

Not What I Expected

(from: Becoming DudePa)

With every milestone we go through, there is always an anxious prelude of anticipation. We all have our check lists of how we anticipate our reaction to be with our pending milestone. We constantly review how we plan to react, what we are going to say, what we are going to do and even try to anticipate the different results and how that will affect our lives. I'm no scientist but I'm guessing there is a whole lot more activity in our brains before the pending event than during.

The simple truth is we think too much. We become anxious because we over think. There is a fine line between appropriate planning and overkill of anticipation as one prepares for another milestone. When you cross that line from appropriate planning into overkill is usually when you hear that little voice in your conscience whispering in your ear, "You're an idiot." As a parent, I have heard that voice far too often and I am certain that Tracy, being the oldest, has been the participant in most of those occurrences.

I have three daughters. I did not raise any of my girls to be Nuns. It has always been reasonable to think that somewhere down the road of life I would be a grandpa. I didn't dwell on this when I was 18 sitting on my surfboard in the beaches of San Diego mind you, but you do grow to understand that life comes in many phases and when you look down that road of life, you assumed there would be a phase way down that road that would bring you the title of grandpa.

Actually, you don't start thinking about it until it becomes the 'next' phase. After I started living the Father of the Bride phase, I understood that the next adventure would likely be grandparenthood. That's when you start thinking of what being a grandparent is... will be.... might be... can be. You know that some day one of those girls is going to say, "Hey Pops, guess what? You're going to be a grandpa!"

So you think about that. You anticipate how it will be delivered, who's going to say it, and how I'm going to respond.

Now that we have officially entered this phase, I have to be honest in saying I am a bit surprised at my reaction... not with the initial reaction when my daughter told me I'm going to be a grandpa, but the reaction in my heart as this new phase takes hold.

Tracy has always been the first to do many of the stages of life. It is the blessing and the curse of being the oldest child. Though all of your children are unique and go through the phases of life in their own unique way, part of the uniqueness of Tracy is that she was the 'first' to go through them. This is a real good news / bad news world she grew up in. Every time she entered a new phase in life, she would naturally look to me as her Dad for guidance and assurance without realizing that as a Dad, I too was entering this new phase for the first time and had pretty much no clue of what we were entering. That's why men make good salesmen – they get a lot of practice selling their kids a product with all the positive attributes without having any idea what the product actually is. That's just being a Dad.

Life is full of revised plans and the family is no exception. Many of the rules you establish are good in principal but you learn that they need some revisions to make them effective. Tracy is the perfect oldest child in that her laid-back, easy-going attitude – courtesy of her old mans gene pool, clearly – enabled her to roll with these revisions without too much damage done. She wasn't afraid to contest some of these rules and at times her debate actually created the revisions for the other two. Still, I'm certain there were many times when she would look at what her sisters were doing and think, 'hey wait a minute – I didn't get to do that!' She will joke about it now but she was a good sport through it all. It's one of the toughest things to balance as a parent, trying to be fair, but often times the reality is that in family, being the first is not always going to be best. But Tracy was the best at being the oldest and I have often said that if you want to build the perfect family, you would want to start with Tracy as your oldest child.

As adults, I look at my three girls with different eyes. Of course your children want you to see them as adults, and rightfully so, but the reality is I can look at their co-workers as adults because I have no other reference points to look at them any other way. With my girls, I see so many wonderful experiences through all their stages of life that I was so fortunate to be a part of that it's unreasonable to think I can simply look at them now as adults. It has nothing to do with me not wanting to 'let go' or some crazy notion that I am in denial of my children being grown up and my insecurities in feeling I am no longer needed in their life and therefore have no further purpose in my life – WHEW – That's why psychiatrists get paid so much; they come up with these really deep

explanations for things like this that in truth are pretty normal and makes perfect sense when you think about it. The key is to recognize that this is not a problem but an honor. My daughters are adults – and fine young ladies to be sure- but I will always take pleasure in being able to look at them in their completeness from the day they were born. If in fact I treat them as less than adult, by all means smack me upside the head and bring me to reality, but don't ever tell a parent that there is a requirement to look at your adult children with the same eyes you look at their adult peers. I didn't do diaper duty with that lady – 'nuff said!

When I look at Tracy, I truly see my best friend. It makes sense really. She has many of my characteristics and clearly got many of my genes – thankfully she got the ones without the worn holes in them. But she has also shared so many of the firsts in my life. My first experience in the delivery room becoming a Dad – Tracy. My first experience learning diaper duty – Tracy. My first experience of parent/ teachers - Tracy. My first experience as a Seniors Dad – Tracy. My first experience as a college Dad – Tracy. My first experience as a Father of the Bride – Tracy. So many of the great experiences in my life have been with Tracy that it's not hard to see that I would look at her not only as my daughter but truly as my very best friend. A best friend is that person who has been with you through the best experiences in your life and Tracy certainly defines that.

So now here I am with my daughter ... my best friend ... pregnant and I am anticipating becoming a grandpa.

When I thought about this moment, I always thought I would be all emotional in a positive, excited way. I thought when I heard those words – you're going to be a grandpa, there would be a fist-pumping “YES” moment. I thought that there would be a euphoric high-speed checklist of ways to spoil my grandchild as I eagerly anticipate his/her arrival. I thought there would be a never-ending supply of fatherly advice for her and Jesse as the honorable and highly skilled father prepares his children for their own world of parenting.

There was. And I fully plan to milk D) All of the above to the max as I annoy poor Jesse and Tracy into probably thinking they should have moved to Alaska before they started their family.

But there is something new to this experience that I wasn't ready for. Something underneath all these normal feelings was stirring in my heart. It wasn't negative – it was just different and slowly making itself known every time I stopped by to see Tracy.

The other night I was talking to Tracy about how she was feeling and she related what her doctor had told her that day. She told Tracy that she has to realize that there are thousand of cells splitting and busily creating arms, legs, eyes and toes at an incredible rate right now and all her energy is focused on that. This is why she is so tired right now. She has to think in terms that she is virtually running a marathon every day. I joked about how impressed I was that she was back into running – she being the absolute best distance runner of Hillwood High EVER, thank you very much!- and encouraged her to rest up now because once the marathon is over, she will be starting a new marathon of being a Mom.

On the way home that night it hit me.

‘Your daughter is doing something only God can do.’

I thought about this as I drove and that subtle feeling that was brewing in my heart began to make itself known. I got home and sat in my chair and just thought about this point. My daughter is creating life inside of her body. At this very moment in her life, she is closer to God than I ever hope to be. They say that when a woman is pregnant it is all in Gods hands, but I'm thinking that this is not completely right. It is in my daughters' body and my daughter is an active partner with God in creating this new child.

With tears sliding down my cheeks, I sit there taking this all in. The power of this emotion is unlike any I have ever had. Women have such an intimate partnership with God during a pregnancy that men may never understand.

Since that evening, I have looked at my daughter differently. She will always be my best friend. She will always generate great memories of moments we have shared. But now there is something different when I look at her.... Respect.

I am humbled almost to a point of being overwhelmed by the thought of all this. As a light-hearted, easy-going guy, I never imagined I would have a reaction like this, that's for sure.

I think of Jesse and want to just hug him. We men are not very prepared for parenting. As boys there are few things we do that sets a foundation for us to become

good Dads. It's not until the delivery room when they put that child in your arms that you realize that you are holding the most significant contribution you have ever made to this world. No matter how many of these creations they put in your arms, this will hold true. Nothing else is more important to you from that day on. Being a Dad is an honor that I am certain Jesse will wear proudly.

It's funny how life is. You anticipate these moments and try to prepare for them but when they come, there are often surprises that you never anticipated.

Fist pumping YES when told I was going to be a Grandpa? Nailed it!

Checklist of ways to spoil my grandchild? NOOOOOO Problemo!

Fatherly advice to a point of annoyance to my daughter and son-in-law? You are looking at the master, my friend!

Your daughter is doing something only God can do?

Never saw that one coming.

But I'm glad it did.