

Give Us A Break

There are six and a half billion people on this planet and I am the only one who can point to Tracy, Kelly and Rosemary and say, "I'm their Dad". That - in and of itself - makes me the greatest man alive.

It's not easy for a man to get to the point in life where that statement becomes absolutely locked into his heart. Being a Father is one thing, being Dad is something totally different.

Being a Father is making a baby, then putting all your efforts into working up a career ladder in the name of providing for your family. Fatherhood is being the strong, disciplinarian and head of the house. The phrase "Wait 'til your Father gets home!", is associated with being a Father, not a Dad. There is the fear of God, which is second only to the fear of your Father seeing that C on your report card.

And every June they set aside a day in your honor, buy you ties in thanks for all your hard work. They call it Father's Day.

Being Dad is wiping away tears as you hold your child in your arms in the delivery room, diaper duty, kissing owies and yet another throw-up on your shoulder. Being Dad is being worn out from endless games of torpedo in the pool, losing every tickle fight and bedtime stories that are never rushed.

Father's Day is just another day for a Dad because you never need to be reminded of how lucky you are.

Of those six and a half billion people, I would venture to say there are a lot more Fathers than there are Dads. I would also think that there are a lot of Fathers who wanted to be Dads but just never really got it.

It's easy to put a negative spin on Fatherhood. The headlines are full with men who are abusive, neglectful, self-serving and shameful in their relationships with their children. There are far too many men who still think that it is not their responsibility to participate in the simple, day-to-day tasks of raising children and then are bewildered when their teenagers are so emotionally disconnected from them.

Being a Dad does not come easy for men. But let's be honest B they aren't designed to be Dads. Or are they?

From the time they are born, girls are groomed in a constant internship for Motherhood. So many of the toys created for girls are wonderfully designed to develop the internal foundation that will be so important to them when and if they choose to become mothers down the road. They have dolls that pretty much take a girl through every stage of child rearing, for crying out loud. Girls make great Moms! With all the training they get, they should be.

When you look at how boys are groomed to be Dads, forget about it. Don't waste your time looking because there is nothing there.

Boys grow up playing with Tonka trucks and tractors in the back yard. They play army with their buddies or wrestle and come home with grass stains all over their jeans. They participate in sports where they are taught to be tough, strong and aggressive. The phrase, 'There's no crying in baseball', is a given for any boy past eight years old.

By the time boys show up in the delivery room to join the ranks of Fatherhood, we are no more prepared for the adventures ahead than if you took a tribesman out of the Rain Forrest and plopped him in the middle of New York City.

Give men a break. When a couple heads for the delivery room to embark on this new world of parenting, the woman almost certainly has at least 20 years more experience and training for the job than the man. Why if you think about it, it's rather amazing that so many of us actually turn out to be pretty good Dads as it is.

Without question, being a Dad is the most important contribution a man can make to this world. How sad it is that it's the one area that they have virtually no training for. The only reference point for any boy is his Father, and given the math of what we've been talking about here, I guess it's safe to say once again B it's amazing that so many of us turn out to be pretty good Dads as it is.

It's been that way for millenniums for us ribless wrecks, and there is no indication that it's going to change much in any foreseeable future millenniums.

But hey, I'm a guy and I grew up with that macho sports-minded never-say-never attitude. Guys never look at situations as hopeless, they just see it as challenging. It is absolutely part of our DNA to step up and beat the odds. We love it when they say we

can't succeed at something. We are enthralled at watching our lovable loser teams, knowing full well that they eventually will rise to the occasion and slay the giant Y it's in their makeup Y it's part of their inherent nature as men to do so. Any man will tell you that his greatest moment was when the odds were the greatest against him.

And God knows this stuff. He knows that men perform best under the most challenging circumstances. So He gives each one of us a wonderful youth of Tonka trucks, baseball and grass-stained jeans, then drags us into the delivery room, plops a child in our arms, pats us on the back and says, "There ya go, now be a good Dad!"

It's actually the perfect balance for parenting.

Generally speaking, women love to plan. They love going over details, reading instructions and following recipes. They have about 20 years of all this preparation that makes them well groomed for becoming excellent Moms.

Men never read instructions, they don't care about planning all the details and, generally speaking, they pretty much suck at all that stuff. However, put a man in a situation where the odds are totally against him, tell him he'll never succeed and just watch that testicular energy shoot up with a defiant can-do aggressiveness.

Given all this, I'm beginning to think that when a man and woman go into the delivery room to start down that wonderful road of parenting, they pretty much start off on the same foot.

Besides, if boys got dolls, they'd probably just destroy them with their Tonka trucks anyway.