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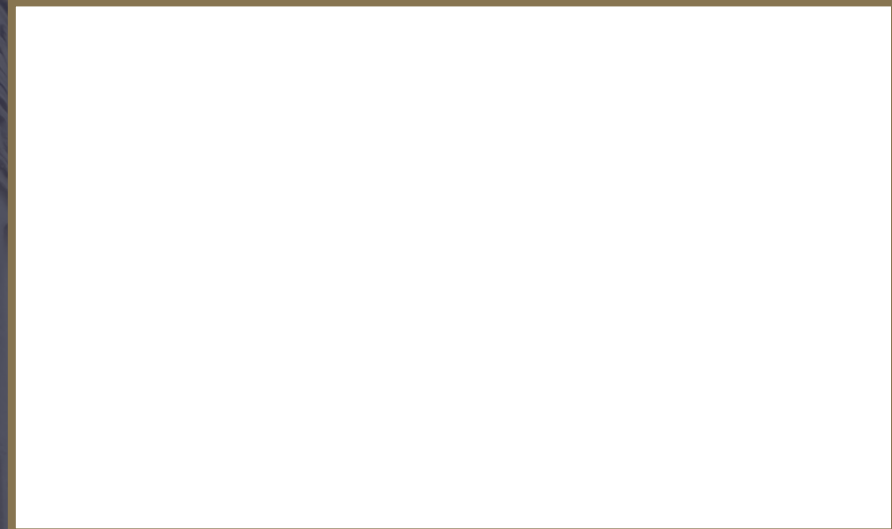
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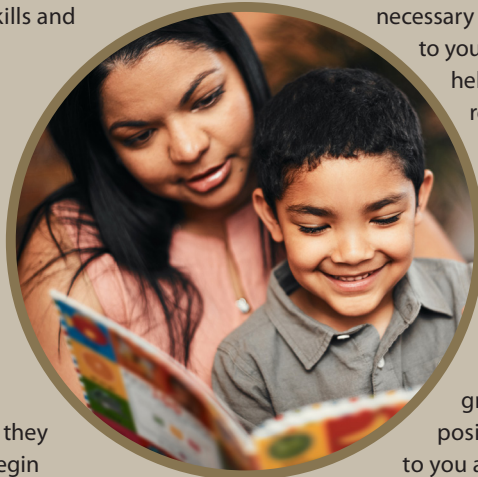
The Benefits of Reading to Your Children

Even at a young age, reading to your children is an important tool to help them grow and learn while sparking their creativity. Your child will help develop their early literacy skills and ability to focus, plus increase their social skills and communication skills.

When you begin reading to your child, they gain a greater understanding of the world, which allows them to make sense of the things they see, hear, and react to in their daily lives. But the benefits of reading don't stop there.

IMPROVING LANGUAGE SKILLS

Reading to your child when they are an infant can help strengthen their language acquisition skills. If you continue reading as they get older, these skills will only grow. They begin to latch on to spoken communication. Improving their vocabulary and grammar skills through hearing the written word is even more effective than what they gain from everyday conversation. Why? Because the human brain comprehends written communication differently than spoken communication.



PREPARING FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

According to a study by the American Academy of Pediatrics, more than 1 in 3 American children enter kindergarten without the necessary reading skills to succeed in school. But if you read to your children, you expose them to new words and help develop their listening skills as they listen to you read. You can also ask questions about their reading comprehension along the way to ensure they understand what is happening in the story. These skills are vital to academic success.

IMPROVING YOUR RELATIONSHIP

The best way to create a special bond with your little ones is simply by spending time with them, and reading to your child on a routine basis is a great way to do that. Plus, reading stories provides a positive and educational experience where they can talk to you and vice versa. This will help you learn more about your child's developing interests so you can find new ways to encourage them to learn and explore their passions.

No matter which way you look at it, reading to your children provides a positive experience that will help them grow.



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Pride and Joy



What My Family Means to Me

This time of year, people tend to slow down and reflect on the things that matter most. While I cherish them year-round, I'm especially grateful for my family during the holiday season. If it weren't for them, I know that I wouldn't have been able to accomplish as much as I have in my life or even be the person I am today.

In particular, my wife, Holly, has supported me through so much. I've always had an entrepreneurial spirit; it's in my nature to want to build a company and make it the best. That involves taking risks, working long hours, and putting your money where your mouth is. And that's on top of handling family obligations.

Holly has always believed in me and trusted my instincts. If I need to put in extra hours at the office or spend money to expand the business, she understands because we share the same vision. I can't imagine how difficult this path would have been without that kind of support, especially in light of the responsibilities we also have at home.

As I've shared before, my son, Nathan, is autistic and needs around-the-clock care. Becoming a father changed me even more than I'd anticipated, as I realized that I no longer wanted my life to be about fancy cars and other material things — I wanted it to be about helping people. Though our family's struggles aren't the same, they've helped me empathize with my clients in a way I never could before. And for that, I'm endlessly grateful.

While I'm running the firm, Holly takes on the bulk of the duties at home. She takes both of the kids to school and picks them up, and she works

here at the firm in between. She also manages the support staff we have at home for Nathan and generally handles the household.

On top of that, she's the fundraising chair for the charity STARability, which provides job training and job placement for young people with disabilities. In addition to her other responsibilities, she's working to pull off a fundraising event that will finance their annual programming. I'm so proud of her and so glad that we have similar priorities — it allows us to have a true partnership.

As I watch my father get older, I've also started to appreciate things that I didn't in the past. Everyone knows that family can drive you crazy, but at some point, you realize they're not always going to be there. That's when the bad times start to fade from your memory and the good times remain. I've become especially aware that we're all on this earth for only a short time, so we all have to make the most of it.

I'm so grateful for Holly, Nathan, and my daughter, Arina. They've not only made me a better person, but they've also brought me so much joy. As you gather to eat and unwrap presents this holiday season, I hope you'll take the time to appreciate your loved ones and all they've given you just a little more than usual. Happy holidays!

Marc L. Shapiro

