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## Peculiarities of Children-parental Relationships Influencing Productivity and Psychoemotional Stability of Young Sportsmen

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### Abstract

Disharmonious children-parental relationships that occur during competitive stress can destabilize the attitudes developed in the training process, cause cognitive dissonance, and provoke an increase in the level of situational and personal anxiety, which negatively affects the productivity of a young athlete in the process of competitive activity.

**Purpose of the study:** the purpose of the study is to identify the peculiarities of children-parental relationships and the emotional state of young skaters during training and competition periods.

**Research techniques:** PARI technique (Parental Attitude Research Instrument) to examine the attitudes of parents (especially mothers) to different sides of family life (family roles); the technique of Rene Gilles for research in the field of interpersonal relations of a child and his perception of family relations; the children's form of CMA Smanifest anxiety scale; the questionnaire "Self-estimation of personality" offered by Budassi.

**Sample of the study:** 30 children of 6-8 years old (students of the school "Zilant" in Kazan) and 30 adult family members (one of the parents).

**Results of the study:** the comparative analysis of the Wilcoxon T-test for dependent samples of PARI technique showed that 15 out of 23 scales have significant differences. The comparative analysis of Rene Gilles technique showed that 10 out of 12 scales have significant differences. The analysis of the CMAS manifest anxiety scale showed that the average values obtained during competition period have significantly higher anxiety indicators than during training period. The correlation analysis (Spearman) of the results of the "Self-estimation of personality" technique revealed the presence of significant connections between the indicators of children-parental relationships and the emotional state of young skaters.

**Significance of the study:** the study of children-parental relationships in the families of young skaters and the study of their influence on psychoemotional state of athletes is of great interest from the point of view of psychological support of youth sports and enhancing the performance of young athletes. The results of the study can be used by psychologists, psychotherapists, coaches working with children and adolescents to optimize the psychoemotional state of young athletes during competition period, to increase their resistance to competitive stress as well as for psychoeducational and psychocorrective work with the family of young athletes.

*Keywords:* child-parent relationships, situational anxiety, primary school student, emotional contact, stress, parental attitudes, sports psychology.

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## **Introduction**

### *Relevance of the problem*

In modern conditions against the background of active promotion of a healthy lifestyle the number of children and adolescents involved in sports is increasing. Family as a resource of emotional support and protection of a child, parents as people accepting the child unconditionally are along with the coach significant and integral participants of training and competition processes.

Family educational positions and attitudes of parents are the factors that characterize the environment in which the formation of a child's mental, emotional and personal development takes place. The family system is the first and main environment for a child's development, satisfying the vital needs of love, security and acceptance that are characteristic of his age. It is in the family where self-esteem and psycho emotional stability which helps to adapt in situations of stress are formed and emotional intelligence that allows you to manage your own emotions and behaviour is developed (Fedorenko et al., 2019). This is especially important for children who participate in sports or other competitions where they need not only the ability to mobilize their knowledge and skills, but also the ability to control their own emotional state in stressful situations as it significantly affects the productivity.

### **Purpose and objectives of the study**

The aim of the study is to identify the peculiarities of children-parental relationships and the emotional state of young skaters during training and competition periods.

### **Literature review**

The importance of parental support and family influence on the productivity of young athletes is reflected in the works of many researchers. The study of the influence of the family on children's participation in sports and physical activity is given in the article of Horn & Horn (2012). According to Clarke et al. (2016), the work with young athletes includes not only mandatory analysis of their individual level of behavior but also the study of parenting problems, the experience of interaction with parents, the presence and productivity of social contact and constructive interaction.

Fredricks & Eccles (2005) believes that parents' perceptions of their children's abilities influence their success and involvement in sports. In his opinion social activity of the family and parental attitudes along with the providing the child with experience are very important and are associated with children's own perception of their sports competence and value.

According to Daniels (2007) parents should objectively assess whether their children are mentally, emotionally, socially and physically mature to participate in organized sports. Being ready for sports is just as important as being ready for school. Motivation is a key factor that determines a child's readiness for sports and competitions. Children want to do sports when they feel competent. The ability to create a motivational climate for the personal development of a young athlete depends on parents and coaches.

Salla & Michel (2012) asked the question - what is the price of a young athlete's high results in sports? He must learn to cope with his expectations and most importantly with the expectations of others (coaches and parents). According to the authors young athletes are particularly at risk of pressure from their environment which can negatively affect their health so it is necessary to study the impact of the relationship between parents and children on the health of a young athlete by identifying parental dysfunction inherent in a situation of success when parental pressure and expectations become excessive.

So what should be the behavior of parents in the opinion of young athletes? Knight et al. (2010, 2011) devoted their research to the study of the need for parental support and preferred parental behavior during competition period. So for young tennis players it is important their parents to refrain from technical and tactical advice during competitions but to point out positively the efforts of athletes and to give supporting comments. It was also important for team competition participants to be supported and encouraged by their parents during competitions and to be given a feedback after competitions.

Studying the aspects of parent socialization through organized youth sports Dorsch et al. (2015) noticed that sports opened up new opportunities for family communication and interaction. Being involved in sports with their children parents began to use sports as a means to educate their children and thanks to long-term collective family interactions parents accepted their new roles and began to think more about developing their own parental competencies.

Harwood & Knight (2015) believes that the experience in sports education requires parents to develop a number of skills – the ability to choose suitable sports activities and maintain the child's interest; the ability to use certain educational techniques, show social activity, demonstrate self-control and others. Parents should develop knowledge and use a range of intrapersonal, interpersonal and organizational skills to manage themselves, to help their child and to be integrated into a broad youth sports environment.

The article by Dorsch et al (2019) in which the authors emphasize the importance of adequate parental education is devoted to the analysis of the views and sports goals of parents for their child athletes.

Thus the success of the "young athlete – coach – parents" system is determined not only by the individual athletic qualities and capabilities of a child, not only by active coaching, but also by the conscious involvement of parents in the training process. The study of the influence of peculiarities of children-parental relationships, parental attitudes and the degree of parental support, psychological state of parents and their emotional involvement in the sports life of a young athlete is an important component which allows to take into account the role of the family as a resource or as a destabilizing factor in coach's work and to correct the influence of the family system through psycho-educational work with the family.

### **Methodology**

The study involved 30 figure skating students (primary school students) aged 7 to 8 of the Sports school for children and young people "Zilant" and 30 parents. The minimum age of parents is 25 and the maximum age is 40. All children included in the study had previously had an experience of participating in competitions of different levels and demonstrated results of different degrees of success.

Since the purpose of the study was to compare children-parental relationships during training period and during competitions when parental support is especially important we used methods allowing us to determine the attitude of parents (especially mothers) to certain aspects of family life (family role); to study the child's social fitness, the scope of his interpersonal relationships and their features, his perception of intra-family relationships, some characteristics of his behavior; to study the child's anxiety; to assess personal self-esteem.

The diagnostics was performed twice: during the training and competition periods.

The applied techniques:

- PARI technique (Parental Attitude Research Instrument) designed to study the relationship of parents to different aspects of family life (family role). The authors of the technique are Shafer and Bell, the adaptation of the technique for Russia is by Neshcheret (2001).

- the technique of Gilles & Ashman (1998) which is used to study the structure of a child's specific personal relationships with others as well as to analyze the characteristics of a child's social adaptability and to study certain behavioral characteristics and personality traits;

- the CMAS (the Children's Form of Manifest Anxiety Scale) is used to identify chronic anxiety in children of 8 to 12. The authors of the scale are Castaneda, McCandless and Palermo, the adaptation in Russia by Prihozhan (2002);

- the questionnaire "Self-estimation of personality" by Budassi (1993) is intended for evaluating the inherent qualities of an athlete's personality.

The statistical processing was performed using the "STATISTICA" software package and Excel.

## Results

Table 1 presents the comparative analysis of the Wilcoxon T-test (at  $p < .05$ ) for dependent samples of PARI technique. It is shown that 15 out of 23 scales have significant differences. In view of the fact that the emotional pre-start state of parents acts as a decisive factor determining the productivity of young athletes during competitions the results on the scales "Parents' super-authority", "Dominance of mother", "Development of child's activity", Irritability (irascibility)", "Severity (excessive severity)", "Aspiration to speed up the development of child" are of particular interest to a sports psychologist. Other scales ("Indifference of husband, his non-involvement in family affairs", "Motivation to verbal manifestations, verbalization", "Partnership", "Equalizing relations between parents and child", "Avoidance of contact with child", "Overcoming resistance, suppression of will", "Creating security, fear to offend" and "Suppression of aggression") do not have significant differences in training and competition periods.

### Comparative analysis using Wilcoxon T-test (at $p < .05$ ) for dependent samples of PARI technique during training and competition periods

Table 1

	Valid	T	Z	p-level
Limitation of interests of a woman within the family	30	68	2,34286	0,01914
The feeling of self sacrifice as a mother	30	28	3,19787	0,00138
Family conflicts	30	31	3,2544	0,00114
Parents' super-authority	30	32,5	2,70662	0,0068
Dissatisfaction with the role of a housewife	30	57	2,03332	0,04202
Dominance of mother	30	7	4,27956	0,00002
Dependence and characterless of mother	30	49,5	2,294	0,02179
Development of child's activity	30	33	3,34286	0,00083
Irritability, irascibility	30	31	3,53826	0,0004
Severity, excessive severity	30	18	3,52252	0,00043
Excessive care, establishment of relations based on dependence	30	53	3,11125	0,00186
Exclusion of non family influences	30	38	3,2	0,00137
Suppression of sexuality	30	86	2,273119	0,02302
Excessive intervention in the child's world	30	38	3,627775	0,000286
Aspiration to speed up the child's development	30	20,5	3,441359	0,000579

The comparative analysis using Wilcoxon T-test (at  $p < 0,05$ ) for dependent samples of Rene Gilles technique showed that 10 scales out of 12 have significant differences (Table 2). The scales ("Attitude to a friend", "Attitude to a grandparent") do not have significant differences in training and competition periods.

**Comparative analysis using Wilcoxon T-test (at  $p < 0,05$ ) for dependent samples of Rene Gilles technique during training and competition periods**

Table 2

	Valid	T	Z	p-level
Attitude to mother	30	41	2,173078	0,029775
Attitude to father	30	59,5	2,387574	0,016961
Attitude to mother and father as a parental couple	30	25	2,437913	0,014773
Attitude to brothers and sisters	29	29	2,460595	0,013871
Attitude to grandparents	30	71	1,801844	0,071571
Attitude to a friend	30	86,5	1,56637	0,117263
Attitude to a teacher (respectable adult)	30	41,5	2,370625	0,017759
Inquisitiveness	30	34	2,01187	0,044235
Leadership	30	28,5	2,042496	0,041103
Sociability	30	26	2,171768	0,029874
Isolation, detachment	30	15	2,740565	0,006134
Social adequacy of behaviour	30	28,5	1,78908	0,073603

The comparative analysis of Wilcoxon T-test for dependent samples of the CMAS manifest anxiety scale showed significantly higher levels of anxiety in children during competition period compared with training period (Table 3).

Probably the increased anxiety of children during competition period is associated with the excessive interference of parents in the training process especially just before competitions. Aggressive, assertive behaviour, the unwillingness to take into account the individual characteristics of a child at the stage of pre-start training destabilize the concentration, emotional stability and strong-willed activity of a young athlete. Personal ambitions of parents, their unrealized desires are projected on a child and cause anxiety, depression, psychosomatic symptoms in children and, in the future, the development of a neurotic state fraught with psychoemotional breakdowns.

Increasing psychoemotional stress, low self-esteem, high situational and personal anxiety provoked by dysfunctional children-parental relationships often cause unsatisfactory competitive activity and negatively affect the productivity and emotional state of young athletes.

**Comparative analysis using Wilcoxon T-test (at  $p < 0,05$ ) for dependent samples of the CMAS technique during training and competition period**

Table 3

	Valid	T	Z	p-level
Manifest anxiety scale CMAS	30	0	3,723555	0,000196

Wilcoxon T-test (Table 4) for dependent samples of the "Self-estimation of personality" technique showed significantly higher self-estimation indicators during training period compared with competition period.

**Comparative analysis using Wilcoxon T-test (at  $p < 0,05$ ) for dependent samples of the "Self-estimation of personality" technique during training and competition period**

Table 4

	Valid	T	Z	p-level
Personality self-estimation	30	23,5	4,087471	0,000044

**The correlation analysis** has shown that the number of significant connections between the studied indicators is considerably greater in competition period than in training period.

*Competition period.* The indicators "Parents' super-authority" and "Creating security, fear to offend" of PARI technique have a positive connection - the higher is parent's super-authority, the higher is the creation of security for a child, fear to offend him. The negative connection was formed by the indicators "Family conflicts" of PARI technique and "The CMAS manifest anxiety scale" - the stronger are family conflicts, the lower is the manifest anxiety and vice versa.

In the framework of PARI technique a positive connection is observed between the indicators "Parents' super-authority" and "Suppression of aggression" - the higher is parents' super-authority, the stronger is the suppression of aggressiveness on their part.

However the indicator "Parents' super-authority" of PARI technique has a negative connection with the indicator "Sociability" of Rene Gilles technique. Therefore the higher is parents' super-authority, the lower is sociability and vice versa.

The indicator "Limitation of interests of a woman within family" has a negative connection with three indicators: "Creating security, fear to offend", "Overcoming resistance, suppression of will" in the framework of PARI technique and the indicator "Attitude to father" in Rene Gilles technique.

So the more a woman is limited within the family, the lower are the creation of security (fear to offend), overcoming resistance, suppression of will, and the lower is the indicator "Attitude to father". The indicator "Dissatisfaction with the role of a housewife" of PARI technique has a negative connection with the indicator "Feeling of self-sacrifice as a mother" - the higher is the dissatisfaction of a woman with the role of a housewife, the lower is her feeling of self-sacrifice as a mother and vice versa.

The indicator "Parents' super-authority" of PARI technique has a positive connection with the indicator "Creating security, fear to offend" and a negative connection with the indicator "Attitude to a teacher (respectable adult)" of Rene Gilles technique. It means that the higher is the level of safety for a child, the higher is parent's super-authority; and the higher is parent's super-authority, the lower is the indicator "Attitude to a teacher (respectable adult)" and vice versa.

The indicator "Motivation to verbal manifestations, verbalization" forms a positive connection with three parameters: "Partnership" and "Exclusion of non family influence" of PARI technique and "The CMAS manifest anxiety scale" which suggests that the stronger is the motivation to verbal manifestations, verbalization, the stronger are partnership and the exclusion of non family influences and the greater is manifest anxiety.

The indicator "Overcoming resistance, suppression of will " of PARI technique forms a positive connection with the following indicators: "Excessive interference in a child's world" of PARI technique, "Attitude to father" of Rene Gilles technique and the "CMAS manifest anxiety scale " technique; also this indicator forms a negative connection with the indicator "Avoidance of contact with child" of PARI technique. This means that the stronger is the overcoming resistance (suppression of will) of a child, the stronger is the interference in the child's world; the better is attitude toward his father, the higher is manifest anxiety and the lower is the avoidance of contact with child.

The indicator "Leadership" of Rene Gilles technique has a positive connection with the indicators "Attitude to grandparents", "Attitude to father", "Social adequacy of behaviour" of Rene Gilles technique and a negative connection with the technique "CMAS manifest anxiety scale " and the indicator "Partnership" of PARI technique. This means that the stronger is a child's leadership, the better is the attitude to grandparents, the better is the attitude to father and the higher is the social adequacy of behaviour; and the lower is the manifest anxiety and partnership. The indicator of PARI technique "Suppression of aggression" also has multiple connections: a positive one with the indicator "Social adequacy of behaviour" of Rene Gilles technique and the technique "CMAS manifest anxiety scale "; a negative one with the indicator of Rene Gilles technique "Attitude to father." This means that the more the aggressiveness of the child is suppressed, the higher is the social adequacy of behavior and the higher is manifest anxiety and the worse is the attitude towards father. In training period these connections (except for "CMAS manifest anxiety scale") are absent.

The indicator "Attitude to brothers and sisters" of Rene Gilles technique has two negative connections: "Excessive interference in a child's world" and "Equalizing relations between parents and a child" of PARI technique. So the better is the attitude to siblings, the less is the interference in a child's world and equalizing relations between parents and a child and vice versa.

The indicator "Attitude to father" of Rene Gilles technique has two positive connections: "Attitude to grandparents" and "Attitude to mother" of Rene Gilles technique and one negative connection with "CMAS manifest anxiety scale " technique - the better is attitude to father, the better is attitude to grandmother, grandfather and mother and the less is manifest anxiety.

The indicator "Exclusion of non family influence" of PARI technique form two positive connections: with the indicator "Partnership" of PARI technique and with the "Self-estimation of personality" technique - the greater is the exclusion of non family influence, the stronger is partnership and the higher is self-esteem of an individual.

"CMAS manifest anxiety scale" technique has two positive connections: with the indicator "Partnership" and "Severity, excessive severity" of PARI technique which indicates that the stronger is manifest anxiety, the stronger is partnership and severity (excessive severity) on the part of parents. Two negative connections are formed by the indicator "Attitude to mother and father as a parental couple" of Rene Gilles technique: with "Irritability, irascibility" and "Excessive care, establishing relationships of dependence" of PARI technique. This means that the better is attitude to mother and fathers a parental couple, the lower is irritability, irascibility, the less is excessive care, establishing relationships of dependence and vice versa.

The indicator "Sociability" of René Gilles technique has two connections: a positive one with the indicator "Isolation, detachment" of Rene Gilles technique and a negative one with the indicator "Development of child's activity" of PARI technique. This means that the higher is the sociability, the stronger is isolation (detachment) and the lower is the development of child's activity.

One negative connection is formed by two indicators: "Avoidance of contact with child" of PARI technique and "Social adequacy of behaviour" of Rene Gilles technique. This means that the greater is avoidance of contact with child, the lower is social adequacy of behaviour and vice versa. This connection is absent during training period. Also a negative connection is formed by the indicators "Attitude to mother" of Rene Gilles technique and "Equalizing relationship between parents and a child" of PARI technique. This means that the better is attitude to mother, the lower is the equalizing relationship between parents and a child and vice versa.

A positive connection is formed by the indicators "Attitude to grandparents" of Rene Gilles technique and "Excessive interference in a child's world" of PARI technique - the better is attitude to grandparents, the stronger is interference in a child's world. A negative connection is formed between the indicators "Severity, excessive severity" of PARI technique and "Attitude to brothers and sisters" of Rene Gilles technique. This means that the stronger is excessive severity, the worse is attitude towards brothers and sisters and vice versa.

In training period the number of indicators of various techniques (with positive and negative connections) that are significant is considerably fewer. The "Family conflicts" indicator of PARI technique has a direct connection with CMA Smanifest anxiety scale - the stronger are family conflicts, the stronger is the anxiety of young athletes.

The indicator "Limitation of interests of a woman within family" of PARI technique has a direct connection with the indicator "Severity, excessive severity" - the more a woman is limited within the family, the stronger is her severity. This connection is absent in competition period. "Parents' super-authority" has a positive connection with the indicator "Creating security, fear to offend" of PARI technique - the higher is parental authority, the higher is the creation of security for a child and the fear of offending him. "Dissatisfaction with the role of a housewife" has a positive connection with the indicators "Severity, excessive severity" of PARI technique - the higher is a woman's dissatisfaction with the role of a housewife, the higher is her severity towards her child. The indicator "Dominance of mother" has a positive connection with four indicators at once: "Partnership", "Excessive care, establishing relationships of dependence" and "Creating security, fear to offend" of PARI technique as well as with the indicator "Attitude to mother and father as a parental couple" of Rene Gilles technique. This means that the stronger is mother's dominance in family, the higher is partnership with child, excessive care (establishing relationships of dependence) and the fear of offending him (creating security); and the higher is the indicator "Attitude to mother and father as a parental couple" of Rene Gilles technique.

The indicators "Development of child's activity" and "Exclusion of non-family influence" of PARI technique also have a positive connection - the higher is the exclusion of non-family influence, the higher is the development of child's activity. The indicator "Equalizing relationships between parents and a child" has a direct connection with the indicator "Aspiration to speed up child's development" in the framework of PARI technique - the higher is the desire to speed up the child's development, the higher are equalizing relationships between parents and a child. The indicator "Leadership" has a positive connection with the indicator "Attitude to mother" in the framework of Rene Gilles technique - the more pronounced is leadership, the better is attitude to mother. The indicator «Attitude to father "of Rene Gilles technique has a direct connection with the indicator "Attitude to mother" of Rene Gilles technique and with the indicator "Overcoming resistance, suppressing of will" of PARI technique. This means that the better is attitude to father, the better is attitude to mother; and the higher is overcoming of resistance (suppression of will). In competition period only a connection with the indicator "Overcoming resistance, suppression of will" exists. The indicator "Exclusion of non-family influence" of PARI technique has a positive connection with the indicator "Sociability" of René Gilles technique - the higher is sociability, the higher is exclusion of non-family influence.

The "Suppression of aggressiveness" indicator of PARI technique has a positive connection with "CMAS manifest anxiety scale" - the more aggressiveness is suppressed, the higher is manifest anxiety. In competition period these connections (except for "CMAS manifest anxiety scale") are absent. The "Self-estimation of personality" technique is directly related to the "Attitude to grandparents" indicator of Rene Gilles technique - the better is attitude to grandparents, the higher is self-esteem of young athletes.

Entraining period we found negative connections between the following indicators:

- "Aspiration to speed up child's development" and "Dominance of mother" of PARI technique - the stronger is the dominance of mother in the family, the lower is desire to speed up the child's development and vice versa.
- "Indifference of husband, his non-involvement in family affairs" and "Severity, excessive severity" of PARI technique - the stronger is husband's indifference, his non-involvement in family affairs, the lower is the severity, excessive severity and vice versa.

## **Discussions**

This study allowed us to analyze the features of children-parental relationships in the families of young athletes in training and competition periods. We fully agree with the position of Blume & Wolfarth (2019) considering stress as one of the potential predictors that affect the success of a young athlete. The ability to cope with competitive stress, resistance to psychoemotional strain are the qualities which are trained not only during sports activities. They originate within the family, based on parental support and family involvement in the training process, and depend on the characteristics of the children-parental relationship.

The data obtained by the authors as regards competitive anxiety are correlated with those of Verdaguer et al. (2016) who studied the impact of competitive anxiety and parental influence on the productivity of young swimmers. Confirming the effect of competitive anxiety on the performance of young athletes Verdaguer et al. (2016) found no significant

connection with parental influence. In our study we found the influence of the peculiarities of children-parental relationships during competition period on the anxiety of young athletes.

The authors' opinion on the feasibility of psychological training of young athletes and if necessary psychological correction using resource techniques in order to optimize the emotional state, increase self-esteem and improve competition results is consistent with the proposals of Dikikh & Babushkin (2015) and Orlenko & Malyk (2017).

Analyzing the peculiarities of family relationships that determine effective emotional support for young athletes the authors were convinced of the need for psycho-educational work with parents. Due to insufficient awareness, low level of knowledge of the basics of the training process, psychological aspects of the child's behavior and activity parents destabilize the psychoemotional state of a young athlete during competitions. Often overestimating the capabilities of their child, parents on the basis of their own, as a rule, biased views form false concepts about the quality of the training process and the results of sports activity which affect the children-parental relationship and the performance during competitions. Therefore the authors consider it appropriate and absolutely necessary to work with the parents of young athletes.

The authors agree with the opinion of Logan & Cuff (2019) on the necessity to emphasize parental support in children's organized sports not only on victories and achievements, but also on the joy of personal development of a child and on the pleasure a child gets from sports.

## **Conclusion**

The results of our study showed that during competition period the anxiety of young skaters increases which negatively affects the performance. Out of 33 studied indicators 27 indicators have significant differences in training and competition periods.

Increased anxiety during training and competition periods is related to the peculiarities of child-parent relationships:

- during training period "Anxiety" has a positive connection with the indicator "Suppression of aggression" of parents (this indicator is included in the group of indicators "Excessive concentration on a child" of PARI technique);
- during competition period the number of direct connections with PARI technique increases ("Family conflicts", "Severity, excessive severity", "Motivation of verbal manifestations, verbalization", "Partnership") and there are negative connections with the indicator "Suppression of will" (this indicator is also included in the group "Excessive concentration on a child") and the indicators of Rene Gilles technique "Attitude to father" and "Leadership".

Thus the study of the peculiarities of children-parental relationships in the families of young athletes and the impact of parental support on the productivity of athletes in competition period revealed certain patterns, the knowledge of which allows you to optimize coaching and psychological interaction, expanding opportunities for cooperation with family.

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