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MARKETING MINUTE

I Love You All Equally



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Growing up middle class in Pittsburgh had us living in a pretty small house for a Catholic family of seven. I am the youngest of five, an identical twin and the last out of the womb. Everyone was two years apart, except Steve and me. We were three minutes apart, delivered early and heading towards an Airbnb stay in a couple of incubators. The only way to settle us down was to put us in the same incubator, no surprise after spending 8 months together in a tiny efficiency apartment...mom.

My two sisters acted like girls, that's what I remember. I remember them fighting, two very different personalities: one played the part of a pleaser and the other took on the moniker of rebel. All three boys shared a bedroom with four amazing homemade bunkbeds built by my talented father covering the length of the room. Steve and I got along famously, with synchronized nosebleeds and seriously freaky twin stuff

I like to think that I was the least trouble, but it was probably really Steve. I probably spent more time on the edge of the line than he did, but by the time I arrived, number 5, they didn't even bother to rinse off the pacifier. No way possible that mom could love us all equally. She would repeat that phrase all the way to the grave, "I love you all equally".

When Dave put his car into the creek, she loved me more, right? When Steve wrecked Dad's friend's car that he borrowed for the prom, she had to love me more. When Denise forgot to tell mom that she needed a costume for school the next morning, she certainly loved me more.

We have four kids, and like my mom, I love them equally. Caroline (CJ) pushes all my buttons, Christopher puts his stinky feet on the couch pillows, Jonathan (JP) acts like Jonathan, and Justin can't even learn to get up on his own for school. There is just something that a child cannot understand, and it's called unconditional love.

Actually, I hate to admit it, but it's something that I've struggled mightily with myself. I think the first step is to recognize it, then step two, decide to fix it. I've often let conditions get in my way of loving.

I think after having four children, I get what mom meant by her bold statement. I also love all

of the kids equally, because love isn't a number between one to 10, it's a decision of action. When one of my children mistreats me, I may feel a one out of 10 on the LFS (Love Feeling Scale), but my decision to love them remains and I still feed them, provide, and forgive them.

Caroline is away at school. CJ as we call her, wasn't feeling well and Ruth and I decided to make a visit to her dorm room one Saturday. Ruth made CJ's favorite chicken noodle soup and cookies, and I bought a bouquet of 24 yellow tulips to cheer her up.

We got to her residence hall where she met us at the door and immediately got herself locked out of the building, forgetting her access credentials. Now standing in the cold, a basket of treats in my arms, we had to wait for someone to come by and let us in. CJ was in a rank mood (I'm being nice). We sat in the lobby and she was being ungrateful and miserable.

I said this, "Ruth, let's leave. I don't want to be around Caroline right now. She clearly doesn't understand the sacrifice we made for her in preparing for this visit." So, we left, after just five minutes. All that work for five minutes and a pathetic response.

Twenty minutes later, Ruth received a text from a girl who was back in bed, warmed soup in her "tummy", yellow flowers in a vase beside her bed.

Her simple text said this: "Thanks Mom and Dad. I love you guys tons! Sorry for the way I acted and thanks for always knowing exactly what I need and not giving up." The hardest part of all of this was to separate my disappointment in her initial reaction and be willing to let my dreams of the expected warm exchange go away from my mind. That "1 out of 10" moment didn't define the exchange, it was the "10 out of 10" unexpected text that showed the complexity of a love decision.

I think this is a good reminder for all of us to leave the moment and the reaction that the moment brings. Lower situational expectations and look long term. Lord knows that in the business world there are situational touchdowns and turnovers. But, when the game is over, even in a pathetically boring game like this year's Superbowl, someone ends up winning. It might as well be you.

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