



FATHERHOOD

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If you are reading this article, then you would have probably read the article my colleague had written about motherhood and her own blessed experiences of being a mother for the very first time. Having read that wonderful piece of personal sharing, and then being tasked to write an article on fatherhood, I need to put on record now that there is no way I can beat that. I agree, as many others, that mothers are the best and they are the closest to angels that you can find on earth. Therefore, if I agree that mothers are living angels, then what roles do fathers play? What is my role in the grand scheme of things? Am I there just for the ride, a hapless sidekick? Questions are plentiful, but answers not so.



What I know for sure is that my own life experiences did not prepare me adequately for fatherhood. Being raised by a single mom (my angel) from the age of five, I did not have the privilege of the physical and emotional security that a father provides. While I could deal with this challenge effectively in my growing-up years, it left me feeling handicapped when I was about to become a father in my own right. So that was my biggest challenge – to prepare for something as monumental, demanding, and important as that without having a frame of reference of how to be an involved partner to my wife as we entered parenthood.

Now sixteen years into fatherhood, I seemed to have done a good enough job at being a father. My children have no plans to fire me from the post, and so that must suggest some level of happiness with my job performance. Maybe they are just forgiving and coping with cards they have been dealt with by life - I really am not sure at this point. But what I know for sure is that, in these sixteen years, I have learnt more about myself than I thought I would.



THANKYOU

Named Must Your Fear Be, Before Banish It You Can

Given the absence of my father, the goals I had set for myself were hence very lofty. I wanted to be the father I wished I had when I was growing up. My fear was that I will mess up and end up doing a miserable job as a parent and thus screwing up my children, and they end up needing therapy to undo what I had done. The fear of failure was real and all-consuming. I wanted to be the best father that I can be for my children, leaving me to question every decision that I was making as a new father. But after some mileage in the job, I now realise that there was no need for fearing failure. There is no need for me to continue comparing myself to a man who was never a significant part of my life. His absence in my life has no relation or impact on the presence that I have in my children's lives.



I had been told by well-wishers that while being a parent is the best job in the world; it is also the hardest. This is a job that does not require you to present your resume for verification before someone deems you worthy of becoming a mother or father to them. No matter how hard you prepare, or the advice you listen to, or the books you read, you must figure out pretty much everything by yourself. So, making mistakes is acceptable as there is no such thing as a failure – only lessons to succeed. Every mistake I had made so far has been instrumental in making me a better parent than I was before. Failures and mistakes have been opportunities for learning, and your children are the most forgiving souls anyway. Every mistake can be forgotten with a hug and a kiss. My children do not expect me to be the best father in the world – they just want me to be the best father for them.



No, I Am Your Father



It is a privilege to be able to say no to your children - no to their demands based on you being their father alone. You do not need scientific evidence or facts to back you up. Just being their father gives you the privilege of saying no to basically anything. But it is a privilege that needs to be earned and exercised with great caution. Children view their parents as someone who can do no wrong and whose words they take as the gospel truth. However, the old saying "do as I say, not as I do" is no longer relevant in a world that is increasingly complex and unforgiving. As a father, I need to manage that expectation and the belief my children have that I always know what is right and what is wrong; that I am a moral compass for them to follow. When I am still making mistakes and still struggling to juggle values and morality with everyday living, being a moral compass is not always the easiest thing to do. I need to continue being an integral part throughout my children's life course - there will be moments I am sure where I will have to say no again.

You Will Find Only What You Bring In

There is no rest in this job, but there is a constant need to try and live the ideals I want my children to grow up with. To blame the external environment for the deficits in my parenting is the easy way out, but that will be an injustice to the parenting my mother had provided me when I was a child. The adults my children are going to become will depend on the efforts that their parents are going to put in now. There is no reset button – what is done is done. I do not need to have all the answers to all my children's problems, but I need to be there to help them navigate their growing-up years. What is going to make me a good enough father is not the ability to have a child, it is the courage to raise one.

you're doing great!

