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Daddy’s Little Girl

“Little girl what do you think you are doing?” These are the words that my dad still uses when he refers to me today. I have become accustomed to hearing this phrase throughout my lifetime, and no matter how corny I think it is I never fail to respond to it. That is just one of the many phrases that are part of the special relationship that I share with my dad, Brian McLeod. It is also just another part of being his little girl now and forever and something I will cherish and never take for granted. I believe that having a good relationship with my dad has played a vital part in my high self- esteem and confidence in myself.

For as long as I can remember I have always had a special relationship with my dad. I don’t know if it’s because I was born two months premature or because I am the youngest of three girls but we have always connected. We have never had a strained relationship because of abuse or his lack of presence in the home and I am thankful for that. When I hear stories from my friends about their dead beat dads my heart aches for them because I know that could have just as easily been me. The reason I think we have such a good relationship is because I grew up in a Christian home and was raised on principles from the bible. Some of those included honor your mother and father and being respectful when talking to adults. We also used to have nightly family bible study as a way to come together and discuss the bible. My dad and I would spend hours talking about stories in the bible and I would listen intently to learn new things because at the time I was just a sponge absorbing everything I could. With these precious moments I knew I could come to my dad whenever I had a perplexing question or was just curious about something.

A strained relationship or a strong and healthy one can make all the difference in the way a daughter perceives and interacts with her father. I have been fortunate enough to have one that for the most part has been pretty strong and has held up throughout the years. Lise Weil, author of “What she thinks about when she thinks about love*”* tells the story of a father and a daughter who have a strained relationship because of a lack of communication and love from the father. The two are like prisoners in their own home; they barely talk to each other for fear of having to actually interact with one another. “Those words, I love you. How gratuitous it seems for them, a surplus of affection, spilling over, the kiss, a light and painless stop on the way to bed” (Weil). This quote from the daughter sums up her feelings toward her dad and subsequently their relationship. I however have never experienced those feelings of want and desire from lack of love shown by my father. I don’t have to beg him to tell me he loves me or show me affection. Some days I will get a random text or call from him saying he doesn’t want anything and that he just wanted to know how I was doing and that he loves me. Those moments make my day to know that he is thinking about me even when I’m not with him.

The daughter in the article talks about her feelings towards her father and that the only time she loves him is when he is gone because she couldn’t stand to be in the same room as him let alone the same house. “This is when she loves him the best, when he is not here, and she is free to contemplate the things he loves, and feels, standing here, how he is needed: to read these books, to serve the drinks, to entertain, to set the walls echoing with conversations that knit the infinite threads of the world together. No other father so big, so full of culture, history, so full of the world” (Weil). This shows the essence of their relationship in the fact that the only time the daughter loves her father is when he is gone, which is attributed to his lack of affection toward her and vice versa. Again this is a contradiction to my relationship with my father in every aspect. When my parents got divorced a few years ago and my mom and I moved to Texas I was devastated when I learned that he would not be moving down with us. I was angry, as you could imagine, because I felt betrayed and could not come to grips with the thought of living the next four years of my life without him. Throughout my life he had always been there for me in the good times and the bad, he was someone I knew I could talk to about anything. All of that though would be a distant memory, but I would make the adjustment as best I could.

As a little girl I was definitely a daddy’s girl in the sense that I followed my dad around everywhere he went. Whether that be to the bathroom or my parents’ bedroom there I was right on his heels. He bought me my own little lawn mower so I could mow the lawn along with him on Saturday mornings. He has always had a relaxed attitude when it came to playing with me. My mom told me as a baby my dad was throwing me up in the air one time and happened to accidently make me hit my head on the ceiling. Of course my mom went ballistic in fear that my dad had just given me a concussion, but my dad insisted I was fine. He figured if I wasn’t crying that I must be ok. Today my dad still holds that same attitude when it comes to sensitive issues. For instance my mom doesn’t believe I can drive on the highway even though I have had my license for three years. Whenever I drive on the highway with my mom she is in the backseat curled up in a fetal position afraid of what’s going to happen. My dad on the other hand is in the passenger seat on his phone without a care in the world. He always tells my mom that she needs to let me grow up and trust in the things that they have taught me.

There is no relationship like the one of the father-daughter variety, but unfortunately the importance of it is not examined as often as it should be. Myrtis Bedolla, author of “Like father, like daughter? Yes and No” gives you a look into the relationship between a father who is an abstract artist and his daughter who is now an artist herself because of his influence. “I don’t think anyone could describe artists showing up at your house in the middle of the night to argue the finer points of color theory a conventional childhood” (Bedolla). This describes the author’s experience growing up and how unlike most kids her age she did not grow up in the conventional household and her dad did not have a typical nine- to- five job. For me on the other hand I did grow up in a more traditional household with both of my parents in my life up until I was a freshman in high school. I also had a very good childhood. My dad though did not have your typical job because he was a truck driver. This would force him to travel across the country during the week when I was little. My mom told me a story of how when my sister and I were younger we took a road trip to Disney land, but this was no ordinary trip because we took it in my dad’s eighteen wheeler. I thought this would be so cool because we weren’t in a car and the truck had bunk beds which is every kid’s dream to have. We ended up having a great time on the trip.

The fact that the daughter in the article was influenced by her father is something I can somewhat relate to, but in a different way. Since the fourth grade I have loved to play basketball, but I wasn’t that good back then. I did however have a good handle on the basics of the game and knew that if I kept practicing I would get better. As I got older that’s exactly what I did as I continued to learn the fundamentals of the game. Now I am a certified fanatic and will watch any game that comes on to see what I can add to my own game. Inadvertently I have turned my dad into somewhat of a basketball fan, and we watch games together with me pointing out things he might have missed. In this aspect it is somewhat of a role reversal, but he has had a lot of influence on me as well. Among those is his hardworking attitude that has rubbed off on me and taught me that if I work hard at something I really want, I can achieve that. Another influence he has had on me is his willingness to always try and provide for his family no matter what it took which is something I plan on doing when I have a family of my own.

One of the biggest ways a parent can have an impact on their child’s life is to simply encourage them in whatever dreams and goals they have in life. The daughter in the article written by Myrtis Bedolla articulates this point very clearly.“My parents were always encouraging of whatever interests or expressive gestures that their children demonstrated. In fact, my dad always jumped at the chance to encourage our budding creativity” (Bedolla). This quote from the daughter describes her father’s influence and involvement in her life. I can relate to this because my dad has been and to this day still is one of my biggest supporters in whatever I choose to do. I can remember in my freshman year of high school he came down to watch me play at one of my basketball games. It was a total surprise to me because I did not know he was coming and was shocked to see him sitting in the stands next to my mom. Knowing he was there I wanted to play good and knocked down a couple of shots. That’s when I realized that even though he no longer lived with my mom and I that he still supported me and wanted to see me do well.

The role the father plays is an integral part to the development and growth in a daughter’s life. Kate C. Kavanagh, author of “The father-daughter relationship” examined the father’s role at every stage of their daughter’s life. Under the early childhood section it explains how it is the fathers’ job to reduce the stress that the mother feels with having to be away from her baby for an extended period of time. Like any other mother my mom was the same way with me always being so little, she was afraid I would get picked on or run over at school. My dad on the other hand was not worried at all because he knew I was a tough little kid and had to reassure my mom of this.

Throughout my life I have been blessed to have my dad with me for most of it, and the times he hasn’t been there I have made the adjustment without forgetting about him. Now that I am in college I feel like we are making up for lost time because he lives in Overland Park and I try to go spend time with him every other weekend. I don’t take those little moments when we are just sitting and talking about life for granted because I know not everyone has a dad to enjoy. Knowing that, I believe I would not be the person I am today without the lessons learned and influence my dad has given to me.

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