

Running Head: FAMILY

Family Life and Communication
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All relationships have their ups and downs and mine was no different in that perspective. The biggest difficulty that I had to overcome as a child when it came to communicating with my parents as a child was if they were sober or high. Drugs, alcohol, and parties can seem like a fun life for a child to live through, but reality can be much worse than people would realize behind closed doors.

Sports cars, lots of cash, and a multitude of guns was the glamorous part of the life. There was plenty of money, but when someone is coming off a high or when you find out your parents were arrested, then life can change quickly. Coming home to see all of the cars gone and told you cannot stay at home as there could be a drive by over the next few weeks and that is all the details you get. I don't know which is worse getting that information, or already having my car packed for a situation like that so I could just drive right back out of the driveway. Plus, this was a time when there were no cell phones, only pay phones and the hope that someone would answer the home phone.

I do not know if being more connected today would have helped or hindered our relationship. Sometimes I think it was best that I could not always be reached and God saved me from some of the details in life that I did not want to know about. I had already experienced plenty, so anymore would have been overkill for me.

Loving your parents unconditionally is hard when they don't always come home at night and you have to be the responsible one. Being a teenager is hard enough with the temptations that other kids bring to you. Life is difficult enough and without church or parents for guidance, I had to realize what I needed to do to get out of the situation that I was living. Communication with other family members helped make my transition out of my parent's house at seventeen. Being thrust into drastically different lifestyles did not make the transitions any easier.

Today, my life is still influenced by my parent's attitudes. I still today do not always put an importance on paying certain bills as a priority. My credit is not always at its best. I have learned some basic survival skills and try to do the best that I can. Change is hard when it has been instilled in your life since birth. Not all of these traits are things that I truly want but change is something that is hard.

Relationship and Communication

My father and I have had an on and off again relationship. This has been going on since I was a child and has seemed to follow me into adulthood. Some aspects of this relationship have changed as different subsystems have been introduced and removed from both of our lives. Our location within the whole suprasystem of both of our families as well as other outside influences has impacted our social connection with one another.

My father and I do communicate with each other on a weekly basis. Most of this communication is done over the phone as he lives in Florida and I live here in Arkansas. I actually feel the distance between us has improved some parts of our relationship. There are a lot of little things that can be left out when you only talk to someone every so often. Both parties are trying to communicate certain points of their life while taking in the others in a limited time.

In today's lifestyles with jobs, school, and children our time is limited and so the calls can be short or not at all from week to week.

History is never short in any family. My family is no different. My father and I have had a volatile relationship from when I was a child. My father feels that he did a good job raising me while my mother was having a nervous breakdown over several years, and his drug addiction. Both of these factors have played a huge part in my father and me relationship. The drug abuse has gone on with him over the years and has never truly seemed to stop. From what I understand about my father, if he has money in any excess, then he will spend it on drugs. This is a habit that is uncontrollable even today. I am told that he has been clean for the last 22 months.

As a child, I could only watch the problems progress and try to avoid most situations. Our communication with one another was mostly on sided. If he was around, I would follow basic instructions, and as long as I did not get in his way we were fine. Ironically, when I was older I worked in the family business and up until I graduated high school. There were even times that I was fully in charge of the business as my father did have a few medical conditions that put him into the hospital for long periods of time. When he would return home, the communication was not on a true father son relationship, but more of an employer/worker relationship. The work got done, the money was good, and so there were not any problems as far as I had with him. Only if my life interfered with his, there was trouble between the two of us.

Unfortunately, seeing my father and mother disobey the most common rules in life caused me not to want to follow some of them as well. I never did anything to truly get into trouble, but if I was caught by my parents the penalties were severe. This was until the drugs were their only concern. An example of this was when I paid my own way home for my high school graduation, as my parents had stated they could not give me any money to come home. When I arrived back in my home state for my own high school graduation, my parents showed me the new Cadillac that they had bought for themselves. The reason that I had to return home for my graduation is I had moved out and went to live with other relatives in another state. I had done well enough in high school to manage to graduate a semester early. Being 17 years old I felt it was time for me to distance myself from my parents, before I was brought into their problems, as I wanted no part of their lifestyle.

Drugs and illegal activities create a whole new suprasystem that most people are not aware of. My life and the adults that I knew of were different than most other children's. This lifestyle I was accustomed to lead to a whole different form of isolation in my life. I knew of my parents faults, but in front of anyone, they could put on a show for the public. When I did not talk of my parents to other adults, the problems seemed to be my fault. I could not just sit back and state that my parents were drug addicts. Being isolated from what would be known as a normal life, lead to a lot of independence in my life. I felt I was on my own to survive in the world, and yet even today my father states he did well raising me because of what I do today.

Divorce

After my biological parents were divorced, I hoped communication would improve with my father and me. Drugs can cause a lot of deception. I don't always feel this was the main reason for our communication problems. My father seemed to always be able to run prosperous businesses, and communicate well with people of stature, so this lead me to believe there was a

problem between him and I. More than once in my life I departed from my father's company for long periods of time, only to have him track me down again. We have had several heart to heart conversations, that have went nowhere after that very day. Being very convincing was always something that my father was good at. If this did not work, he would use the poor pitiful me routine, to get you to feel sorry for him. This has worked from time to time with me, but over the last few years it does not work out.

My father has chosen reframing as part of a way to communicate with me. The reframing comes into mind, as long as I do not ask a whole lot about his drug situation. If everything is going well, I will hear from him often and he will even bring up how long he has been clean. This has created the off and on again situation of disqualifying the topic of drugs. The drug addiction topic becomes taboo, until my father decides to reopen the topic for small controlled discussion. I feel my father is trying to utilize the critical approach theory. He is trying to remain in power over me to control me and from time to time silencing me in the conversation. This is also his way of creating his own truth to a situation.

My social process of time with regards to my father overcast my communications with him. Usually, things such as heart attacks, deaths, and births should come to mind. Instead, with my father there is the time he asked me to help him get off drugs to control his life, the deception when he stole my car, the letter stating he wanted to contact me again, the divorce that lead to his second wife going to prison, and many others similar to these. This does not help to keep a positive line of communication with someone. This also creates trust issues on many levels, as my father has always came out on top. This means someone else had to fall.

I have tried to place the revised developmental theory behind my father and I communication issues. This does not seem to work as usually both parties will change over time. There have obviously been changes in both of our lives, but the true core of my father's life has not changed. The time line still applies but once again it is similar to that of the previous paragraph. This only helps me to see why other relationships have failed within my father's live. My father's development has been linear in the since that it has not evolved over time. If I was to say there was some sort of development with my father it would be the ability to deceive. The pity party ideal gets old, and loses value with family that knows my father.

Intellectual Traditions

This brings up the ideal of intellectual traditions. This is something that my father has consistently followed. Intellectually, he is well versed at reading people. The mindset of a professional sales person is one who has been working diligently over the years to perfect his craft in the field of general life sales. The longer you sell something, the better you become at leading someone to do as needed.

When talking about the study of families being relevant, and the fact that objectivity is seen as impossible with the participants, I have to think that this is true within my family. Time has shown me only one way with regards to my father. When things only seem to work one way, and over time the only thing that seem to change is I, then how can I trust my father. I have seen his life unfold with regards to three different women and the only thing consistent is my father and his attitude. Trying to remain objective does get more complicated when all of the little things have been seen as well. These are the things that would probably be forgotten when

trying to sum up your life to a therapist. It is the things between the time lines created in your head from major instances. There are millions of little details that have been discussed or overlooked over the years. It is impossible to remember every little detail good or bad in someone's life.

I love my father and wish for only the best in his life. Communication is something that has never come easy for me with him. I do not know where the lies end and the truth begins. I have always felt the truth was the easiest way, but I feel my father is trying to impress me like we are two teenagers. I hope to learn the ability to break down the walls my father has created around himself, so we could have a better relationship with one another.

Social Construction Theory

My father tries to justify his life and the things that he does with his stories. I have found from listening to my father's stories, that if you are good enough at telling the stories anybody can twist the facts in their favor. Details can be left out or innocently forgotten. This is a simple tactic that my father deploys when he needs the facts to add up in his favor. As stated that people actually construct their worlds while talking with people, shows me that depending on who my father is talking to depends on the story he is telling.

I believe there are contradictions in the dialectics. With this I mean that the dialectics are informed by oppositions. The opposition sometimes seems to be the fact that my father talks and I pretend to believe his every word. There does seem to be another opposition with my father in the fact that he tries to impress me for acceptance. This means that even though I tell my father I love him and I am proud of him for the things he has done right in his life, he is in opposition with me on that belief and feels he has to impress me like a teenager to his friends. I thought this would have ended long ago, but I am even surprised sometimes by the things he still says and I am now thirty-eight.

Uncle

I noticed something similar in another family member. An uncle of mine went to prison at the age of eighteen. He was released ten years later at twenty eight. When he was released his maturity was that of an eighteen year old not that of someone twenty eight. His ability to integrate into the system was very difficult, but he did seem to correlate well with my father. This was because my father was into partying and playing around more so than following the system. They both showed the autonomy/connection dialectic, meaning they desired to be independent of their families. The intimacy was scene with this desire. The two together created a very dysfunctional relationship. This was the point at which I decided to move out of the house, as to not get involved in anything that could later get me into trouble with the law.

Shortly after I left home, I returned back to obtain the rest of my things, to find that the house had been burned down. My parents showed up to hand me a few items and then quickly left again. Within six months, my uncle was back in prison for parole violations. He is currently serving three life sentences in Southeast Missouri. My father remains without a criminal record.

Conformity to laws

The motion or fluidic relationship changed over time as most relationships would expect too. The difference with the relationship with my father and I is that the changes usually had to be invoked by myself. What I mean by this is that I had to take the responsible position out of the two of us. My father would tease me for driving with a current driver's license and having proper car insurance on my vehicles. The time when he would not say much is when he would get stopped by the police or was having problems paying fines for driving without a license or car insurance. At this point when I would talk to him about his bills he would just make some useless comments about paying the state. We both knew what that meant. Today this problem still exists. Currently, he is paying off a four thousand dollar fine from when his last wife was driving his car and wrecked it. Every now and again he talks about paying this bill, but has not totally confessed to what has really happened. I do not push the issue, but he no longer makes fun of me for having all of my paperwork legal.

While reading the introduction of book, "Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins: How Our Family Stories Shape Us", the author talks about how that no matter how much you try to run from the family, they are still part of you. While thinking about that simple thought, I realize my father is part of who I am. I have to accept this fact so I can either change my life or embrace the good that I see in my father. The one thing that I have not tapped into yet is how to communicate with my father on personal issues. I have not learned how to get him to open up to me with personal issues, instead of lying or being totally evasive. He knows that all I have to do is contact one of his sisters and I can get all the information about his where he is and what is going on.

Values are less applicable to the culturally diverse groups in which the family is central to everyday life, and family values have priority over personal values... The family is the pivotal institution that sustains the comfort and security of older people. (Grigorenko, 2001) This thought of my father being the older person can sometimes be disturbing. I feel as I should be the elder instead of my father as I have the maturity.

The one thing that I am grateful for is the benefit of being able to tell stories. This is something that my father was very good at. He would be able to tell the greatest stories, and leave you wanting more. These stories are of days gone by, and of the past that I was not present for. Listening to the stories keeps my family alive and gives me things to pass on to my children. Also listening to all of the different stories of my family from each family member, has taught me how to listen and sometimes read between the lines as well.

I feel that I have to do all three things in the end. The integration, neutralizing, and reframing, these are all three things that I have to do when dealing with my father. I am constantly trying to search for that happy medium with my father. The best thing that keeps our medium happy is the fact that my father lives in Florida and I am here. These lines help keep some ideas personal in my life and in his. When I lived close to him there was a lot of doubt as I could see his actions every day. When you watch someone's actions all the time and then talk on the phone later and the stories do not match, then the trust falls short. My father living in Florida means that I cannot watch his actions every day, and so when I talk to him I have to take him at his word. The distance builds the trust that I want with my father, and the distance helps to keep it real.

Reframing my father's words is to prevent opposition. When he is truly evasive on what he does I try to refrain from prying into his life. I only hope to gain his trust so that he can be open with me. Refraining to speak when I feel so strongly about communicating and knowing when to refrain and when to speak up can be a very difficult situation. I feel I need to learn how to read the situation better, and other times I think I need to just keep things simple with my father. Trying to complicate my life while my father is 1200 miles away may not be the best thing to do.

Disqualifying items from the general pattern is hard to do when trying to communicate with him. His general pattern most of his life has been a lot of lies and inflated truths. Then, things would be followed by promises of him getting his act together to only fall off the wagon over and over again with those lies trying to hide things. I try to believe that my father is clean today because I want to believe this. I want to give him the benefit of the doubt, but years of problems in the past make it hard to see the light. Trust is earned, but in a family situation the trust should be a given. I have been taught that family should be the first line of defense and the people that you turn to in the sign of trouble. Unfortunately, I am 36 years old and the only person that I feel I can trust besides my wife is my mother. She probably would not do much but lend an ear, but the judging would be left at the door. Also she tells me everything and our relationship has blossomed. Sometimes I get more information than I bargain for, but nevertheless we can talk.

Dialectical Theory

A dialectical theory is that of two forces or people that is in opposition to each other, but serves to define each other. A father and a son can make a great example of that type of situation. They both learn from one another and grow over time defining each other's character and personality. Dialectics are tensions or forces within the relationship, they are also called relational dialectics. As with any relationship there are always multiple points of view on how the relationship is going and each of these points of view play off one another in every contradiction. My father and I are no different in this area and have many contradictions. Sometimes I feel we are closer to ying and yang than any other theory, as we cannot exist without the other, but one is positive and the other negative.

In relational dialectics there are multiple points of view and the play off one another in every contradiction.

“Questions and vocabularies are not without tendency; they very much affect what it is that you see. Relational dialectics is certainly unfinalizable, but asking dialogic questions about communication focuses the attention on some things as opposed to other things.”(Baxter, 1996)

Each of these different points of view play off each other to help make a wheel that will work and create a smooth relationship. I feel with my father the wheel that I may be on is not the same one that he is on and so the relationship does not always go smoothly. The dialect we share sometimes leaves things left out. I feel almost as if on certain subjects, that I am being

stonewalled and on others there is a slight of hand at play. In this I mean that he is showing me one feeling or attitude while the other hand is doing something totally different. The problem that we have is trying to get on the same wheel to communicate better.

Honesty can seem the hardest with family. This is seen when a total stranger will walk up to you and tell you their life story for no apparent reason other than to get it off their chest and not be judged. There is always this sense of judge and jury when speaking with a family member and sometimes this closes the door to communication. These ideas that you communicate may come back and haunt you later, or be used against you in some other way. The family should be where secrets are kept, but today's society with the use of Facebook and Twitter everyone wants to spill out everything. How much will this change my communication with my children as they get older? There are times where I think that typing a letter to him on a computer would work as a better form of communication than talking on the phone.

My relationship with my father seems to take on the centrifugal force that keeps throwing us apart. Last week my father was in Missouri and later drove back to Florida. On his way he passed through Arkansas but chose not to stop, call, or visit. I cannot figure out why this happened. Then a part of me wonders if, due to his past, that he had something to hide so that is why he chose not to visit. Both of us practiced avoidance of the subject the other day when he called to tell me he was back in Florida. The only mention of it I got was that he wanted to get home. He has not seen his grandkids or me in over three years, so I did not comprehend why he chose not to visit. I believe that true honesty with my father would help create a centripetal relationship. This is a relationship that pushes each other together instead of pulling each other apart.

Now, to the world my father's external dialectic is that of conventionality and uniqueness all at the same time. He wants to fit in with the crowd and pretend everything is normal, and then be unique and surprise people as well. He will reveal that he use to be a drug addict and talk of most of his problems to any stranger on the street just to keep the conversation going. Then he lives on a sailboat by himself in seclusion and wants no one else on it with him. This has been a strange concept for me to grasp lately as he hates to be alone, or at least that is how he talks about it.

With regards to his family, there is uncertainty and closeness. There is also this attitude of separateness as well. He usually prides himself as being the "black sheep of the family." The quote from another book says it even better by stating: "... A kiss is never just a kiss and no human act is simply straightforward body movement; rather each exists at the converge of multiple contexts of meanings." (Mongomery, 1991) I do not have a problem with this attitude, but I would appreciate a little better communication as he says I am one as well. I thought us black sheep had to stick together. I guess from my father's point of view that is not true.

The book states that both parties involved in communication must sacrifice some individual autonomy. If there is too much connection than individual identities are lost. The book also states that males are more likely to socialize towards independence where females desire autonomy. I believe this helps with the husband and wife situation. A father and son relationship is a bit trickier in the fact that both males want their independence and to give up nothing. Unfortunately this makes for a rough relationship if there is no give and take from each other.

When looking at cyclic alternation I do feel that we are just floundering around together drifting towards and apart from one another. I do not feel that there is any type of pattern with this type of drifting, nor is there a promise that we will not just fly apart one day. I try to select to be connected to this wheel and often wonder how connected he wants to be. Our wheel has been mended before and we have even had to go as far as to get a new wheel to replace the one we broke pulling and pushing on one another. I would like to keep this proverbial wheel intact for the rest of our lives. Currently, I feel as though the wheel is slightly warped and bent in places, but I worry how hard to tighten the spokes without snapping them off.

Novelty

Our relationship has always contained a sense of novelty about it. Predictability was never something in my father's vocabulary. Unfortunately, novelty is the predictable part of our relationship. Occasionally the novelty gets old and it does make it hard to trust my father, as he will say one thing and before you know it he is doing something totally different. Sometimes this makes me feel like I am suffering from schismogenesis, or the dysfunctional condition of being overly rigid. However I do feel that certainty leads to more certainty, and within limits I do expect this at times. At least being a father myself has taught me that this is needed in order to help raise children with constancy. As the book says, some areas of predictability are key. My father has not figured this out and there is still no predictability in our relationship. This makes it hard when he ask if I would send my son to visit for a week, as I feel I cannot leave my son in a situation that may get him in trouble. I have to change the subject, or create activities for my son to do for the summer to prevent it from happening. I know my father can tell that part of this is on him as well, but we both once again practice avoidance as not to hurt each other's feelings and just move on with our conversations.

Working it out is something that I try to do on a daily basis with my father. Usually the concepts that are used are indirect hints, testing the water. Lately I have incorporated endurance by putting my father through a couple of tests. This seems to be a way to judge his reactions and tell me where his head is. Asking direct questions is hard with my father as he is a very intelligent man and can answer them accordingly. Separation always has been best for me and my father as well. Every time we have lived in the same state I have usually left and my father and I were not on good terms when I did leave. The talk of visiting each other seems to work out well with the two of us. It seems that the thought of visitation is better than the actual thing itself as life will get in the way otherwise.

Power has always been a major issue with my father. Sometimes I feel that he leaves me in the dark so he can keep some semblance of power over me. We are both too old for physical or verbal attacks on each other. Unfortunately, conflict being viewed as personal and not issue orientated is the biggest factor, as these are much intertwined. This leaves old issues unresolved, with the two of us. Some of them have been forgotten and left where they lay, but new ones develop with dishonesty and deceit. I sometimes feel that my father is one of my children when I catch him in a lie. He will even act like one with apologies and a humble tone of guilt. I feel this is a sad way to have a relationship with my father. This is too much role reversal for me and I do not appreciate being put in this type of situation.

The book talks about how conflict and power can be destructive on children. The first is the learned behavior. When I was 8 years old I begged my mother to leave my father and this

has haunted me to this day. I still believe that she should have and things would have worked out for the better, but it is said that I was put in a position to feel that way to begin with. The stress my parents put me through as a child I believe benefitted me as it has made me a better person today. I learned what not to do instead of being taught the other way around. A lot of people would not have survived this type of learning curve. The discipline was text book for this type of situation as well. I was either over disciplined or under depending on their problems. These things have been brought with me in my life today and I have learned what to and not to do, but I had to learn it on my own. I do give my parents credit that they did teach me to be very independent in life and do not expect anything from anyone, because if your own parents will not give it to you then you probably will not get it anywhere else.

My parents and I have had some constructive conflicts. We have had to in order to get to where we are today. Restitution and some very long heart to heart talks had to take place to understand. There were a lot of behind the scenes information that I had to absorb as well, to make sense of the why and what for reasoning. All in all, these conversations brought me closer to my mother and for a time closer to my father. The hardest part with my father is that these conversations of why he did me wrong or stole from me or cheated and lied to me have had to take place more than one. The old saying of “do me wrong once it is your fault, but do me wrong twice it is my fault,” comes to mind when I think of these conversations that we have had four or five times. I guess that is why I tend to stonewall him on some subjects, as it is my way of protecting my own family from another apology from him.

The four horsemen today usually trot in and out of our relationship. They do not trample everything in their path, but instead tread lightly, as we both know a good trampling would end it all. We both understand that the proximal outcome of a strong horse would create a distal outcome of nothingness for our future. So our conflict interaction creates strategies and a lot of defensiveness as not to blame one another. Like the book states once these horses know the path it is hard to lead them another way.

Conversations with my father today are usually pretty bland. There is no real meat to our relationship from my end of the spectrum. Like I said earlier, my father is a smart man and knows that there is something wrong, but he does not want to address the situation. I think he feels that as long as I am talking to him then things are good, so why rock the boat. He is a hard man to contend with and with the distance between the two of us our problems do not truly affect one another. There is the occasional mystery call that states he is going away for a couple of weeks, which I have learned he is going into rehab again. Then he complains about a bill trying to get his driver’s license back, but that was not his fault too, it never is. I just try to lend an ear and be a non judging friend for the moment. I do not bring up the fact that when he talks of bills the numbers always change. If he is happy or wants to brag he will tell me about a great deal he got on his rent for his boat, and if he is depressed or broke then that bill usually doubles. I leave it be and try to just listen. As stated: “Role conflict is conceptualized as a condition in which a person faces incompatible role-related expectations; such incompatibility can result from disparate expectations associated with a single role or from competing expectations associated with two roles that a person occupies simultaneously....”(Baxter, 1996)

This describes how I feel with my father and the roles that I have to play.

The true problems I have are when he wants to invite my children to come stay with him. I do not know how to say that I cannot trust him. I know he would drive to the airport to pick them up, but I also know he does not have insurance or a driver's license. I feel it in his voice when I try to change the subject that he is hurt by me not sending my kids down to him, but I am troubled by this as it is a no win situation. If I speak my mind of the situation, then I could hurt his feelings worse, so we try to just move on in our own way. I have noticed some changes with my father though. Like I said earlier he drove through Arkansas and did not stop and visit even for a moment. I feel there is another talk about to come about between me and him. The good news is that this time he has not done some of the things in the past to create these talks.

Dennis Rainey and the family life walk stated, if you want to lead then you have to learn to walk correctly. By using religious connotations and bringing God back into the picture, and directing these ideas at men to lead their families as God intended family life can be great even with the extended family. Utilizing the Bible and reminding people where they need to assume responsibility spiritually and within their family and learning how to serve the family as well as lead them. This is a strong position to have to follow and no one is teaching what it is to be a dad or husband. This is a humble position with leadership as well. That is where the difficulty becomes is to learn how to lead and yet serve the family all at the same time. Usually, one or two things happen, the man leads with an iron fist or he becomes meek and weak.

My church has done the Men's Fraternity program for the men of the church. This program was designed to teach men and fathers what it means to be a man, and how to do it. We met every week for three months, for about an hour with each meeting. As society crumbles around us, our children have no one to look up to and must follow someone. If the father and mother are not leading our children then who will since we are not doing it. Leading a family means knowing what to do and how to do it.

Listening to the speakers about taking care of families is usually done by religious leaders. This is unfortunate as some men are not religious and will turn away from these speakers. Men need to learn to humble themselves and give up their selfless pride and step up to care for their families. A family is not a status symbol or something to take lightly as it is today. Divorce rates are higher than ever along with teen crimes and pregnancy. The reason for these problems is that the men in the relationships is not leading their family and taking care of them as they should. Without proper leadership, then the whole family can be lost. A child cannot learn what to do by talking with just their friends and winging it. Unfortunately, there are no real television shows talking about values, there are no program brochures for learning how to be a good dad, all of these things must be sought out by the men themselves, and men do not like to ask for directions. This is not an easy path, but a path that a man must seek out and want to follow.

Values

The subject is not an easy one to be brought up in a family where the values have been lost, but if a man talks with his wife about family values the building blocks will begin. There is no woman out there that has married a man and would shame them for wanting to have good wholesome family values and be a better family man. This does not mean to be a perfect man in everything that he does, but be a man that admits his mistakes, and faults and then truly asks for forgiveness. We are not perfect and will make mistakes, what makes the difference is what we do

after those mistakes are made. Do we ignore them and pretend nothing has happened? Do we blame other people and shift the problem onto someone else? Do we change the subject and try to move on with our life and later make the mistake again? Do we just not care what happens? Do we ask our family for forgiveness and truly mean it and try not to do it again? This is a decision that has to be made with every mistake that we make.

People do not take responsibility for their actions anymore. Everyone seems to have an excuse or someone else to blame. If they do not look to blame someone else they feel they have done a good enough job and do not care about anything else. This is the path that my father has taken. The other day he was talking about how sick he was and his medical problems, and with that he said he had fun and had no regrets. This was a sad awakening for me as he was saying that he has no regrets with the way that he raised me and feels that he has not missed anything in my life, even though there are gaps in his memory from my childhood.

While talking with my wife the other night though I realize that there are children that have had a worse childhood in a normal life. My wife had an ordinary childhood and her parents are still married today. They both worked and did not have too many problems. My wife has a sister who is almost five years older than her, and did get into trouble with drugs and dating, but nothing too serious that would involve the police. My wife on the other hand was an honor student and did not drink or party her only activities were with the church and the youth group. The problem was that she was not a boy and her parents already had a girl. When she did something well, she was told good job, but then something was mentioned about her sister. Her own father called her by another name for years and her mother who was a school teacher misspelled her name on all of her school records one year. This is another form of abuse that I feel has a stronger impact on a child than anything I could have ever experienced. My parents were drug addicts and did not have common sense, where her parents were church going normal parents who just seemed to drop the ball with my wife and still are that way today.

Conclusion

Life is hard enough today without parents holding on to the past or just blatantly ignoring the problems. Judging and holding grudges against your child is not the way to take care of your family. Even in adulthood it is the parent's job to step up and be the parent; unfortunately most children have to step up and try to be the child and the parent just for their parents to notice them. This is not a game to see who will brake first; it will usually be the child wondering what they have ever done wrong to let their parents down do badly. Children still want their parent's approval at the age of 50 or older. We are taught by the school and church to honor and obey our parents and when they stand by and judge and do nothing then the child is lost.

Being lost and finding my way in life has not always been easy. My parents left me no choice in the matter and for this I have my resentments. Life is hard enough when you leave the family nest. A family leaving their child in the dark just makes life that much harder. Mistakes that could be avoided and troubles that did not have to happen. Learning things the hard way is not what always needs to happen. This type of problem leads to less guidance in their life when they have children as well. This is seen all over the United States as adults want the schools to teach their children more and more things that should be taught at home. Some of these things

would be about sex and drugs. Instead the parents are expecting strangers and television to take over that role as well.

My life has had its ups and downs and my parents have had a lot of influence on this even when they were not around me. I did not realize this until after I turned 30 years old. I would hear my father's words sometimes coming out of my mouth. I talk to my father about once a week and listen to his ramblings, but I try to let it go as I know he is never going to change his ways. I know in his own strange way he loves me and does his best to show me this. I cannot ask for what he cannot give. I love my father and will always try to keep the communication path open, but I may not open myself up fully to him as a way to protect myself and my family. This is the fate that I have to accept with regards to my father and at least acknowledging this helps with acceptance of the type of relationship that we have.

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