

DETROIT NATIVE SUN

Removing Dad's protection can mean failure to children

By Calvin T. Mann
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The possibility that somehow, we have lost our way when it comes to dads is worth deeper thought. Through the motions of the “absent” father and the number of statistics that support it, what has happened is that we breed failure into children. You can see it everywhere from sports to the classroom; in business and more importantly you can see it in the family. We are failing our children and the family in each generation will reap the burden. I recently met a woman at a restaurant, and she noticed my good father's only jacket. She seemed very interested in what it meant to be a “good” father. So much so, that she began to ask a lot of questions. Interested in sharing the importance of fatherhood, I welcomed her questions indulging in a series of thought-provoking conversations. She spoke about her father and how he had failed her and her siblings by not showing up after her parents divorced. From her questions she seemed to feel life he divorced her and her siblings and not just her mother. She felt that their home was no longer a safe space financially and trauma filled from the fears of feeling unloved and unsafe at home and in most spaces. For both of us to hear each other's perspective on what “good” fatherhood looked and felt like was enlightening. This welcomed conversation was then and even after we parted, fulfilling. I believe that by sharing my fatherhood perspective after my divorced I helped her see the possibilities of her father's story too.

Many times, when people see me in public wearing my Good Fathers Only jacket they see the embroidered image of a father walking hand in hand with his son and daughter. They immediately want to know what “Good Fathers Only” means. I am happy to share with them the reminder of the many reasons Fathers have value. As members of the Good Fathers Only organization, we always explain that most people know exactly what it means when they see it the name. We also know that there is something along their story about their own father or as a father themselves is full of examples of painful experiences from the absence or perceived absence of the father.

This young woman's conversation was not so different from what I hear most days. She wanted to go into what we hear a lot of women say about fathers in general. But we started to speak to her own situation with her ex-husband and their kids. We're going to call, this inquisitive stranger, Lisa. Lisa shared with me that her kid's father doesn't want to be a father to his kids. She mentioned that he's moved on with his life and the people that are most impacted are the children. Lisa started by saying she did nothing wrong. However, their relationship just simply ended with them having a divorce. She further said that right after the divorce he disappeared. He no longer wanted to be in our kids' lives, she believed. He didn't want to help us with anything. She went on to say how he had moved on with his life and didn't or has not participated in his children's lives. I said that it's very interesting to hear because I don't really know a lot of men who don't want to be a father to their children. I also went further to share simply, that what he is saying by not showing up, is likely from his own hurt and fears of failure. I also said let me explain to you just how important he is to the children. I went on to talk about all of the social issues that happen in families and with children when dad is not present. We talked about the increase in violence, rape, poverty, homelessness, low self-esteem, dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, substance abuse and dying by suicide as a few of the symptoms directly impacted by his absence.

I always go to the research to get this information across to the people. Men are protectors and we leave our children unprotected when Dads are not allowed or do not participate in the lives of our children. One of the series of events that helps reveal his value and how systems fight against his presence in the family (and in the lives of his children) has been built into laws and policies. This timeline will share with you some of the intentions to make sure fathers were removed from the family. In 1969, then Governor of California Ronald Reagan, signed the no fault divorce act according to www.ipl.org. This event charted a course for families that would put the entire family at risk and greatly impact the next generation. The point I want you to look at and consider is what happened next. Ronald Reagan, would then say, it was one of the biggest mistake in his career. I'm sharing this information because law and those supporting it blew up and impacted millions of families. In fact, in January 1970 there

Lessons from the Journey: Motherhood - Are we raising a child or cultivating an adult?

By Heather Hetheru,
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This lesson for the journey is a slight detour from the normal parenting discussion on raising a child. For at least in the two present generations, I can confidently say that many of us have been raising children when we should have been cultivating adults. In spite of my best intentions, I have been party to this phenomenon. I thought my job was to raise a child until I was asked the question and gave deep reflection to what I was saying and my own expectations. I would often say proudly, that I/we was/were raising our son. In my definition, I was thinking that I was teaching him the basic fundamentals of values, behaviors and expectations to become a man and productive adult. My after thought is, was I really cultivating that idea or did I believe and affirm that I was raising a child. To my dismay and unbelieve, for years, I have been raising a child to be a child!

For those mothers out there like me, its not too late, there is still time. To be honest, there was no real plan to have children by the time I was 38. I had already been married, divorced, co-habiting and engaged to a man who said he wanted to have a life and kids with me. Unfortunately, our engagement ended and a few years later, I found myself teetering toward the age of 40 and married to a much older man. Neither of us planned for or expected kids, I had accepted the fact that I was unable to get pregnant from the previous relationships and settled into the idea. After our first year of marriage, as fate would have it, I got pregnant with our son. The responsibility of being a mom uprooted all of my hopes and fears of raising our son successfully, like I thought my parents did with me and my siblings. We all made it through and to adult hood intact (mentally and physically) and were well on the way to raising our own children. My mom and dad stood ready as a support system for our kids not just us. They could see and remember the experiences of raising us. They could see the difference styles of parenting for each of us. Outside of house rules, how they dealt with each of one of was a unique skill set. I understand that while both of my parents were married and lived in the house with us; they had a different role.

Intention of Actions

Dad in our household was the disciplinarian. Just the fear of having to face him “when he got home” was enough to immediately correct our behavior. He was other things for us; protector, provider and problem solver especially of money matters. If we didn't have enough money for something Dad would make sure that we had it. Mom was home with us most of the time. Outside of going to school herself, and running errands that we were no longer able to tag-a-long for, mom was home with us. I recall mom making home a safe space for us. At any given time, between the 7 of us, we shared 2 of the 3 bedrooms in the house. It seemed the bulk of the parenting was on Mom. She was our Sunday school teaching, bringing the lessons home to give us our beliefs. She did all of the shopping, paid the bills, prepared dinner, washed clothes, and dealt with school issues. I didn't know at the time that she was my in house model, teach-

ing me the things expected of a wife and mother. I had baby dolls to care for and younger siblings. These roles as parent were an important impact on my ideas about being a mother and a “good” parent. So when my marriage ended, I still felt very much obligated to the expectations we had for our son. We communicated fairly well and neither of us were bitter until... I decide to remarry. Then so much of our parenting roles began to change. The plans we had for our son, according to my ex-husband, were no longer valid since we were no longer married. So I had to take on an expanded role to fill the gaps that my son's father left unfulfilled. I keep in my mind that I was tasked with raising a child. I wanted him to be a healthy adult and the closer we got to his teen years, the more I expected his father to be his model of manhood. What this model would be was a fight between the two of us. So much so that I had to seek out men in our lives to mentor our son in the areas where his dad had little to no interest. I was doing my best to ensure our son had all he needed but what I could not control was how he would develop as a man.

For me, mentoring was the answer. Mentorship was made up of other boys for him to build relationships and friendships, become physically fit, mentally adjust to life lessons and some levels of growing independence. Mentorship was made up of MEN. Men who wanted him to succeed, follow his dreams and could encourage him. I made sure our son was involved in other activities like piano, some entrepreneurship exposure, event planning, summer and after school programs, field and road trips and all kinds of arts and science. Was I really raising our son? Was I preparing him to be an adult? Did I give him enough foundation to really become a responsible independent decision maker in our community? Did I give him enough tools to one day choose a mate to marry? To maintain a job, household, marriage and family? I felt like I gave him good bones of what was possible for him based on our lifestyle.

All in all, I had to consult with a lot of people - mothers; fathers as well as family, friends, and others raising a son in the climate and culture of Detroit in the 2020's. As he reached teenage years, I had to release my “protective” mother feelings and put him in the hands of his step-father. A man can help build a boy and would know better how to do it through engagement and experience. There have been difficult moments of related to the manhood experience and I often feel like an outsider. I had to release control over what is best for him. How could I really know what's best when I have never been in the role of a boy or man? I had to trust someone to show him the way. So I stepped aside and trusted the process. A difficult space to admit to and to yield control of my own fears and expectations. By holding on I realized I could only raise a child. With another man in my son's life to help support where his father could or wouldn't, I learned together we can all raise an adult... specifically and adult male.

Share my “lesson for the journey” resources through books (Amazon), viewing YouTube videos, listening to My Secret Chamber podcasts and/or by visiting our website at yourinspiredjourney.com. Heather Hetheru is a Personal Change Coach; call 313-759-7855 for more info or to set up your one-on-one coaching session!



Real Talk: Truly Yours, and that's what the letter said

By James Ford
Founder of the Obama Weekend



As you read the words written in this letter, your tears may begin to rise. I thought it better not to use the word surprise

But, it's one thing that I want you to understand as I take this pen in my hand. I am going to sign the letter truly

yours.

My people the Police Commissioners. the City Council, and Mayor want to hear from you as to how to stop this red light running and drag racing problem. You can express your concerns every Thursday at 3 pm at 1301 Third Street. Parking is free and safe. For info, you can call the Detroit Police Headquarters or Mayor's office.

My people you sit around and say nothing as people break laws. They have you sitting around afraid to leave

your home. You are also afraid to speak up and defend your family, loved ones, children and babies.

So as I close, you may wonder and not understand how could I take the pen in my hand and end this letter.

Signed,
TRULY YOURS

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