

COLLABORATIVE LIFE COACHING

June 2009 Newsletter

By Jeanne Erikson, PhD



A Great Father

I was very lucky to be raised by an exceptional father. He had a demanding work life as an engineering supervisor at Boeing, but when he was home he was attentive. He let me hang out with him doing woodworking, yard work, golfing, bowling, reading, and more. I always felt very loved and cherished. When we were together I knew I was the most important person in his life at that moment.

In the past month I had the privilege of watching my son-in-law become a first-time father during the busiest time of his work year. Brian teaches college, and Gabriela was born right before finals week. Despite that, he managed to support my daughter, spend a lot of time holding and talking to the baby, play tennis with a friend, take several walks with the family, give his finals, and turn in his grades. The intense joy on his face as he looked at the baby was infectious. It reminded me about how important life balance is for fathers, and how easy it is to get off track as the children grow up.

I have also had the privilege of coaching many successful professional men to find that work-family balance again when they realize their life is not working well. These three steps to finding satisfaction as a father or grandfather work for most men:

- 1) Prioritize values. Self care needs to be first, with good diet, exercise, and sleep habits. Next should be the spousal relationship, because children thrive in a happy home. Third should be the parent-child relationships. Fourth should be your friendships and social supports. Last should be your work. These priorities play out daily in all your choices. Reviewing your schedule for the last week will tell you how you prioritized. Were you on track?
- 2) Live deeply in the moments with your children. Some fathers do their duty and take the kids to the zoo, but are distracted by answering their cell phone, texting, or checking NBA scores and the stock market on their Blackberry. Positive fathers leave electronics alone and focus their entire attention on their children. They take their time, teach the children about each animal, and encourage the kids to imagine the animals' inner thoughts. They make goofy faces at the monkeys. You can take a bike ride or a walk with your child to create a positive memory as well. It does not take money, but it does take your full attention. Remember, humans cannot multi-task and be deeply connected to one another at the same time.
- 3) Reduce energy drains and distractions. What are your energy drains? Most men tell me they are checking e-mail several hours a day, eating out instead of cooking at home, griping with colleagues about the bad economy or politics, worrying about money, and spending time searching through a mess to find important papers. Your life has to be relatively organized and simple if you want to enjoy being

a father or grandfather and not feel hassled all the time.

I wish for each father who reads this to have the joy of looking at your child's face and seeing your love reflected in it. If you are disappointed in your own efforts, it is not too late to change. Your child can still think of you as a great father.

to your wellness and joy,

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