

# Your time, my time, our time - time management for better relationships

EP [educationpost.com.hk/resources/parents-guide/170516-parents-guide-the-three-kinds-of-time](http://educationpost.com.hk/resources/parents-guide/170516-parents-guide-the-three-kinds-of-time)

by Odette Umali



Hong Kong is full of time-starved parents and equally time-starved children, who often find themselves struggling to navigate through insufficient family time. Some parents claim that the time spent eating breakfast or dinner with their children is like walking on eggshells – they must tread lightly so as not to trigger themselves or their children.

Kids, on the other hand, often complain that they have enough demands in school, so why are their parents demanding more “performance and interaction” during dinner time? Therefore, it is not uncommon to find that attempts at family time end up with either with parents shouting to get respect, a child “acting up” in order to get attention, siblings arguing with one another, or a combination of all three.

So, how can we avoid these problematic interactions? And how can we ensure family time flows naturally and smoothly?

In Parent Effectiveness Training (PET), there is a concept known as The Three Kinds of Time, which helps answer these questions.

The first kind of time is called Activity Time or Family Time, which takes place when there are more than two participating family members. The idea is for the family to relate to each other openly and often involves cooperating on tasks or objectives, which may include preparing and enjoying dinner, going on holiday, eating out, hiking and others.

However, it is important to note that parents and children will be far better equipped to handle family time if their needs for the other two kinds of time are met.

The second kind of time in PET is known as Alone Time- time individuals spend by themselves in order to relax or recharge, process feelings and ideas, and make plans for future development and growth.

For parents, alone time is achieved when they engage in activities like running, going to the gym, cycling, hiking, attending yoga class, painting, etc. Alone time can also be spent on passive activities like enjoying a massage, watching a movie, reading or by having quiet time to think to themselves.

Children also have the need for an alone time which they often satisfy by having quiet time in their rooms, playing video games, browsing the internet, reading, or playing sports.

Alone time allows people to establish control over their lives and affords them the pause necessary to be physically and emotionally ready for the next Activity Time. This is especially important in Hong Kong, which is filled with external stimuli, distractions and noise.

It should be noted that the need for alone time varies greatly between different kinds of people. For instance, the more introverted types need more alone time than extroverts. In any case, satisfying alone time needs helps to ensure family time runs more smoothly. Don't you feel you are more open and fun with your children and spouse after yoga, exercise or massage?

The third kind of time is One-to-One Time. During PET courses we call it One-to-One Relationship Time because this is the time when relationships are most meaningfully developed. It occurs when mothers or fathers spend time with one child at a time. In other words, it is "quality" time.

Dr. Kyle Pruet, a Clinical Professor of Child Psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine, explained the "whys" of spending one-to-one time with your child:

- Unique intimacies are more likely to appear during this time; nicknames, caresses, and loving teasing that make children feel loved.
- It helps to establish and build trust.
- Time alone with mom is different from time alone with dad, and those unique differences reinforce the strengths that come from each other.

Remember, one-to-one time does not need to be task-driven to be useful. "Chill" time is often better received by kids. Additionally, it works best when outside distractions such as phones aren't present.

Spouses also need one-to-one relationship time, so they should carve out time for date nights and activities together.

In a fast-paced city like Hong Kong and in this digitally connected age, the smart family needs to spend their time right. Satisfying the needs for alone time and one-to-one relationship time prevents problems arising during family time and ensures that it becomes fun-filled quality time for everyone.