



USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: Dad, Tell Your Stories

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Father's Day always reminds us of the great dads out there who are consistently loving, energetic and bring enormous fun into the lives of their children and families. I love that I can find a warm and expressive greeting card that helps me tell the story of my wonderful husband and his effect on our everyday life. "You pour a whole lot of love into even the most everyday fatherly and grandfatherly duties around here. That's why you're the real thing. That's why we love you so."

Unfortunately, the relentless focus on negative images of dads, keeps us from recognizing great ones. The simple things that most dads do like reading a story, tossing the ball, giving a bath, cheering a team, catching fireflies, fixing a bike, building a fort, squirting kids with the sprinkler, helping kids with homework are seldom recognized in the news.

My memories of my own dad are of the everyday things. He mowed the lawn wearing shoes with a steel toe. He labored over packing the trunk of the car. He often helped people out. He liked hot peppers, and his friends used to bring him the hottest they could find, in search of the one that was just too hot to stand. Dad jingled the coins in his trouser pockets and looked worried when he considered a problem. I remember him staying up late with me when I was in high school and had procrastinated on an assignment to write a creative story for my English class. It was due the next morning, and I was struggling. He made a few suggestions, but just his support, staying up with me, helped me get through it.

My dad tended to do less talking about himself than most of the women in our family. It seems many families enjoy the narration and stories the mothers and aunts tell us about the past, present and future, but not so much from the men in the family. When my dad did tell his stories, we loved them. He loved baseball, and was a Chicago Cubs fan until he died. He knew his time was short. A couple of weeks before he died I asked him, “Dad, have you seen anything wonderful in your thoughts or dreams?” He said, “I’ve seen huge fields of red flowers that are so beautiful. And I dreamed that I was playing baseball again. I was up to bat and hit the ball way out over the fence – a home run! It was so great.” I loved hearing my dad tell the stories of his life. I always discovered something new in his memories. I am so grateful he told me.

Dads, please tell your children the stories. They want to hear them to help understand you and to define themselves. What did you think of them when they were born? What did they look like the first time you held them? What did you say to them when they went to sleep? What were your dreams or fears? What was your first job? What makes you sad or happy now and earlier in life?

Your children will be grateful throughout their lives knowing what your life was like, and what it felt like from inside you. Tell them your stories and keep telling them. They need to hear.

Happy Father’s Day!

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