

**The Center for Families and the Agenda for
Children Literacy Initiative proudly present**

Cambridge dads: in their own words

Fall 2015



Introduction

As part of a larger effort to support fathers in Cambridge, the fatherhood team at the Center for Families and Agenda for Children Literacy Initiative set to find out what fatherhood means to the dads who are living it.

Read the powerful words of over 50 Cambridge dads who shared their thoughts and feelings. Common themes emerged even though the men all had diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Immerse yourself in this collection to hear the many voices of dedicated fathers in our community.

Learn more:

Cambridge Dads

Twitter: [@CambDads](https://twitter.com/CambDads)

Facebook: [/CambridgeDads](https://www.facebook.com/CambridgeDads)

Center for Families

70 Rindge Avenue, Cambridge MA 02140

617-349-6385

www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP/programsforfamilies/centerforfamilies

Let's Talk!

Agenda for Children Literacy Initiative

Cambridge Public Health Department

119 Windsor St., Cambridge, MA 02139

617-665-3812

www.letstalkcambridge.org

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What does fatherhood mean to you?



What does it mean to me?

Love. Fear. Unsurpassed joy. Frustration. Patience. Exhaustion. Ability to do things you never thought you could or would. Amazement. Confusion. Worry. Relief. Lack of sleep. Rethinking the concept of time. Energy. Inspiration. Beauty.

– Dave Twombly

I now don't even remember what life was like without children! I thought I knew the meaning of life. Life was real simple until I became a father! A love greater than your own is how I sum it all up. I could go on for days, but I'll leave it like this. They wouldn't be here if it wasn't for me, but I am NOTHING without them!

– Aram Dotten



Fatherhood is about love, commitment, and sacrifice. The love that you need to have for your kids is deeper than the oceans and seas. This love has no boundaries. The commitment to your kids has no limits or conditions. Your role as a father requires sacrifice because all the GOOD fathers know what it REALLY takes to raise our kids.

– Albert Pless

It means the world to me because most kids I see don't have dads and I want my son to grow up the right way.

– Chris Raftery



To me fatherhood is about learning just as much as teaching. It's a responsibility, as fathers, to accept who our children are, and to uplift them to what they want to be, and to be supportive, loving and caring.

– Corey Dupree

What does fatherhood mean to you?



Fatherhood is like the gift that keeps giving. When my daughter was first born, I didn't have a clue how dramatically life would change in so many unexpected ways. How much more I'd look forward to going home after work to read the same book the hundredth time than going out with friends. How quickly the game console would gather dust in favor of stacking and toppling wooden blocks. How readily I could stay up night after night without an impending deadline. How my partner and I's relationship would deepen as we set to the work of parental problem-solving. Fatherhood is a gift because even though I'm responsible for raising my daughter into her own person, she's already made me a better person.

— *Leland Cheung*



Fatherhood to me means to be accountable, to be present, to be a role model, to be a disciplinarian and to be a man. It is simply the best job in the world. I cannot begin my path of becoming a father without first paying homage to my own upbringing. I will not give the full credit to my father because he was not always physically there for myself and my siblings and did not fulfill all of the things that I describe as a Father, but he did do the best that he could do under his circumstances and I would never knock his hustle. God rest his soul. The rest of the credit goes to my five older siblings, two sisters and three brothers and my mother. They have made me the person that I am, by watching and learning from them, whether right or wrong, those were my life lessons.

I have worked for over twenty years and continue to work with troubled youths and teenagers, so I feel that I have always played a father figure role in some way or fashion to every youth that I have encountered. It has always been my style to treat all young people that I have worked with as my very own children and it has always been very fulfilling.

As for the literal term of fatherhood, I have a step-daughter, I have a biological daughter and just recently I am fostering to adopt another daughter. I think I have and am experiencing a very wide array of fathering scenarios. I have and will continue to treat and love each and every one of these girls equally and wholeheartedly to the very end. It is my first job and responsibility to protect and provide for them, this is what fatherhood means to me!

— *Byron Godfrey*

What does fatherhood mean to you?

Lying in bed in a hotel,
Two boys, 18 and 15.
Soon one is gone, but not forever.
Soon one is left, but not forever.

How much of me will go?
How much of me will stay?
How much of me has grown with both of them?
How much of me will wither as they leave?

Not wither, but change.

I think of them and of me as I type this poem.
Of days past and days yet to come.
Of things to learn and share.
I type.
They are still in bed.

Lying in bed in a hotel,
Two boys, 18 and 15.
My life, Not withering.
Changing and growing.

Two boys.



– Craig Kelley

Fatherhood to me means having children for which we are ready to sacrifice for. Fatherhood should not mean “neglect.” It should instead inspire one to spend time with a son or a daughter, and satisfy their needs to want to go to the park, the movies or a game. Fatherhood is to pay attention to the kids’ needs in general. Fatherhood is to be a good father, exemplary, and a good listener. We cannot give it all, agree to all things our children want, but fatherhood is also to learn how to compromise.

– Gabriel Mondon

What does fatherhood mean to you?



Being a father to my children is the most important role I will ever play while on this earth. Every day since the birth of my twins, India and Matteo, I have endeavored to make sure that the values I learned as a young child from immigrant parents that came to America with an invincible spirit and drive to succeed in a difficult and complex world, are passed on to my children. I want my children to have the courage to face the world; to have the drive to succeed; to understand how important it is to embrace their culture and roots; to appreciate learning; and to treat each other and their community with the highest levels of respect. As a father not a day goes by that I don't fear for their safety and well-being, but I know that if I continue to pass on what I learned growing up and continue to support them throughout life, they will have what it takes to care for each other as siblings and succeed and contribute to our great city.

– Dennis A. Benzan



Becoming a father was the defining moment in my life. Before fatherhood, I didn't understand why I was here, what my purpose was. It wasn't that I was lost, or had no motivation. I was living, growing, and experiencing many things. But upon the birth of my son, I felt a connection - to him, to my wife, to my family and community that hadn't been there before. It opened up a whole new world, and grounded me in a way I had not thought possible.

– John Doucet

What does fatherhood mean to you?



Fatherhood is what you make it. I try to make the most of it, seeing as I grew up with two unselfish parents who wanted to give me the world. My father didn't live with us until I was about 5 years old. It became important to them both that I had a mom and a dad present in my everyday life. I was the piece to further unify them, in what came to be a beautiful marriage, and then later, a little brother I could call my very own, instead

of admiring the families pertaining to my peers at school.

My dad immediately became my role model. There was finally a man in the house I could study and love. He embraced my presence whether we were in the car going to his job, an amusement park, or at home just watching TV. There was hardly a moment where he wouldn't make me laugh or smile.

I learned to return the embrace of making sure to make the most of each moment with my dad. Little did I know, these interactions molded me into being the person I am today. I have never wondered until writing this what I would have been like as a person if he never came to live with us when I was 5.

Now, as a father of two phenomenal, healthy boys of my own, and husband to one of the smartest and most beautiful people I have met... I get to give back what was given to me, and better yet, blessed to be in a position to provide even more to them than I ever had. Looking at my own kids sometimes is like, "Wow, you guys are so lucky and don't even know it. You think all of this is normal."

My early years as a dad weren't the easiest, I was young, looking for education and a paycheck, but my wife and I made sure our newborn son never felt the ripple-effects of any of that. THAT's being a parent.

Because of my own upbringing with a mom and a dad, I value that nugget of inspiration as the glue to keeping my family of four together for a very, very long time, because I know some people don't get the opportunity to have both parents at home, which at one point before a miracle, was me.

Having a father was huge for me, being a dad is even better.

— Luis Vasquez

What does fatherhood mean to you?



What does being a dad mean to me? It means everything. I have four children, ages 18, 14 and 5 year old twins. They are all so different, yet share a common thread. Sometimes I find myself loving them so much that it hurts. Watching my oldest children grow into responsible young men, while at the same time watching my twins learn something new every day, is both amazing and a gift.

– Marc McGovern

Being a father is special in helping and watching my child grow up, making sure she has nothing to worry about, helping her with homework, and school projects, and not letting anyone harm or hurt her. Being able to wake up and kiss her on the forehead and say everything is alright. Taking her to the park and playing for hours, but most of all making sure that she doesn't have to worry, to make sure that she is the happiest person in the world and that she has everything.

– DeLance David



The greatest gift you can give your children is to lead your life by example. That causes your kids to grow up to want to be just like you. That means love, respect for all, kindness, hardworking, honest and always willing to help those who are less fortunate. If you can do this, you will have given them a great way to be in life. My wife and I have always done this and do it with our grandkids too. Family is what it's all about.

– Richard Rossi

What does fatherhood mean to you?



I have had the distinct blessing, privilege, and responsibility of fathering my 2 young daughters since their birth. Their very existence is a miracle, and as their two lives unfold the gifts of being their father are endless.

For many years I had wished and hoped to become a parent. As a gay man, for a decade in a long-term partnership, and for many years single, I explored the various ways I might make this dream come true. And when in my early 40's I came to accept this was most likely not going to happen, I became friends with the woman who became the mother of my children. After a few years of friendship and sharing our lifelong mutual desire to parent - we began to discuss what it would look like to create a family together as friends. What it looked like was what we saw all around us - the possibility of our children having 2 loving parents who don't live together and are not in a romantic partnership. We also saw the opportunity to create a child-centric contract and to think through all the ways that we could preserve and protect our commitment to taking care of our children no matter what. We worked with a family lawyer and talked through and documented our plan to share the emotional, physical, and financial responsibility of raising our children. Then we got pregnant. And 3 years later got pregnant again. Now I wish it were a requirement that all parents figure out certain critical aspects of caring for their children while they are happily embarking on the lifelong commitment, instead of when they are dissolving a marriage or a relationship that is marred with hurt and pain and anger.

I quickly learned that fatherhood was more than the dream I had held my whole life. The reality was exhausting at times and full of worry when kids got sick or intersected with difficult challenges. The reality was also full of so much more magic, excitement, and joy than I ever could have imagined. I am almost every day awe-struck by the experience of being these young girls' father. Now 7 and 4 years old, my daughters are both completely different people from each other and from me. At the same time they are loving sisters who look out for each other - and I get to be part of teaching them that and how to work through conflict and difference. They care about their parents and their many aunts and cousins and extended family of friends and I get to help them appreciate the community they are part of and teach them about growing and building their own. I often tell my friends that my children are parenting me. But more accurately, I am sure that as I continue to learn to parent them, they are re-parenting me. As their father, I can't help what I was taught and what I learned along the way, but I can make choices about what I teach them. I can be an example of what I think is important and celebrate what is unique and special about who they are.

I think this story of fathering captures a lot of my experience. When my daughter was 3 I was able to go from a rented apartment to a condo that I bought through the City's first time home buyer program. Our (then) new home is a duplex and the bathroom is upstairs. My daughter was afraid to go upstairs alone to the bathroom, even in the day time. The

first couple of times she asked me to go upstairs with her I found myself telling her in a reassuring tone that there was nothing to be afraid of. Then I remembered being her age and being afraid to sleep in my bedroom which was at the opposite end of the house from my parents' bedroom. I remember my father telling me there was nothing to be afraid and sending me back to bed - but because I was afraid to tell him I was still afraid, I'd wait until my parents fell asleep and I'd sneak down the hall and lay on the floor at the foot of their bed hoping I'd wake up before they did in the morning. When I remembered that experience, I realized I could be a different father than my father was. I started going upstairs with my daughter and making it an adventure - "Oh good, I'll come with you," I'd say. "Let's get a book while we're there, or let's have a pillow fight when you're done." And then I would talk to her about how I used to (and sometimes still) get afraid. And I reminded her she can always tell me when she's afraid. Sure we talked about how there was nothing to be afraid of - but mostly we removed the judgment from having fear - so she could pass through feeling afraid when she was ready. She did get over her fear. But if she asked me today to go with her upstairs - I would in a heartbeat.

Fatherhood has taught me so much - yet the truth for me is that fatherhood scares me. But I keep doing it and doing well or figuring out what needs work and trying to do it better. And the fears I conquer are almost always replaced by new fears I'll have to conquer - so as a family we figure out how to get to the other side. But a million times greater than the fear is the joy and the love. My first daughter turned 7 last week while we were on vacation and she spent her days swimming to raise money for a fundraiser in a community she loves. Her little sister spent the week telling everyone she wanted to be just like her big sister. And I spent the week covering them in sunscreen and thanking God for the gift of being their father.

—Jeff Walker

Being there when counted on,
Unconditional love,
Being supportive in all endeavors
Leading by example

—Donald Down

What does fatherhood mean to you?

To be a father is the best gift in the world. When I look into my children's eyes all I can see is the love. When I was growing up, I had no father to show me the joy of being a kid. I always said if I had kids they would never have to go through what I did. A father should always make their kids feel that they are the world. We hang out at the mall or go to the movies, we are always on the run. Being a father is Awesome.

– Enoch Johnson



Fatherhood means teaching, teaching children and young adults the rights and wrongs of the world. Educate the youth on an as-to-need basis. Communicate to your kids. Love them unconditionally. Support them. Enjoy any and all time with them.

– Evaristo Santiago



Mucho Happiness, experience, Love.
Sometimes hard.

– Felipe Baharona

Wonderful. To me a father means Blessed by God! One of the happiest things in life.
Praise to God.
10% hard
90% happiness

– Getachew Negeri



My whole life, my everything, I live and breathe for them. It's tough, but it's all worthwhile. Nothing's easy, but stick it out and they'll make you proud.

– Guito Aloï

What does fatherhood mean to you?

“STAY PRESENT”

— Herman Manos

It means tremendous joy. It means my little one will be looking up to me. This is an opportunity to share our family values and inspire him to be happy and a good element for our community/society.

— Javier Parra



A bond with my child means a lot to me. A lot of love, caring, responsibility. Taught me a lot about the way I want to be, and being better than my own father.

— Mike Laguerre

Best feeling in the world. They give me a reason to come here and they keep me busy. They push me to be a better man. I’m doing better than my father and am more involved.

— Radames



What I think fatherhood means to me is being there for your child, even though you are not with their mother. Attending school activities and sports events, and always having conversations and listening to them 100% of the time.

— Randy Cartagena

Fatherhood means protecting my kids, providing for my kids financially, morally, whatever my kids need from me. It means being there to support them and teach them the right way to live, so they will be better human beings than I am, in whatever way I can and they need.

— Roy Armstrong

What does fatherhood mean to you?



Excitement and tension yield our first touch, and I hold my daughter. In an instant, bliss arrives as more than just happiness. It is a curious and powerful harmony with every emotion I can imagine. We look at each other and feel them all at once.

Love. Acceptance. Vulnerability. Fear. Need. Courage. Compassion. Trust. Patience. Humility. Understanding. Hope....

They are the air, and we become the air too. We circle the whole world and touch all its life; a connection that would have seemed impossible moments before. I instinctively surrender all calculated thought and intention to a simple truth. *We need nothing but each other.* My mind works desperately to cast this joy into reason, trying to trap the boundless echo of my heart's new voice. I must fight to hold this feeling; to live it faithfully for my daughter and our family.

I hear my daughter cry and I begin to cry with her. I take another breath, as a father.

— Greg Phoenix

Being supportive to wife and kids, being a protector. Being supportive financially and emotionally. Being there for them.

— Roy Arnstaj

Being a Dad is the toughest job you'll ever have. It's a daily lesson. Each day I pray that I can be the father he needs me to be.

— Sean Hope



Fatherhood was life changing for me. I now have to be more focused on insuring a happy and healthy future, not just for myself, but for the life that I helped to create. Once I was notified that we were having a boy, I was happy and nervous. Happy for all the information that I can instill, but nervous about the struggles that men of color deal with, knowing that my son will face them also. I'm nervous about the journey, but blessed to face it all. I will do it all for my son.

— Trevis Brooks

What does fatherhood mean to you?

A father is someone that never leaves their kids' side. Always be there for them, always listening, caring, just letting them know you will always be there for them and provide love.

– Vishunath Mahabir

To help our kids as much as we can so that they are ready for their era.

– Weijun



Fatherhood means being an important part of your child's life, not an occasional piece that gets plugged in or presented twice a year. It means knowing that the things you want to share – time, knowledge, love, memories—have so much value and worth and probably can't be measured.

Fatherhood also means respecting your child's rights and abilities to make their own decisions. It is easy to try to live one's life vicariously through others, but it is more rewarding to share their lives and its highs and lows on their terms.

– Josh Foley

Major responsibility. Leader of the pack. That's the role we must play.
A blessing X2.

– Damon Banks

Singing "Wild Horses Won't Take Me Away" in the morning to wake them before school [Rolling Stones].

– Folk-Man Wong

What does fatherhood mean to you?



Fatherhood is being presented with and overcoming challenges no job, relationship or anything else can provide... and always knowing when I return, I am welcomed with a big smile by a happy little person whose growth and evolution I will not only witness but be a HUGE part of. This is a unique experience everyone should partake in at least once in their lives; it changes your perspective on life, what matters and what does not, goals and ambitions, etc. forever. We live in a spoiled society that caters to businesses and professionals. What has

happened to families and family values? As a father, I'm glad to be carrying a torch of guidance for my daughter, who will have to face the many challenges our rapidly changing society will throw at her. To be a father is to lead and influence with confidence, fairness, love, caring and compassion with hopes that my little one will do the same one day.

– Vilmos Csizmadia

Fatherhood to me means everything. Most fathers give up early in their kid's life or don't get to see their kids due to certain situations. Watching my child grow is a blessing.

– Shane Brown

Fatherhood means responsibility. It means care and guidance. It also means protector, to teach and also to learn.

– Ta'Keame Gomes

Being there, make sure they learn, and are provided for. Show them a better way. Not easy/not hard.

– Joseph President

Vivian is my biggest accomplishment in life. They [kids] are half/half. A perfect present of love.

– Jeff

What does fatherhood mean to you?



Father

Always be there for guidance

To cherish every moment with my son (nothing like the present).

Hero through my son's eyes

Embrace life with joy

Remain true to fatherhood.

As a father, it is a privilege to raise a son to become a good man, a great man and eventually to witness greatness before my eyes and continue the legacy of being a proud father one day. Fatherhood is the blessing of a lifetime, a journey filled with unconditional love between father and son, despite all of the obstacles that come with the territory of the unknown or what the future may bring. All the diaper changing, sleepless nights, and unpredictable tantrums are just simple reminders of a young life making its presence known. In time I will come to appreciate these stories when telling them to my grandchildren. As a father I have learned how to cherish even the little moments. When my son looks into my eyes filled with love, it makes me feel like a super hero. The feeling of security I sense when he's around me just increases my motivation of becoming a better father, even though in his eyes he thinks I'm already perfect just the way I am. Even at times when I feel overwhelmed, and the stress of life gets to me, just thinking of him makes my day go by much easier. Knowing that I have a little person at home waiting for me who thinks that I'm the best person in the world just fills me with joy and happiness. The excitement my son shows when we are going out as father and son is priceless to me, as if we are going on a mission that means the world to him. Even if we are just going to the park, the beach, the zoo, or just driving to Grandma's house, he always acts like we're going on a new exciting adventure. His view on life has renewed and changed my own for the better.

– Moise Elan

Great, more than anything in the world. She's my life. Not hard.

– Teferi

What does fatherhood mean to you?



Fatherhood is a gift from My Higher Power (whom I chose to call God).

The reason why I call Fatherhood a gift is; I have bettered Myself, taught Myself, learnt from Myself as I raise, teach and nurture My children.

I am able to Love Myself more because of My Children.
I am able to push Myself further because of My Children.

I see what I have to offer is limitless because of My Children.
Make no mistakes; I am the person I am because of My Parents and
I pray My Children will achieve greatness because of who I am. I will
continue to be a Beacon in My Children's love, wellbeing and inner soul
through My actions.

I am a Father to My Children, I am a Son to My Parents and I am the Spirit to guide and Protect My Kids.

Being a Parent to Me is "God's Gift".

I would thank Baby University and the Father's Groups of Cambridge who is guiding Me with their programs designed for the enhancing and bettering of Fathers.

Be Well, Stay Blessed
Live Inspired

– Charles B. Green III

My daughter means the world to me. She is my calm, my sanity, my everything.

– Richard Harding

What does fatherhood mean to you?



Fatherhood is one of the most powerful experiences I have been gifted with in my life time.

One's imagination continues to wonder what tomorrow will bring in the growing & development of my kids, of which two are now adults and two are teenagers. For I can still remember just yesterday what we did when the kids were toddlers.

As we evolve now around growing & maturing as adults, as parents and as working class citizens in today's society, so doesn't our children. We are faced day in & day out with so many good and trialing challenges with our kids, such as peer pressure, violence, safety & young adulthood stage, that we have a tendency to protect our children from the unknown. Understanding that times have changed tremendously it is our efforts to protect. Fatherhood doesn't start once birth happens, it actual starts from the womb. The gift of knowing that you are about to father a child of which holds characteristics of both the mother and father is remarkable. From the food you intake, to the exercising, and communication all of which creates the development of such glorifying humans.

In the beginning, I wanted a child to love me, learn from me, mature into their own individuality. Someone I could raise and give them everything I had never received, but most important was to be a father in their life and not disappear like my father did to me. If ANYONE ever tells you that a father doesn't make a difference in a child's life, they are lying. For there are some things, no, a lot of things a mother can't teach what a father can. I took the time to have the kids engage into all sports, ie soccer, basketball, football, baseball & track, also musical instruments and neighoring activities so that, once they become older they might fall back on something of which they have been introduced to. One son is into sports, while the other son is solely into music. One daughter as adults loves modeling and is focused on continuing her education, while my other daughter loves to work. You see, self-individuality is what transpires from being a parent, a father and involved. This never ends, and is always faced with trials & tribulation of which make us who we are today.

Do never give up, always be involved and remember, do unto others as you would like done unto you.

– Vincent Best

What does fatherhood mean to you?



My name is Anthony Cyrus, and fatherhood means everything to me...

I had James shortly after my 18th birthday, and had sole custody of him before I turned 19. Nothing about this was easy... James and I have fought every battle together, and uphill. I had to learn a lot, and fast. Feeding him every couple of hours, changing diapers, it was a true test for me to raise a boy when I was still one myself.

For the past 9 years, James and I have learned a lot from each other. I have learned patience, responsibility, and he has really motivated me to be a man he can be proud to call his dad. I love going to every school field trip, doing homework together, it's always a funny conversation hearing what his expectations are for the day while making his lunch in the morning. I never miss his baseball and football games, and nobody has to guess who James' dad is, I am his number one fan.

James and I are best friends. He knows through any and everything this world throws our way, his dad will be there to support him and guide him in the right direction. I guess if I had to define fatherhood, I would define it as "unconditional love." I look at my James every day and see his smile, and thank god for my blessings. I'm very fortunate the Cambridge fire department has given me the opportunity to have the best two jobs in the world, a dad and a fire fighter.

If I ever had to give any advice to a new father, it would be to show as much love as you possibly can, always hug and kiss your child. Never miss an opportunity to hold their hand. Be patient, let them be creative, and just do your best.

I didn't have a dad growing up, so I always tell myself to be the dad I would have wished for. Being a father is the hardest job there is, but also the most rewarding. Nothing feels better than coming home from a long day at work, and have a huge hug and smile waiting for you.

James is and always will be my greatest accomplishment.

– Anthony Cyrus

What does fatherhood mean to you?



Practicing things that don't come naturally so I can set a good example. Such as being honest, hard-working, considerate, generous, and reliable. Such as speaking out against dishonest, unlawful, or inconsiderate people as well as against political, cultural, or professional bullies and peer pressure, even when it's presented as politically correct. Such as trying not to unfairly take advantage or manipulate people or situations for personal gain. Such as not needing too much affirmation. Such as judging people by what I see them do and not reacting to behavior that doesn't directly affect me. Such as combining enjoyment with constructive productivity when I use my time, body or brain.

Trying to expose my child to as many lifestyles as possible without over-advocating any of them or being too dependent on group memberships. Trying to respect my child by answering them honestly and by using objective analysis of the results of decisions for learning instead of shame. Encouraging my child to constantly and strongly consider her own interests, values, and what she thinks is right so that she can choose activities, companions, and career paths with high probabilities of satisfaction.

– *George Stylianopoulos*

What does fatherhood mean to you?



What Fatherhood has meant to me cannot be expressed with words! It is my most important duty and the title that I take the most pride in. To imagine that a baby full of life could come from me is mind blowing. It is GOD's greatest gift to us besides life itself. The ability to procreate...

Fatherhood means everything! There is no other journey or learning experience quite like this one. I mean, for me personally, the first time I saw my offspring, as I cut the umbilical cord, I could never imagine loving them more than I did at that moment! The fear, anxiety, and patience was all worth it. My child has been born healthy! I am overwhelmed with joy and consumed with anticipation for what is to come. Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone, this is my child.

As time passes... weeks turn into months. Months turn into years and with each changing stage my child is becoming more unique! They cultivate habits and develop an individual personality that is uniquely their own. I began to learn as much from them as they were learning from me. In raising them up, they have taught me much about myself and continue to...What initially started out as a father loving his child, very early evolves into a man loving another individual for who they are.

So even though I thought that I couldn't love them more than I did at their birth, what actually takes place is that the love grows even deeper as they mature into their own person. A power greater than my own created us together.

— Ryan Williams

What does fatherhood mean to you?

I've seen good days and bad days on this earth but for what it's worth
I've planted a seed and soon will witness birth
I'm gonna be a dad,
I'm gonna be a Father,
It sounds cool but in reality I know it's much harder,
I'm the man, my little man is gonna listen to
Not here yet but my love's unconditional
Am I ready yet?
I don't have a clue
But Imma do any and everything that I gotta do,
Because I'm his shoulder to lean on,
We'll map it out, make it right when it seems wrong,
If you're feeling sad, try to be strong
Be confident, beat your chest like King Kong
You're a star in my eyes that shines bright,
The beat in my chest
That pumps life,
Birth.....is beautiful, it's ART
You're my heart and I knew it from the start

– *Shawn Proctor*

What does fatherhood mean to you?



Dear Dads,

Engage the cycle of consistency and fulfill it with opportunity for generations to come! I am still in my neonate phase of fatherhood. I do not have all of the answers. I love being a father and cherish its privilege! Fatherhood is not easy. It surely is rewarding. Fatherhood...is like a wolf pack, a lion's pride, or like flying with eagles.

The Wolf Pack

Father comes from the Old English word, faeder, meaning "one who exercises parental care over another." Hood comes from the Old English word, -had, meaning "quality, condition, or position." In essence, fatherhood is an overarching term for a man who holds the position of taking care of his child on a regular basis. There are no vacations from fatherhood. None. As long as you and your offspring are living, you are always in the position and fleet of and for fatherhood. Fatherhood possesses reflections in so many fashions. The public eye sees fathers playing with their kids, taking them shopping, reading to them, or even changing a diaper. However, many times news arises that may question the increasing need for fathers in the world. The absence of fatherhood affects and echoes from generation to generation:

A 12-year old child in Omaha, Nebraska is wanted for first degree murder. Where was his father to discipline his son?

A mother in Florida loses three of her kids to violence. Her last child who was murdered (and targeted) saved her life by shielding his mother from the bullets. Where is the father to train his son not to hang with the wrong crowd?

Another athlete hits his girlfriend/fiancée/wife. He loses a scholarship or sponsorship. He is forced to give a public apology. Where is his father to offer the advice on what to do before the heat of an argument spawns into a fiery bit of physical rage? The act leaves an indelible mark.

A young man, delusional to the envy of racial hatred, walks in to a historical black church during their Bible study, stands up, and shoots nine people. You get one life. Nine lives cut short. Where is his father to put his son in the position of love before this catastrophic event.

A 20-year old man drops out of college because he says, "I can't handle the pressure." He comes back home to hang with his friends who do not possess the grit to further educate themselves. The young man gets into the wrong mess and ends up locked up. Where is his father to offer that motivational talk? To offer that sense of confidence? To offer the shield of promise and correction?

Engage the cycle...

Of speaking to your son or daughter. Of ending disorder and contagious behavioral disease in the household that your kids will emulate.

Of taking care of yourself through mind, body, and soul. Fathers, you have to set high standards of living that enrich you mentally, physically, and spiritually. Your family will reap the impressive benefits!

Of eliminating the phrase, "I can't," as a determinant to the successful and humble path laid out for you. When your children hear this phrase, they emulate it and stop themselves short of success. You, fathers, are a major part of your child's support system...A. Major. Part.

Engage the cycle...

The Lion's Pride

Fatherhood is leadership. Fatherhood is support. Fatherhood is fun and a refreshment. Fatherhood is a rewarding challenge. It is a vast privilege that is God-given and many choose to flow with it. Others choose to deny it. Like lions, the fatherhood pursuit fits well with motherhood - what a dynamic duo that is molded to cope with reality! Yet, when the father purposefully goes AWOL, the family, and hence, the family pride suffers and is emotionally cracked.

Remember: there is no leave from fatherhood. It's a job without retirement but with the best benefits.

When fatherhood is denied, the family dynamic simmers like a hunter seeking to destroy the head of a clan. Developing a defense against all temptation or danger that thwarts your progress as a father is imperative to keeping a strong fatherhood profile. Durable, flexible, energetic, intelligent, and courageous, fatherhood is the solid rock of the family that works in partnership, delivering strength and much needed boldness.

Fatherhood is a brotherhood. Fathers make mistakes - we are not perfect, but we were made perfect to do the job that we need to fulfill. When one father falls on his duty, other men tend to step up. The pride has support. Grandfathers, uncles, brothers, nephews, friends, and cousins all, to some degree, serve as father-figures when children suffer to the absence of the head of the household. At least, it should be that way.

Engage the cycle...

Fly Like Eagles

Entertain the cycle of consistency, love, leadership, support, and fill it with much opportunity!

...And, headlines may read: high school senior is accepted to all of the Ivy League universities. His father always gave him first rate advice.

...And, headlines may read: a 12-year old boy develops a service business to help the homeless. His father always told him to help others.

...And, headlines may read: Three sisters return home from college to transform their community into a place of cultural extravagance. Their father inspired them with his gentleness and open-mindedness.

...And, headlines may read: A group of professional athletes donate one-tenth of their salary to their home churches. The act follows in their father's footsteps to give back to their Lord and Savior and church community.

...And, headlines may read: A young man talks to a shooter, offering him advice that his father taught him. Saves the day.

...And, headlines may read: a 20-year old male finishes college in three years, and during the process saves enough money to pay off his family's mortgage, resurrecting advice that his father gave him on how to make honest money.

Engage the cycle!

Engage the cycle!

Engage the cycle!

In the end, be thankful, be humble, be joyful, be gentle, be a good attitude.

Sincerely, Derek

P.S. Do not forget to kiss your wife and children too!

– Derek Arledge

