

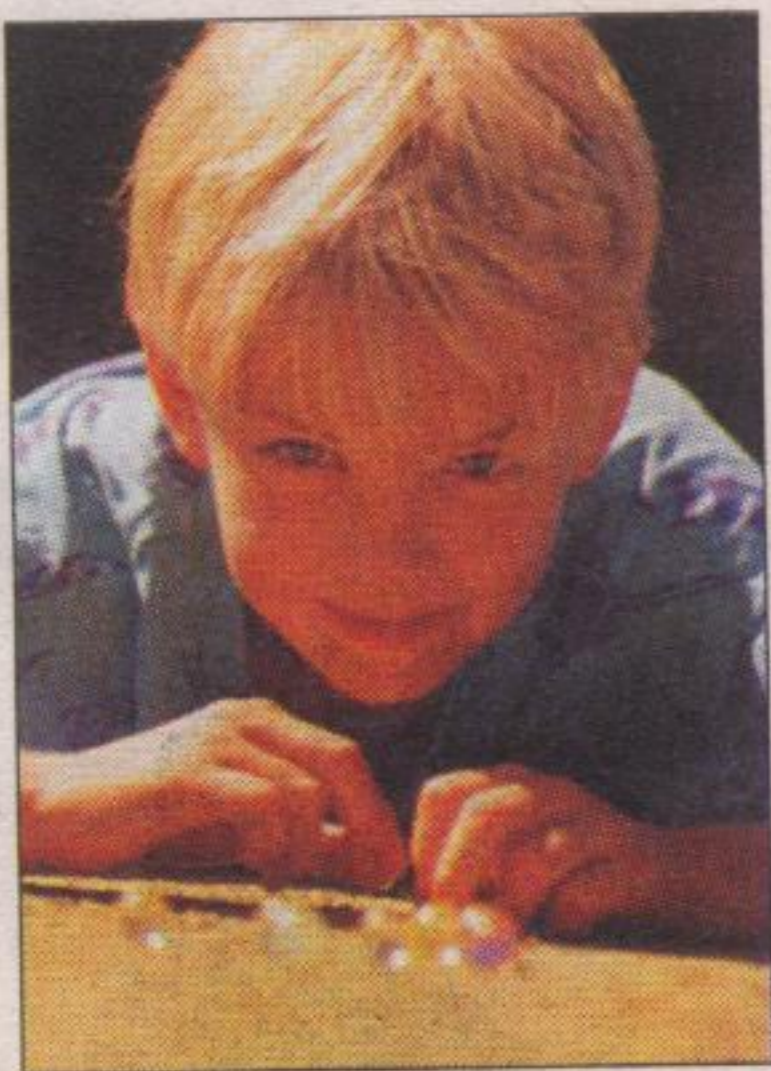
Tip for Kids – Just wait a minute!

by Abbey James

When my kids were babies, and they started to wake or fuss during the night, I usually waited a few minutes to see if they could settle themselves on their own. If the little noises became louder and stronger, I would start to feel that they really needed some help, and I usually responded. I realized recently that to “wait a minute before I respond” works just as well now that they are older.

For example, quite often the kids ask me for something to eat, ask me to do something for them, ask me to take them somewhere, etc. when they are feeling bored. I’m not always willing to drop what I’m doing and respond immediately so I say, “just wait a minute...I’ll finish what I’m doing and be right there.” More often than not, they’ve managed to think of something to do on their own and are happily involved in an activity before I get back to them.

I started to wonder how this approach works and realized that I use the same approach when my kids ask to “bend a rule”. During the school year, the kids are not supposed to be watching TV during the week, but when they are bored they will come and ask for an exception. In between the pleading and begging, I usually ask them to “wait a minute” or sometimes I just make eye contact or say “m-m-m-m I’ll think about it” and I wait to see what their reaction will be. If I can see they really cannot



manage their bored feelings on their own, and they get increasingly upset and agitated, I am more willing to bend the rule or try to respond to their restless feelings. If they don’t push too hard, or go off and find something else to do while I’m “considering”, I realize that this moment of non-response somehow gave them a chance to turn to their own thoughts and ideas and often they discover their own way to ease their restless feeling.

Somehow it seems that “waiting a minute” leaves children with the feeling that they do not have to solve this restless or bored feeling alone, yet it gives them an opportunity to find their own solution. In this pause, often a new idea will pop into their mind they can act on. In trying to understand why this “waiting a minute” might help children, I had an opportunity to ask child therapist Judith Deutsch.

Mrs. Deutsch replied, “Whenever children rely on their own ideas to keep themselves busy and happy, they experience more than the enjoyment of the chosen activity. On a deeper level, children experience a satisfaction that they cannot understand or explain. When they are able to solve a problem — even a little problem like feeling somewhat bored — they experience a sense of well-being for being able to find a way, without help from a parent, to solve their predicament. It makes them feel content and pleased with themselves that they have managed independently.”

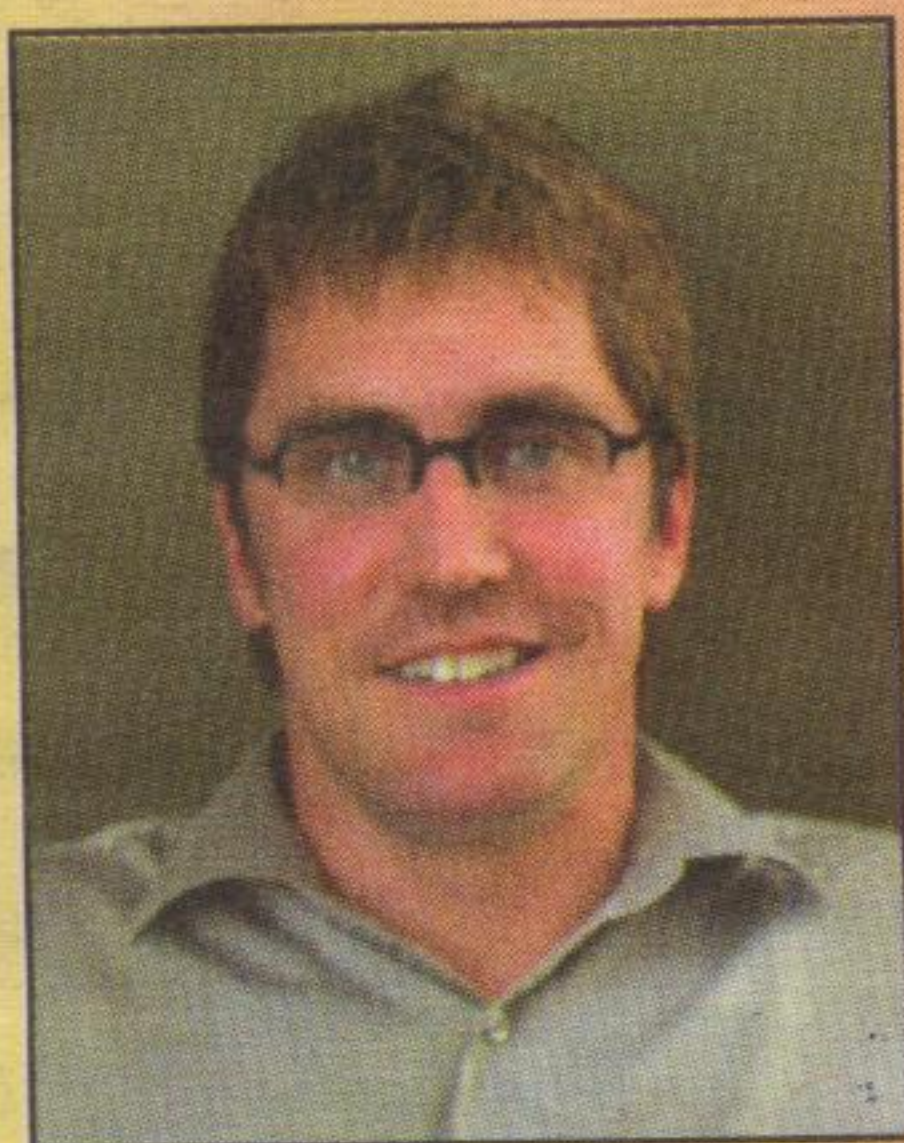
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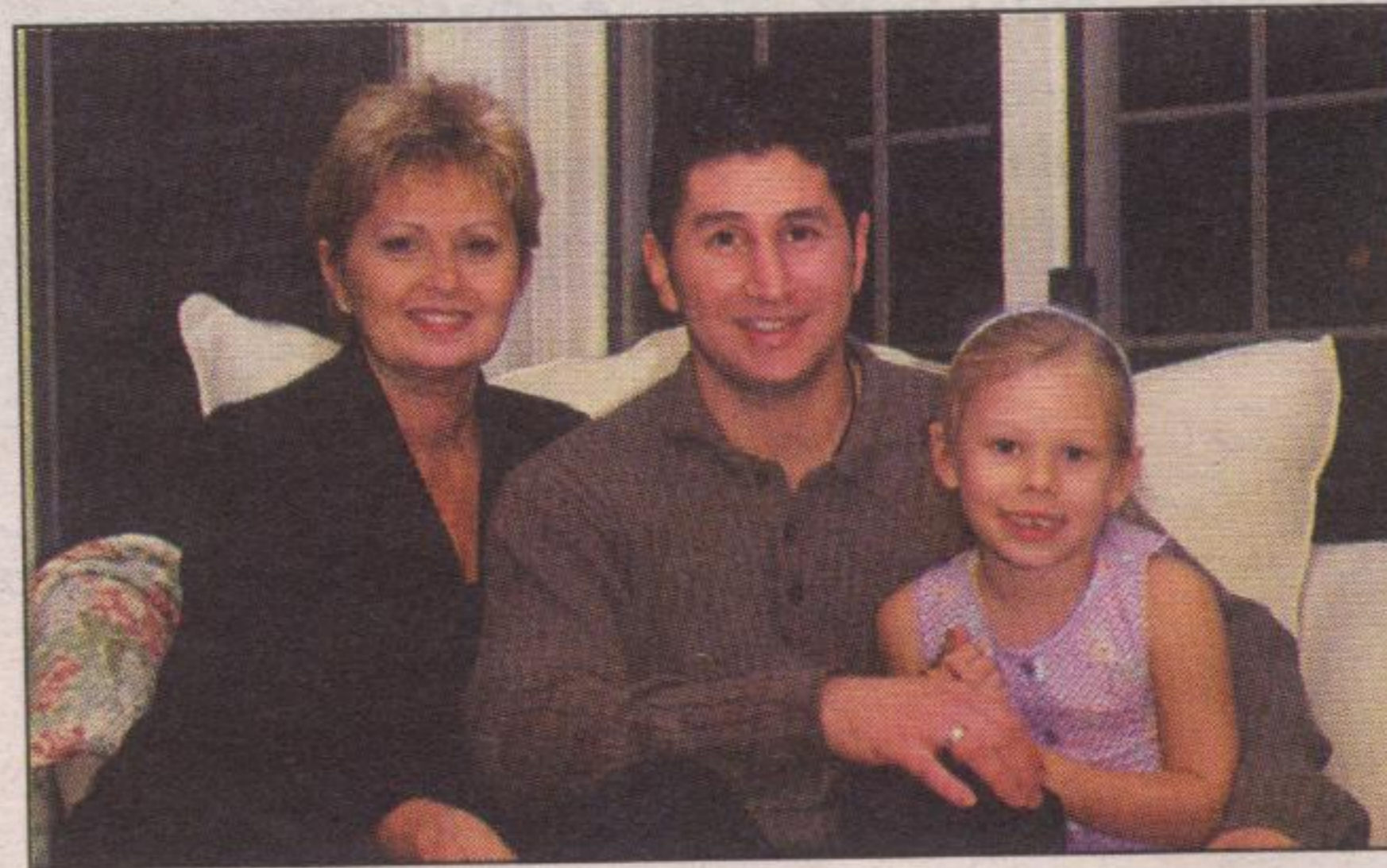
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