

Break Through the Invisible Barrier  
between Your Father and You

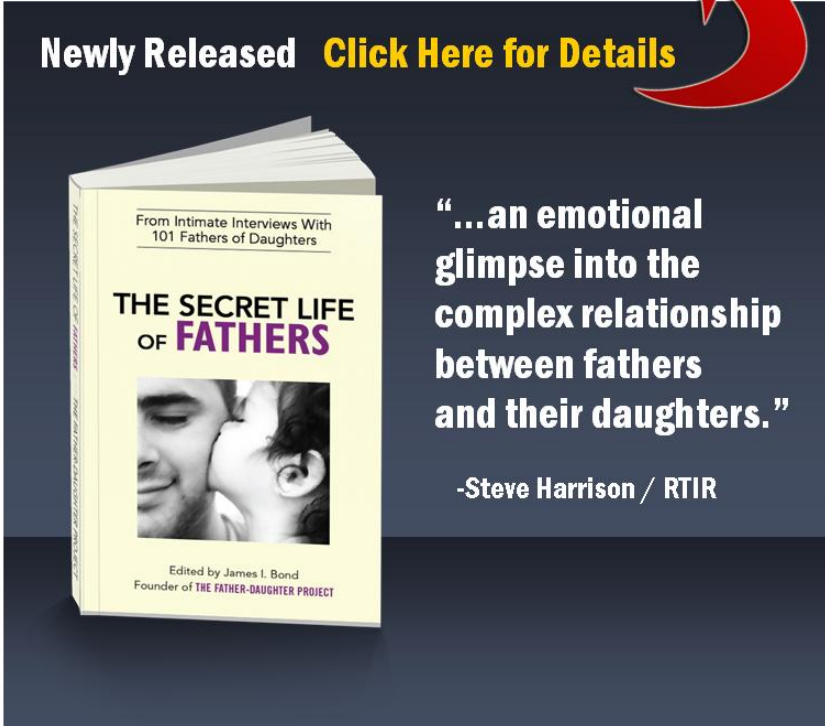
# **7** QUESTIONS Every **Woman** Needs to Ask Her **FATHER**

By James I. Bond, Founder  
The Father-Daughter Project™

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**T**hese seven questions are based on extensive personal interviews we did with 101 fathers of daughters combined with almost eighteen years of research into why people do what they do.

Excerpts from these interviews were published in our highly acclaimed book, "The Secret Life of Fathers," available on our website, at [www.TheFatherDaughterProject.com](http://www.TheFatherDaughterProject.com).



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From Intimate Interviews With  
101 Fathers of Daughters

**THE SECRET LIFE  
OF FATHERS**

Edited by James I. Bond  
Founder of THE FATHER-DAUGHTER PROJECT

**"...an emotional  
glimpse into the  
complex relationship  
between fathers  
and their daughters."**

-Steve Harrison / RTIR

As featured on:



# THE 7 QUESTIONS EVERY WOMAN NEEDS TO ASK HER FATHER

To help you understand your father's heart a little better, and to plant the seeds for a better relationship, here are seven questions every woman needs to ask her father.

These questions were developed because, when it comes to expressing their true feelings, many men (and fathers) will not start the process without a little help.

Sometimes one of these questions touches on such a sensitive emotion that it needs setup to make it easier for your father to answer. For this reason you will notice the primary question sometimes includes a few setup questions.

## QUESTION #1

### HOW HAS YOUR FATHER BEEN "AFFECTED" BY YOU?

Ask:                    If I were never born, what would be different in your life?

Note: Some dads will half-joke that, if you were never born they would have more money. There certainly can be a degree of truth to this, and many dads like to joke as a way of avoiding, particularly when asked a sensitive question.

If he says:            "I'd have more money..."

Ask him...            Besides having more money, if I had never been born, what would be different in your life?

QUESTION #2

DOES YOUR FATHER UNDERSTAND HOW HE HAS  
AFFECTED YOU?

Explain: Did you know that, because you were the first man in my life, your words, actions and support of me have affected my confidence and ability to be happy and successful in life?

Then Ask: How do you feel your words and actions have affected me?

What if anything, would you want to be different?

QUESTION #3

HOW DOES YOUR FATHER RATE HIMSELF AS A FATHER?

Ask: What makes a great dad and what makes a terrible dad?

On a scale of 1-10, 10 being best, how do you feel you'd rate yourself as a dad? Why?

QUESTION #4

HOW DOES YOUR FATHER COMMUNICATE WITH YOU  
(and with women)?

Explain: Men can be really great problem solvers, but are often not that great at just listening, without trying to solve a daughter's every problem.

However, daughters often want to share information without getting her dad to try and solve every problem she has.

Then Ask: Would you be willing sometimes to just listen to my issues without trying to solve my problems?

How could I let you know about those times when I just want you to listen, and maybe to support me without trying to solve something?

QUESTION #5

HOW DOES YOUR FATHER EXPRESS HIS LOVE?

Ask: A dog knows you love him because you walk him, you hug him, and you give him treats. How do I know you love me?

(He may respond, I walk you, hug you and give you treats...)

Then ask: What are some of the ways you show me how you really feel about me?

QUESTION #6

WHAT OBSTACLES PREVENT THE TWO OF YOU FROM HAVING A BETTER RELATIONSHIP?

Ask: What are some of the things in your life (or mine) that prevent our relationship from being even better? (job, divorce, new wife/girlfriend, distance).

Is there anything we could do to make our relationship even better? What?

QUESTION #7

UNSPOKEN WORDS... WHAT HAS YOUR FATHER ALWAYS WANTED TO TELL YOU?

Ask: If this was your last day on earth and you could say anything, what would you want to tell me that you haven't already (about you or about our relationship)?

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## About “The Secret Life of Fathers”

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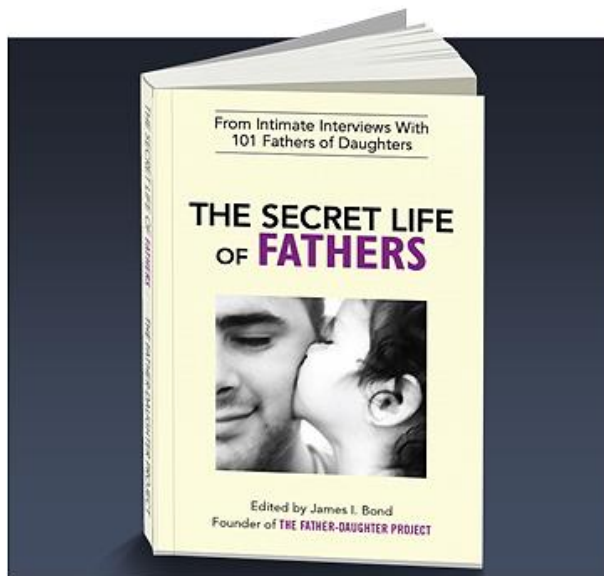
Read how actual fathers answered these and related questions, in the groundbreaking new book, “The Secret Life of Fathers” (from Intimate Interviews With 101 Fathers of Daughters).

It’s available at bookstores everywhere, or online at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or Barnes & Noble.com;

...or come to our website, [www.TheSecretLifeOfFathers.com](http://www.TheSecretLifeOfFathers.com).



**READERS' FAVORITE 5-STAR AWARD WINNER!**



“Surprisingly candid... terrifically rewarding.

For women here’s an emotional glimpse into the complex relationship between fathers and their daughters—from a father’s perspective.

Being the father of a daughter myself, I was really moved by the joys and heartaches many of these dads were willing to share.”

- Steve Harrison, Publisher, Radio-TV Interview Report (RTIR)

Excerpts from the Book, “The Secret Life of Fathers”



# On Being a Father to a Daughter



This chapter provides a glimpse  
 into the emotional experience  
 of being a father

- My Daughter Was A Real Mystery To Me
- I'm Nervous Around Females
- I Found Daughters More Complex Than Sons
- Girls Get Treated Differently Than Boys
- It also considers the impact  
 of a dad's own parents  
 and his comfort  
 with women in general  
 in understanding  
 what has molded him  
 into the kind of father  
 he has become.
- I Gained A Lot From Having A Daughter
- It Was Surprising How Much My Own Parents Affected Me
- I Wish I Had Known My Grandparents
- There's A Difference Between A Great Dad And A Lousy Dad
- A Daughter's Relationship With Mom Is Different Than With Dad
- I Struggled To Find The Time Needed To Be A Good Father
- Being A Divorced Dad Was Tough At Times
- I Really Enjoy Being A Stepfather
- Although They Have Similarities—Every Child Is Different
- One Daughter Is Easier To Talk To Than The Other
- I Had Fear And Resentment At Being Such A Young Father
- Being A Father Is The Most Incredible Thing In My Life



## ***My Daughter Was A Real Mystery To Me***

Girls Were Aliens, A Breed Apart—I Had To Rethink How To Be A Parent

**“I grew up in a household with two brothers, so to me girls were aliens.**

**As a young man I had to learn through dating what they were like. I didn’t have any girls to interact with growing up, so they were just a whole breed apart from me.**

**With [my son], I knew I was right because I was a boy at one time so I know what’s going on in your head. But I didn’t know what was going on in [my daughter’s] head, so I had to sloooooow down and think.**

**I had to think much more with her. I had to learn how to be a daddy a little different. A lot different. Because I wasn’t sure all the time what’s right with her.**

**You tell your kid to do something, hopefully you’re sure you’re right. If you’re not, you’re going to have to slow down and parent differently.”**

*Ken, 9/11 New York City fireman and father of a six year old daughter and two sons*

I Wasn’t Prepared For How Emotional Females Are

**“I have two brothers that I grew up with.**

**I think not having any sisters growing up made girls kind of a mystery, you know what I mean. They’re more emotional—as I find most women are than men.”**

*Ed, fifty-one year old father to a fifteen year old daughter and two sons*

My Daughter’s Been A Mystery And A Gift—She’s Made Me More Open

**“She’s been a female presence in my life that has been both a mystery and a gift. It’s just been a delight to see her grow.**

**[If I never had a daughter] I don’t think my heart would be as open. I think I would have gone more towards [being] a macho male. More testosteronic.”**

*George, seventy-five year old father of fifty-two year old daughter and two sons; also later became stepfather of another daughter (when she was a teenager) and a stepson*

## I Would Definitely Be More Intuitive Raising A Son Than A Daughter

**“I think that I would feel innately more intuitive with a son because I know what it's like to be a little boy, having been there. However, never having been a little girl, it really requires a different mindset.**

**I would assume the responsibility and the desire to care for my child is one in the same whether it be a boy or a girl. However, the relation in terms of understanding a little boy or a little girl, I think that probably is a little different.”**

*Ray, forty-eight year old computer executive, father of a five year old daughter*

To better understand the dads, we also asked how they are around females in general.

## *I'm Nervous Around Females*

### I'm Intimidated By Women—I Don't Understand The Rules Of Engagement

**“Women intimidate me. I have some fear around women.**

**I mean, I've built my image in a man's world, so it's a lot easier for me to understand the rules of engagement. And I've been pretty successful at it.**

**Whereas with women—I mean, I've been successful dating and doing all those things. But it's always been an acquisition for me versus actually functioning in their world.”**

*Bill, forty-eight year old father of a twenty-year-old daughter and a twenty-four year old son*

It was surprising how many dads said they were nervous around women.

For some this discomfort seemed to carry forward into their relationship with their daughter.

### I'm On Eggshells Around Women

**“I think I have a long standing fear of women. In particular I fear that I will too readily and unconsciously give up my power to women.**

**So on a certain level, there is just a low grade fear that causes me to be on eggshells around women. I don't feel threatened in the same way by men at all.”**

*John, fifty-six year old schoolteacher, divorced father of eighteen year old daughter (divorced when his daughter was seven but remained close to her)*

## ***I Found Daughters More Complex Than Sons***

### Daughters Require More Patience Than A Son Would

**“Daughters I think, are a bit more complex than sons. Daughters in a lot of ways require a bit more patience, a bit more understanding from a male point of view.**

**You know, relating to a girl who then becomes a young woman. I think it’s a bit more challenging for a father to really understand all the things that a daughter is going through as she matures.**

**In relationships [and] in friendships, I think one tends to understand his gender a bit better. You can relate. You’ve been there. You’ve seen it. You’ve felt all those feelings. Or [at least], you can certainly put yourself in that person’s shoes.**

**But with the women you’re guessing. Sometimes you guess right, sometimes you guess wrong. You try to keep notes so that you learn along the way.”**

*Bill, forty-six year old human resources manager of a Fortune 500 company, with a twenty-six year old stepdaughter and a twenty one year old son. He came into his stepdaughter’s life when she was two.*

### Daughters Want You To Speak And Sing To Them

**“You can start to see right away [when they’re babies], that there’s a difference between the boys and the girls—how much they like to be close, right up to your face, touching your face all the time.**

**The boys were more distant and observant and looking around and seeing the world. The girl always wanted to be staring into your eyes. She always wanted to be touching your face and to be held and to be whispered to and sang to.”**

*Ken, 9/11 New York City fireman and father of a six year old daughter and two sons*

### Daughters Are More Sensitive Emotionally Than Sons

**“Actually, my daughters are so different [from each other] too. [But yeah, daughters] are softer, meaning they’re just *not* as rough and tumble.**

**I also say, they’re much more sensitive emotionally. And that may be more about how my son’s already getting socialized by people and the changes [my kids] are already going through.”**

*Ron, forty-seven year old school counselor and father of an eleven-year-old daughter and a twin eight-year-old daughter and son*

## Women Have A Different Kind Of Strength Than Men

**“The awareness of their strength was something that was not shown to me or taught to me when I was growing up.**

**So therefore, the way I treat my daughter or the women in my life is, in some respects like the weaker vessel. Although I’m finding out that they have their own strength.”**

*Donnie, fifty-six year old father of a thirty-two year old daughter and thirty year old son (divorced when his daughter was eight but remained close to her)*

## As A Father Your Defenses Are Down—So It’s Easier To See How Girls Are Different

**“Men and women aren’t the same. We’re different. We think different. We feel different. We have different tolerances. The way women think about things is just so different from the way we think about things.**

**When you have a daughter, all your defenses are down so you can see it and you can feel it and understand it. There’s no barriers to that knowledge now because it’s being given to you in such an innocent way.”**

*Ken, 9/11 New York City fireman and father of a six year old daughter and two sons*

What does that mean:  
“Your defenses are down when you have a daughter?”

Several dads explained that it’s about being vulnerable...

It’s about knowing that your little girl is always watching you.

## ***I Gained A Lot From Having A Daughter***

It Was More Than I Expected—I Grew So Much By Being Her Dad

**“Yeah, it was definitely not what I expected but much better than I expected. Because I got so much more out of it. I grew so much by being her dad.”**

*Ken, 9/11 New York City fireman and father of a six year old daughter and two sons*

My Daughter Got Me to Experience Things I Would Otherwise Have Missed

**“My youngest daughter has given me a chance to connect on various interests I would have missed out on, [like the] physical affection and nurturing.**

**That’s more difficult for my son. I have to really push to get it [from him]. It’s amazing how that doesn’t happen [with him] because I’m a very affectionate expressive person.**

**[Also] I would never have gotten to play ‘pretty, pretty princess’ {he laughs}. Hey I had a lot of fun battling to get the crown. Gotta love getting the crown. Get that tiara in your hair. That’s kind of what jumps out to me.”**

*Ron, forty-seven year old school counselor and father of an eleven-year-old daughter and a twin eight-year-old daughter and son*

I Talk About Different Things With My Daughter Than With My Son

**“I think women in general process things a little bit differently. The kinds of things I share with my daughter are different than what I share with my son, even though I consider we all have a very open relationship.**

**Interesting enough, my daughter is probably in some ways more like me and my son is probably in some ways more like his mother. So there are just some different dynamics in general with fathers and daughters. Different dynamics that take place specifically in our relationships.”**

*David, sixty-three year old real estate appraiser and Vietnam vet, father of a thirty-seven year old son and a twenty-nine year old daughter (divorced when his daughter was eight but stayed very engaged with his children growing up)*



## Having A Daughter Helped Me Understand Women A Little Better

**“[If my daughter had never been part of my life], I wouldn’t be able to understand women as much as I do now.**

**Not that I have a great understanding by any stretch of the imagination. But just to see how different they are as human beings, you know, [how different my daughter is] from her brothers...**

**She’s given me a whole new way to love. She’s given me a whole new way of feeling—that a girl’s love is different than a boy’s love. {He chokes up} She taught me how to love in a whole new way. In a softer gentler way. In a slower more understanding way. I had to go slower.”**

*Ken, 9/11 New York City fireman and father of a six year old daughter and two sons*

Many dads hadn’t realized how much they gained from having their daughter.

Several explained that spending time with her *slowed* them down and got them to listen better... without their mind racing to what they wanted to say next.

## ***It Was Surprising How Much My Own Parents Affected Me***

I Was Going To Be A Better Father Than My Dad Was

**“...I was going to be the father that I didn’t know, that I missed as a child...”**

*Andrew, forty-six year old schoolteacher, father of two daughters age nine and ten*

I Didn’t Feel Loved As A Child—My Daughter Doesn’t Know That

**“One thing my daughter doesn't know about me or understand is what I went through as a kid, what I went through when I was her age and younger. How I had a dad that didn't love me, at least didn't love me the way that I understood. And how I had a mom who was vacant.**

**My daughter doesn't know or understand the wounds that I have from that. She doesn't know or understand all the work I've done to get to be the man I am now.**

**I don't need her to know or understand those things at all. I just need her to know and understand who I am now.**

**She's starting to get it. As she gets older she's starting to see who I am. She’s starting to understand it, because she sees other men. She's smart enough to make a comparison.”**

*Mark, forty-four year old Navy pilot, father of a fifteen year old daughter and an eleven year old son (divorced when his daughter was seven but stayed involved as a dad)*

My Dad Never Shared His Feelings With His Kids

**“Absolutely. Absolutely [I’ve shared my feelings with my younger daughter]. That’s one of the big differences between how I do things and how my parents did. I’m very willing so share how I feel.**

**Like just the other day, I asked my youngest to do something really simple for me, as I was heading out the door, and she said ‘No.’ I expressed myself very clearly on how I felt about it. Not just the anger about it but the sadness and disappointment, that family takes care of each other.**

**[Still] I'm surprised how much I ended up being like my dad, in ways I didn’t want. Very pleased in the ways I did want.”**

*Ron, forty-seven year old school counselor and father of an eleven-year-old daughter and a twin eight-year-old daughter and son*

## I Loved My Father But I Wanted To Be A Different Kind Of Dad—Less Self-Centered

**“I guess one of my issues about being a father was to make sure that I covered the bases that my father didn't cover.**

**I always loved my father very much, but I don't think he was such a terrific dad, much more self-centered. I think he learned to care more about himself than the family as a unit in some ways.**

**So I spent my whole life making sure that I did *not* do or act the way he did.**

**Notwithstanding that, I think that I was always a very good son and treated him in a very, very loving warm way. But, you know, I did learn from his negative [example] how to act as a dad in some ways, or how I thought a dad should be. And I think I'm getting a lot of returns for it.**

**I think my kids like me. I guess that's the other part. I truly believe that my kids—there's no question they love me, but I think my kids like me, and that's a pretty nice thing to say.”**

*Len, sixty-eight year old attorney, father of a thirty-five year old son, a thirty-four year old daughter and a twenty-eight year old stepdaughter*

## Unlike My Dad—When I Make A Mistake I Go Back And Apologize

**“My father would have never admitted a mistake. So I love that when I do something wrong, like yell at my daughter, I'm willing to go back and apologize, and then tell her that's not the way I want to be.**

**[So having a daughter] has taught me how weak and how strong I am as a parent, [in a way] that I would have never predicted before.**

**I realize my need to be liked is much bigger than I wanted it to be. Yet with that, I'm surprised at how tough I can be when I need to be and want to be, [but] do it in a way that's not abusive in any way.**

**I don't think any of my kids question whether I really love them, which was the question I always had with my dad in the way he dealt with me. I'd be shocked [if my kids didn't know I love them].”**

*Ron, forty-seven year old school counselor and father of an eleven-year-old daughter and a twin eight-year-old daughter and son*

For many of these dads, admitting they weren't perfect suddenly meant they could be themselves around their daughters.

For some reason, relationships with sons seemed to be different.

My Father Was Emotionally Distant So I Didn't Get The Tools I Needed As A Dad

**“I had collected a lot of my father’s tendencies for not being very demonstrative in my emotions. So [as a father] I was fairly reserved as far as my expressions of my emotions.**

**My father really didn’t know how to express his love. I don’t recall him being a tender loving father. He was fairly distant, removed.**

**Looking back on [my dad] I don’t think he really had good skills for any personal relations at that time, and he didn’t know how to deal with expressing intimacy.**

**I was present with him in a lot of things, whether we were cutting wood or whatnot, but it was not a direct intentional ‘mentoring’ type relationship.**

**[So when I became a father] I didn’t feel totally competent at how to relate to this young lady as she was growing up. I knew I should be doing this differently but I didn’t have the tools to do it.”**

*Richard, fifty year old male nurse anesthesiologist, father of a twenty-five year old daughter and two sons*

Growing Up With An Abusive Father, I Became Determined To Be A Better Dad

**“Well here's the thing. I didn't want my child to grow up without a dad. I grew up for the most part without a dad. Then when I did get a dad it was an abusive-as-hell dad. He was, you know, an alcoholic and rage-aholic and physically abusive. I mean, seriously physically abusive. And he was abusive to my mom too.**

**So I knew what I didn't want to be like. I didn't want to be an absentee guy. I needed to do the right thing.”**

*Ray, forty-eight year old computer executive, father of a five year old daughter*

## ***There's A Difference Between A Great Dad And A Lousy Dad***

A Good Dad Doesn't Try To Buy His Kids' Love

**“Wow, I guess a great dad, I believe, is somebody who's developed a relationship where they can talk to their kids about almost anything they want to talk about, and [is] not particularly judgmental.**

**I mean, I think being judgmental is what screws up relationships. So as much as I have my own beliefs, I do my best not to be judgmental [towards] what my kids are going through, and what they think about. Trying to be more understanding, which isn't so easy sometimes.**

**I have friends that I think have basically tried to buy their relationships with their kids. I think they are lousy dads. I think they've been unbelievably overindulgent with their children. They didn't want to say ‘no’ because they were buying their [kids'] love. I think that makes for a crummy dad.**

**I think people that deal honestly with their kids and talk to them in a straightforward manner have a much better chance of success with their children.”**

*Len, sixty-eight year old attorney, father of a thirty-five year old son, a thirty-four year old daughter and a twenty-eight year old stepdaughter*

Fathers Today Are Much More Involved In Raising Their Kids Than In The Past

**“My son and son-in-law are better fathers than I was. They are involved, they listen.**

**Fathers today are more involved from an early age and that's the secret.**

**I think they are more attentive to [their kids], more sensitive to them. I don't know where they learned that but I think that's the secret—paying attention to the kid, and [even the way they] discipline them, not physically but finding a way to do it more subtly.**

**It's important [today], I think, just being with your kids, talking to them, playing with them. Much more than I did, and much, much more than my father did.**

**I see that as a general rule with younger couples, that fathers are much more active and much more involved in the whole process of raising a child now than it used to**

That was a difficult question: “Do you feel you’ve been a *great* or a *lousy* dad?”

Deep down that question unnerved some dads.

That’s why we started by asking them about *other* dads... a much easier question for many to answer.

**be. Actually listening to the child and not commanding. Not being the super boss, but more reasoning with them than commanding.**

**I think they're more flexible and getting better results. It takes longer but they finally convinced me.”**

*Leonard, seventy-three year old ex- school music teacher, father of a forty-six year old son and a thirty-three year old daughter (divorced later in life but has stayed close to his daughter)*

#### A Great Dad Gives And Gets Lots Of Hugs

**“In the early years, be willing to encourage and participate in the girly things and don’t worry about what it looks like. Some of my fondest moment memories were playing the game ‘pretty-pretty-princess’.**

**Encourage them to connect with their emotions and their nurturing side because it’s their strength typically. Don’t worry about rough housing with them. They need it. Don’t assume that they’re gonna be girly. They may not, and that’s okay.**

**Bless them and love them constantly. Affirm them a lot and be their strength. Even if they get angry at you for being it, always be their strength. They need something that they know they can count on for safety and protection.**

**So if you gotta be tough with them, be tough. But never let them doubt that you love them. That is what I'm saying. Show and get lots of hugs. That would be very good.”**

*Ron, forty-seven year old school counselor and father of an eleven-year-old daughter and a twin eight-year-old daughter and son*

#### A Great Dad Can Just Listen Without Needing To Tell Her What To Do

**“A great dad is listening, being there to accept your child without judgment, supporting them, listening and understanding their dreams and their aspirations.**

**A bad dad is, trying to force your own ideas and your own wishes upon your kid. A bad dad is making them into something that you want them to be rather than what they want.**

**A good dad is just being there. Sometimes just to listen and not to tell them what to do. A good dad is, at the same time, watching out for stuff that's really dangerous and could be poignant, but not focusing on the small stuff that doesn't make any difference.”**

*Terry, sixty-two year old engineer and father of two sons age thirty-eight and thirty-four, a stepson age twenty-four and a twenty-one year old stepdaughter*

## A Good Dad Needs To Get Past His Own Problems—Then Everything Gets Better

**“[I wasn’t the best dad when my daughter was younger.] Personally at the time I had my own ripping bad issues with depression and dealing with alcohol and things like that. So I was not as present as I should have been.**

**I knew I should be doing this differently but I didn’t have the tools to do it. So, I would be frustrated.**

**Not that there was ever anything where I was just totally out of hand. But it was more of me covering up my deep wounds and internalizing everything and withdrawing.**

**It wasn’t like I was drunk all the time, that kind of thing. I wasn’t one of those kind of guys that got DUIs and whatnot. I drank a fair amount but I’d still function well. I didn’t lose my job.**

**But I would say the depression trumped about everything at the time and I was disappearing in my own way. So I would withdraw—because I didn’t want to inflict my issues upon my family.**

**If I had to do it over again, it’s so hard to say [what I would do] because at the time, my developmental level was such that I might not have been able to hear what I hear now. It was just my own maturing process.**

**I don’t have a lot of regrets other than the fact that there were some things that I didn’t experience with my kids that I should have as far as being present, because I was off in my own issues.**

**[However] I was very proactive in dealing with my own issues, through counseling, therapy, the whole nine yards. I mean, I knew that this was not right. Consciously I was saying, ‘This is not [my family’s] fault. They don’t deserve to bear the brunt of this.’**

**-- I Had To Push Past My Awkwardness To Spend Time With My Daughter --**

**My daughter was very close with her mom at the time. I had a lot of access [but] at the time, I was working more and I pretty much turned into my dad as far as [not being involved with my kids].**

**[I mean] we did things together on camping trips and whatnot. But the day to day life was more of just—we were in the same house, but there weren’t a lot of deep conversations or closeness in that regard, with her and I during that period.**

This came up a few times...

To have a positive relationship with his daughter, a dad needed to move past his own personal problems.

**In a sense it was almost awkward. I'd push through that deliberately and spend time with my daughter, but I don't recall feeling really comfortable. It was more of, 'I know this is the right thing to do and so I need to do it even though I don't feel totally competent at how to relate to this young lady as she's growing up.'**

**I was still pulling out of my own hole. I think I had my own crap to deal with, so [even though] I had feelings about [what she was going through in her life], I didn't have the energy to process it with her.**

**-- Early On Communication Was More By Osmosis Than Actual Conversation --**

**[So] most of the time, in the process of life, things were kind of dispersed by osmosis to [my kids] as far as my values and things. We didn't talk about it a lot. Whenever we had discussions about matters of consequence, I would dictate.**

**I mean, that's kind of a harsh word for it, but I would be the one who would say, 'This is how we do things and these are the rules,' and that kind of thing. Not in an overbearing way but just because I was the dad.**

**As far as discussions about how you deal with a moral choice, I would [basically be the one] talking about it. [Of course] there would be a little bit of back-and-forth.**

**-- Things Are Finally Better—My Daughter Has Seen Me Work Past My Problems --**

**Now it's different. She's getting married [in a few weeks],**

**And I'm in a much better place myself, through a lot of hard work. So our conversations are definitely adult-to-adult. They're about, what I refer to as matters of consequence—values, what's going on in the world and how she feels about this and that.**

**Our conversations are more comfortable, they're easy. They're not as awkward, but largely that's because I have energy to do that. She's watched as I've worked through it.**

**She knew that, 'Gosh, Dad goes to counseling appointments and therapy.' She was aware of my work and she's very—I guess if I asked her, she'd probably say, 'Yeah, I'm proud of you for working through it dad.'**

**I had some really good therapy and I have a very good [men's] group that I hang out with on a weekly basis. It's just a really good maintenance program for that. [Also] got some pharmaceutical stuff dealing with the depression.**

**[So I guess] it was just a culmination of, I finally got ahead of it. But it was a lot of hard work.**



**Through the culmination of therapy, through my faith, through the group of guys that I meet with on a weekly basis, I'm just continually chipping away at it. I've finally got enough tools to stay ahead of it. I'd put it that way."**

*Richard, fifty year old male nurse anesthesiologist, father of a twenty-five year old daughter and two sons*

## ***Being A Divorced Dad Was Tough At Times***

The Worst Of The Worst Became Some Of The Best Times With My Kids

**"[Being a single parent has been] very exhausting, overwhelming. It forced me to go dig very deep, and just find some way to get from one day to the next.**

**And yet in that context, at the worst-of-the-worst was when I had the best time with the kids. I think we remember that time as very special. [I mean], she's a tremendous daughter, she's a great daughter. Her cards, her special birthday cards. I know I'm in her heart all the time.**

**I'd hate to even think about [her not being part of my life]. Oh, God. I would not be as patient or sensitive or appreciative of women, or understanding of women or girls. I learned a lot. I would be much lonelier. I would feel like I missed a huge part of life."**

*Eric, fifty-two year old psychologist, father of a twenty-four year old daughter and a nineteen year old son (divorced when his daughter was six but stayed involved as a dad)*

Most dads gasped at the thought of being a *single* parent, having to raise a child on their own.

Perhaps in part, that's why even those who had gone through a painful divorce stayed involved as a parent.

Only Seeing Her Every Other Weekend Is Hard

**"Not having her live under my roof, seeing her every other weekend [because of the divorce], having to continually say goodbye to her and not see her for two weeks at a time, has been sort of practice in [eventually] letting go of her [when she gets older]. It's still the hardest thing."**

*John, fifty-six year old schoolteacher, divorced father of eighteen year old daughter (divorced when his daughter was seven but remained close to her)*

### The Divorce Definitely Limited My Time With My Kids

**“Post-divorce? Yeah, it sucked. It was terrible. [It’d be] just week-on, week-off and I wouldn’t see my daughter that much during the week off.**

**I wasn’t flying [as a commercial pilot] at that time [so I had more time to be with her]. [As a pilot], being away at work in a hotel room and not having my kids, I am used to that. [But] being home and not having my kids is not something I’m used to. So that was hard, yeah. It was hard to be at home and not really allowed to see my kids when they were right there.**

**Things are a lot better now. When I’m home and not working, I’ve got my kids full time. If I want to go see my daughter some afternoon, I can go see her. It’s no problem.**

**But the divorce was definitely not harmonious.”**

*Mark, forty-four year old Navy pilot, father of a fifteen year old daughter and an eleven year old son (divorced when his daughter was seven but stayed involved as a dad)*

### *I Really Enjoy Being A Stepfather*

#### Once You Get Past The Trust Thing It Can Be Really Fantastic

**“It almost seems like being a stepdad is doing it with one hand tied behind your back at times. Yeah. You start out at a disadvantage.**

**But by the same token, that doesn’t mean it can’t be fantastic. In one sense it may [actually] have been helpful, being the stepdad in our particular situation, just because her father is, you know, very different from me.**

**[Her father] was very controlling so I think she had a void or a need in her life that I was able to step in and fill.**

**But we kind-of had to do this dance initially to where we could develop a trust relationship with each other. Then once we started to get past that, things just fell into place and worked really well, and continue to work really well.”**

*Terry, sixty-two year old engineer and father of two sons age thirty-eight and thirty-four, a stepson age twenty-four and a twenty-one year old stepdaughter*

## ***I Had Fear And Resentment At Being Such A Young Father***

I Resented That Her Becoming Pregnant Forced My Life To Change Direction

**“I had a lot of anger towards myself and a lot of fear at having a child, [my] being twenty one at the time I got [my girlfriend] pregnant.**

**I had a lot of things going for me. I was looking into transferring to UC Berkley or UC Santa Cruz to play [college] rugby there. I walked away from that due to the fact of my actions.**

**My brother suggested I have an abortion, [but] I just didn't have it in me to do that. So we both decided to continue on and have the baby.**

**[But] my girlfriend at the time didn't feel like moving from the LA area away from her family to the Bay Area, so I didn't take on the, uh—I wouldn't say it would be a scholarship but they were definitely going to help me with getting into school.**

**So there was a lot of fear, a lot of resentment on her not really being too willing to go—and a lot of anger with myself. I should have just been more of a man in my decision making.”**

*Aaron, thirty-two year old construction worker and ex-bouncer, father of two daughters age nine and ten (marriage fell apart after just a few years, but he has remained close to his daughters)*

## ***Being A Father Is The Most Incredible Thing In My Life***

For Me, Being A Father Is Absolutely Incredible

**“I knew I wanted to be a dad, but I never realized how absolutely, incredibly fun it was, and how incredibly proud I would be of my daughter.**

**I always felt that I would be proud of her because she was my daughter. I never realized that I would be proud of her because she is this incredible human being.**

**The thing is, being a dad for me has been a fulfillment of a huge long, long dream. But what I love most is that it just keeps growing. As the years expand, it's like, ‘Oh wow!’ I don't even remember dreaming that [it would be like this]. So the dream just keeps expanding.**

**I'm just so incredibly proud of my daughter as a human being and I am proud to tell that to everybody I know.”**

*Lucas , fifty year old kindergarten teacher, father of a twenty-five year old daughter (divorced when his daughter was four but stayed one-hundred percent involved throughout her entire life)*

My Kids Are My Fan Club—There’s Something Pretty Wonderful About That

**“I did a triathlon and [my kids] were all very supportive of me. They always make a big deal of it.**

**It's nice to have a fan club in some way. I've got a real fan club, you know. My own children are truly part of my fan club.**

**If you [don't have] kids, I'm not sure who your fan club is. There's something pretty neat about having people that truly care about you. It makes you internally feel wonderful.”**

*Len, sixty-eight year old attorney, father of a thirty-five year old son, a thirty-four year old daughter and a twenty-eight year old stepdaughter*

This concept of your kids being your fan club is interesting.

Even dads with challenging relationships with a daughter often described this feeling of being unconditionally loved.

## A Life Without Kids Is Half-A-Life—But Some Guys Are Not Meant To Be Dads

**“A life not lived being a parent is half a life.**

**I tell that to my buddy who didn’t have kids. I says, ‘You’re living a selfish half-a-life. You can’t expect to have fully lived at the end of your days without having gone through this process of making a new generation, of making a new branch on a tree.’**

**Yeah, I even bought him a copy of *Chicken Soup for the Father’s Soul* and gave it to him, but I don’t think it moved him very much.**

**[I think,] ‘If this book didn’t move you then maybe you shouldn’t be a dad. Maybe everybody’s not made to be a dad. Maybe you are just too selfish to be a dad.’**

*Ken, 9/11 New York City fireman and father of a six year old daughter and two sons*

## Without My Daughter My Life Would Be Flat—She’s Brought Me So Much Joy

**‘[If I never had my daughter]... now that's sad. My life would be empty. It would be like a book with half the pages ripped out. I mean, like all the pages are there, but—so one-hundred-fifty pages in the book, there's still one-hundred-fifty pages but each page is ripped vertically in half. It's just missing [a part]. That's what it would be like.**

**[I’d be] missing a lot of joy. She's brought so much joy into my life.**

**Not having my daughter Savannah in my life, it would just spin. It would be a bit less full and just flat. Just a lot of emptiness. That's it.”**

*Mark, forty-four year old Navy pilot, father of a fifteen year old daughter and an eleven year old son (divorced when his daughter was seven but stayed involved as a dad)*

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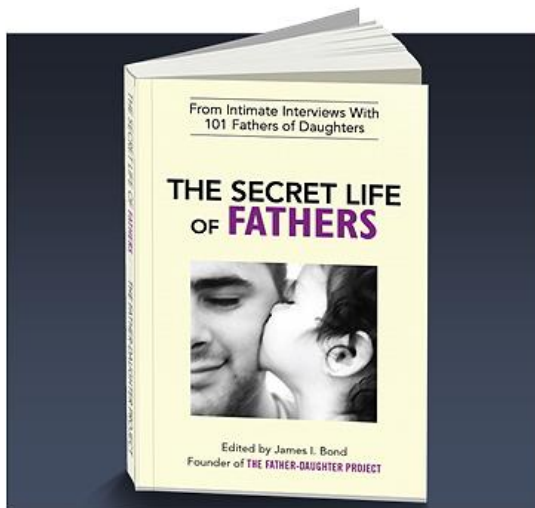
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- Steve Harrison, Publisher, Radio-TV Interview Report (RTIR)