

## Notes To Dad

by

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father who is willing to enjoy the child's company. Toys, presents, clothes — material things — are all doomed to eventual demise. Not so, are precious memories built through the 'growing years' when Dad and children share "time" and "love." Children want presents but they remember the time spent with Dad. So, let's begin to think about ways Dad and his children can enjoy each other's company.

In families where the children are elementary school age and younger, begin the search at the local library. The children's section in most libraries has numerous books for children on Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanza and winter. The children's librarian can help you select a book or two that you can read together. Here are a few suggested books to try: "The Polar Express" by Chris

Van Allsburg, "A Child's Christmas in Wales" by Dylan Thomas, the "Hanukkah Mice" by Ronne Randall, and "Snowflake Kisses and Smiles" by Toni Trent Parker. Spent time every night to read a portion

of the book together. Some Dads are great readers. Some can expand the story by asking questions to lore the children into the experience.

In some families, Dad and the children take turns reading the pages out loud. Other Dads may not be comfortable reading out loud, but they are great storytellers. Tell what it was like when you were a boy. It is okay to embellish a little.

Talk about "Christmas in the Dark Ages" of your youth. Add some humor. From ages, eight to 10 most children want to know what it was like when Dad was a boy at Christmas.

If reading isn't your bag, try making something together. It could be a present for someone else. Building a bluebird house is relatively easy. It is fun and also gives Dad a chance to begin teaching woodworking skills and safety to Jimmy or Suzie. Even children under age five can take part on a limited scale. It will take more time than if Dad did it by himself, but it is worth it. The process of building the item is much more valuable than the actual product. "We did this to-

gether is the goal."

For older children, a visit by Dad to a relative or friend in a nursing or personal care home is a good way to extend the value of caring. The visit doesn't have to be long. In most cases, one-half hour is long enough. Dad, child, and care home resident win in this situation. Dad serves as a role model for the child on what to do at a nursing home. After the visit, stop for a snack and talk about the visit. It could be a visit to remember.

Most holidays began as a celebration or commemoration of an event. At most of these celebrations, adults and children interact. Time, giving on one's self, and love are the joys of any holiday. Ask your child about his or her favorite part of celebrating a holiday. More often than not, the child will tell you about something you did together and not the video game, doll or CD he or she received. While it takes work and effort to make a holiday memorable, it is worth it. This year create a new tradition around a special time with Dad.

**Gifts Of Love, Time**  
The month of December offers challenges and opportunities for Dads to interact with their children. Traditionally, in many households, Mom did the present buying, cookie baking, present wrapping, decorating...the list goes on and on. Dad's contribu-

tion was the outdoor decorations and paying the bills.

Today's Dad, whether custodial or non-custodial, wants and should be involved. Children want to do things with Dad, too. But how can this work?

First, recognize that most children want to spend time with a

*pick up the*



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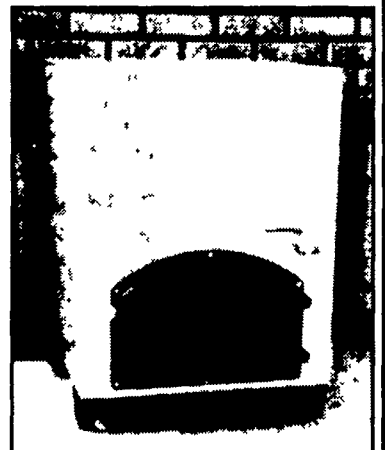
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