BIG UP DADDY! A Message To Fathers

June 15, 2011 By Jeff Carroll

This may not be dating advice but it is good advice just in time for Father's Day.

Father's Day and Fathers is important for us to discuss because of the growing number of shared custody families and the high number of single parent families that already exist. Since, I became father in 2002 I have experiencing aspects of life differently. Call it parental instinct or assuming responsibility or whatever but I fully recognize the effect that having a child has on a person. I am the only child of happily married parents and being exposed to both the male and female parents in my life allowed me to see first the roles that both parents can play. Today in America there is so much confusion around the importance of the male parent and his role. I remember when I was in College back in the late 80s Sister Souljah organized the "GET BUSY" tour and it featured student leaders like Ras Baraka who was student body President of Howard University Who is now a high school Principal in Newark). The Tour also, featured rap artists like KRS-ONE and Doug E Fresh. Doug E Fresh said something I always think about when the subject of male parenting comes up. Doug described the role of father as FURtherhood from farther as opposed to fatherhood. He explained fathers are supposed to take their children further in the growth of a man then they are. I not only believe this is important for men but, women as well. There are many aspects of being a good father these are the aspects I feel are the most important.The Challenge of being a parent.
African American parents and all parents have the responsibility to further their children's growth in the understanding of life and behavior as human beings. Due to the intensity of the years of captivity by Europeans African Americans had to overcome has driven their social behaviors, morals and ethics downward. The morals of African's that African Americans once practiced are currently practiced by African Americans who study African Culture or who have reformed Christianity and other religions. These African practices which are referred to by African's as tradition tribal behavior are what allows African Countries the opportunity to enjoy low divorce rates and less number of single parent families. Countries like Ghana which have a large "Traditionalist" community are just now dealing with higher levels of divorce and single parent families because of increased European social influence. As Africans in America it is our responsibility to learn from our African Tribal beliefs and practice ways to improve our social interaction and take society further and further to where single parented families are a distant memory.

What a child needs from the male parent.
When my wife was pregnant I would -practice explaining things to my unborn child in my head. I thought of ways of how to get him or her to learn from my mistakes and stand on my knowledge and build on it. I also, thought of what my child would ask of me. When I look at the behavior of some fathers I don't think they think of their child's needs when they do things. All children need to play and learn from their parents. They need their father's to talk to them and not just give orders. Many people believe the woman is the parent who should raise the children and that the man should just earn the money. Well, not only is it difficult but, it may not be the best way. Intimate interaction with ones father allows the

child the opportunity to see more than just one dimension of male behavior. Children need to see their father's laugh and cry. They need to see the father's be serious and be silly, strong and sensitive. Seeing all of the dimensions of man through their father's actions helps them get a better understanding of themselves. Many people suffer from gender confusion because they think men aren't suppose to cry or be sensitive towards pain. This is the very same aspect of manhood rapper Kanye West mentioned in a MTV interview. Female children need to see their fathers conducting themselves like responsible men so the can have high standards for the men they choose to bring into their lives. We need to adopt this present father philosophy instead the absentee father who doesn't think he needs to be active in their child's life until their teenage years. Like in the movie Boyz N the Hood. Children need their fathers not just to be disciplined by and to change diapers as well.

Using your life as an example.
It was after I came back from College when I had some of the best conversations with my parents. I experienced enough in my own life independently that I could share my own stories with them. Talking to my parents about their adolescent years helped me understand the reasons behind the rules they raised me under in High School. My parent's history was my history. Learning their histories help me understand myself better. This self awareness helped me navigate my future. Parents especially fathers can use their history to guide their children through challenging life decisions. Stories about dating peer pressure and fighting are better than just laying down rules only. Through stories a parent is able to guide not tell and for fathers it is an excellent tool to master. Using an educated critical analyst of one's life is a very easy way to positively impact the growth of your child.

The importance of being a good husband.
Now, I know single dads are mad at me for saying this but, it is true. It is important to not only show your child how to get up and go to work everyday and relate to other men but, it is just as important for men to show their child how they respects and relates to their mother and other women. Now, for single dads developing an honest relationship with a women is invaluable. Shared custody fathers need to have a relationship with their child's mother. If these relationships are either underdeveloped or confrontational it will negatively impact the child. Even when the biological parents have irreconcilable differences fathers still need to seek out a woman to develop a healthy relationship with and demonstrate the behavior of a good male companion. Being in a happy marriage is an excellent thing for a child to see.

The Importance of being a good son
As an only child I really had no choice of being an attentive child. When my father got ill with Alzheimer's disease my mother had to take an early retirement and I had to assist her. The period of caring for my father allowed to be viewed as a different person by my mother. Knowing I helped take care of my father and made his transition easier makes me feel more of a complete person. My friends, family and other elders in my community now look at me in a different way a more responsible way. Loving your parents and displaying love helps young people around understand we are all connected. Being a good son is not a sign of weakness but, of maturity. What kind of man disrespects his own parents. Learning how to display this behavior doesn't mean you let your parents tell you what to do. Being a good son means you respect the things your parents tell you and listen to them. If you disagree with your parent it's fine just do it with respect. Showing that you can be a good son will help your child be more respectful to you and their mother.

Our responsibility to each other
Parents do not parent in isolation. Society greatly influences our children. It is narrow to think a father should only parent or mentor their own children. Families function in communities and cities are made up

of a lot communities and society is influenced by what happens in our cities. Many of the negative values that are children pick up are from parents who raise their children one way and pollute the society with negative values. It's like crabs in a barrel when we treat other children different than we treat our own. Caring is caring. If a father really cares about their children's lives that caring feelings should carry over to their child's school, the play ground, their friends, the neighborhood and society in general. Children also learn from parents care for society and learn not to be selfish. We can't call each other brothers and sister without treating them with the respect of brothers and sisters.

Being a father can help your understand life
Understanding and mastering the qualities of fatherhood help men learn their purpose in life. Human's are just a different species of animal and therefore just like animals we have a connectedness to the world and each other. Being a father helps a man learn how he connects to the past, present and future. We have a place in time and the universe. Parenting biological children or the children of the community is mutually beneficial. Understanding your purpose in life can be learned through studying your history. Through understanding your purpose you can fulfill your destiny. Through understanding and fulfilling your destiny you are better able to help your children and other children learn and fulfill theirs.

The importance of analyzing your childhood.
Since, we only have one childhood in our lives it is important that we critically and honestly analyze our own upbringing if we are going to be good fathers and parents. A person's childhood gives them their personal bias or perspective on life which helps them understand that other people's feeling can be different from theirs. If you feel you were unattractive while growing up as an adult you maybe understand children who posses similar feelings and help them. In addition when you understand firsthand your own prospective you can consciously seek out people who see things different than you and learn why they feel different from you. Children are individual people and your child may have a different view on life then yours. The better you are able to understand other perspectives the greater chances you have at being a father who can relate to their child. Parents are more effective when their children can relate to them.

The valve of being a complete man.
Being a father did not complete me as a man but, helped me see how to become a complete man. There are many phases in life and of a human's growth and parenting is simply one of the phases. We are born not knowing how to go to the bathroom on our own. Our parents teach us. We then go through the phases of mastering what we have learned from our parents. Then it is our responsibility to teach the next generation. Teaching others makes you feel complete in your mission in life. This information wasn't only for you and it is not yours to keep. It is yours to share. Your life lessons are for you to pass on to your children and future generations. Participating in all of these phases help you become a complete man.

So, I give props to all of the men who are trying to be good fathers. To these men I say Big up Daddy and keep up the good work. To my brothers who give into counter productive ways and have excuses for why they aren't being fathers to their seeds I say no matter how hard it is, it is something we must do. It is a crime to have a child and not try to father them. This is important for mother's who are receiving child support and block the father from being able to visit his child to understand. But court supervised parenting is a subject for a future blog. God bless and happy Father Appreciation day. Peace Yo Jeff.

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