I was listening to the programme yesterday and heard about new research from the National Literacy Trust who are concerned about families who never regularly eat together, as children then miss out on the conversation that naturally follows from a shared meal.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, studies show that children who have regular routines of interaction with their parents tend to develop greater confidence.

We adults often like to moan about the time our kids and grandchildren spend on TV and video games and yet rather than give in to the temptation to blame the gizmos and gadgets, maybe we need to accept that another reason for this is our failure to give them quality time. We're just too busy.

Growing up, there was an expression I used to hear a lot: "*labour saving device*". Technology was advancing and we were now creating products that would save us time. The iron, the washing machine and the car would speed up our chores so we would have more time for ourselves. The accepted wisdom was that in the future more and more machines would do the work so **we** didn't have to. And in years to come we would work less, retire earlier and be able to take it easy.

Just the reverse is true!

Because of these "labour saving devices" we are expected to achieve more than before and pack more activity into our day.

Generally, we work longer hours, sleep less, and are more stressed.

So maybe we could all do with taking stock, and, (not once, but regularly), build in reviews of what matters to us and whether we need to be as busy as we are.

Jesus once told a story about a farmer who worked so hard and was so successful that he had to build new and bigger barns to store all his crops and possessions. He finally decided he could take it easy and enjoy life. Then, that very night, the man died!

One of the secrets of life is surely this – taking time to work out what really is valuable, taking time to be with the ones we love, and spending time on the things that matter most.

And sitting down to eat with the rest of the family might just be a good place to start.

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