

**L**ike many people in his demanding profession, Kevin Smith tries to strike a balance between being a good superintendent and being a good father. Smith, who has been a superintendent for about 21 years, will tell you that it's *always* a challenge to keep the two in proportion.

I called Smith, the certified superintendent of Bryan Park & Golf Course in Greensboro, N.C., to talk about fatherhood in celebration of Father's Day this month. I knew Smith could shed some advice on the subject for guys like me who want to be the best at what they do for a living without forgetting about their families in the process.

Smith has three boys, and I have two. We talked about the ability to gather a second wind after a hard day's work to spend some quality time with them. That might mean playing all-day quarterback when all you really want to do is play armchair quarterback while lounging in a recliner in front of ESPN.

"I try to get to everything that I possibly can," Smith says of attending his boys' numerous events, from baseball games to musical recitals.

Smith and I also talked about the importance of letting your children know how much you love them by simply telling them that you do. I've discovered that I can never tell my children this enough. They beam when I do.

"That's such a vital key," Smith says.

But what strikes me most about Smith's advice to be a better father has nothing to do with "do's" and "don'ts." It has everything to do with his humble ability to recognize decisions he made that weren't in the best interest of his family.

It's no surprise that Smith, who's in a business known for its transience, has hired a few van lines in his career. The 48-year-old Michigan native has worked in Texas, Alabama, Arizona and now North Carolina. Smith says he took new jobs and moved the family to move up the proverbial career ladder. But looking back, Smith wonders if he was thinking too much of himself and not enough about his family when he made those decisions.

"It was a lot about Kevin's career and what I could do to improve my standing," Smith says.

## Good Superintendent But a Better Father

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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"In retrospect, I might not have made a move or two if I had really fully embraced the sense of family and what was best for my family *and* me."

A big thing Smith learned was not to make impulsive decisions without consulting his family, something he says he was guilty of doing. That's a common mistake among fathers, who often view themselves as leaders of their families. But the best leaders consult the people they lead before making their decisions.

It's so easy to convince yourself that the decision you make will be good for the family and not just for you. But such decisions can often end up alienating family members.

Smith also shared with me a powerful experience he had as a young father early in his career. The older he gets, the more he realizes the magnitude of the experience.

It happened when Smith was the superintendent of Amarillo Country Club in Texas about 18 years ago. He came home after a long and arduous day at the course. Unfortunately, Smith didn't leave his stressful job at work.

But when home, a troubled Smith picked up his newborn son, Tony, cuddled him in his arms and sat in a rocking chair.

"All the burdens on my mind were just sort of lifted and carried away," Smith recalls. "Everything else seemed so irrelevant and so secondary."

As time passes, that blessed time spent with his son on that harried day means more and more to Smith.

It makes him realize the importance of his family. It makes him realize the importance of being a good father.

It makes him realize that being a good father is more important than being a good superintendent.

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