

The Secret to Becoming a RealDAD

By Larry Bilotta

Why read yet another of a million well researched studies, grinding out the minutia of who, what, when, where and why we have yet another social problem?

We all know the problem because it is ONE problem. We don't even need to debate it anymore. We don't need to discuss it any more because the problem of our past, our present and our future is a father problem.

That's because once you know the ONE problem is a father problem, you immediately know the ONE solution that solves every other problem is a father solution.

The ONE problem: failing fathers turning out challenging children!

Oh! You don't believe it? You think it's so much more complicated than that? Allow me to prove that it's not complicated at all.

Let me take you on a brief history tour of failing fathers and see what they have produced.

When Saddam Hussein's father Hussein al-Majid fled the family, it was up to Saddam's mother Subha to raise him. When she could not, little Saddam was given over to his uncle Khairallah Tulfah, an army officer and fervent Arab nationalist. A deep bond between Saddam and his uncle Khairallah developed. Khairalla was an argumentative and bad tempered individual but he inspired great respect and hero worship in young Saddam. When Saddam was still a boy, Khairalla was expelled from the army and sent to prison for five years because of his public sympathy for Adolf Hitler and the Nazi belief system. Saddam missed him greatly. With Khairalla away at prison, young Saddam was sent back to his mother who had now remarried a poor and reportedly lazy peasant named Hassan al-Ibrahim. By the time Saddam rejoined the family, he found several new half brothers and sisters waiting for him. Saddam's step father found him an inconvenience.

Saddam was badly neglected except when Hassan would take delight in beating him with any blunt device that was handy. (1)

Adolph Hitler's father Alois was more than strict. His oldest son Alois Jr ran away from home because he could not endure the violent beatings at his fathers hands, so Alois Hitler turned his attentions on Adolph, giving him sound thrashings every day. (2)

Joseph Stalin's mother was described as strict, but what created the power of a dictator was his father Vissarion. Frequently drunk, Vissarion inflicted brutal blows on young Joseph. He lived years watching his father drink up his small wages as his mother slaved over a sewing machine in factory labor. Vissarion's years of cruel treatment developed a vindictive attitude in Joseph Stalin that gave birth to a seething revenge against anyone in authority. (3)

Karl Marx, the creator of communism, was born to Jewish parents and watched as his father Heinrich denied his Jewish heritage and converted to Christianity solely as a business decision. Even as Heinrich Marx denied the tenets of his heritage, he embraced humanist beliefs that men were by nature good and all equally rational, and the cause of human misery was simply ignorance. (4)

No matter where you look, when you find suffering, loss, pain, sorrow, it is created by a leader who was created by a failing father.

Not convinced with world dictators? Let's move closer to home. How many prisons are operating today? According to the Bureau of Justice there are now 1,664 prisons holding 1,214,969 prisoners! (5) These prisons were built by tax paying Americans so we can enjoy the benefits of our law abiding way of life. To protect this, we take over a million men and lock them away from the rest of us because of the danger they represent.

Interesting fact: How many of those dangerous one million two hundred thousand men come from troubled fathers? About 85% of them (6). Prisons exist because of troubled fathers. Minimum, medium or maximum security prisons, troubled fathers put those men in a position, in a condition, in a place where they were dangerous to the rest of us.

Do you need to know about the father of Al Capone, John Dillinger, Jeffrey Dahmer or a very long list of cruel and morally disfigured men? I didn't think so. The stories are basically the same...failing fathers.

Let me not stay on the dark side to make the point...there is no problem in our lives except a father problem! If there are failing fathers, there are also FAITHFUL fathers.

You may not know much about history's great fathers so let me remind you.

The story you always heard about honest George Washington and the cherry tree incident cannot be confirmed through George Washington's family history, but what you didn't know is that our nation's first president's father was very fond of his children according to George Washington's memory of him. Augustine Washington instilled a work ethic and integrity into little George as he built farms and a mining business. Mary Washington. George's mother, cared deeply for her children, writing to George "I am,

my dear George, your loving and affectionate mother.” He in turn referred to her as “my revered Mother, by whose maternal hand I was led from childhood.” Even though Augustine Washington did not live to see George’s twelfth birthday, he fully imprinted his values on George in his most formative years. It was George’s mother Mary who continued to reinforce his father’s lofty values, the values that would create the greatest American president. (6)

What about Abraham Lincoln? You know about his unwillingness to quit despite multiple defeats, but you didn’t know that his work ethic came from his father Tom Lincoln, the frontier subsistence farmer who turned wild acres into farm land. Tom showed his pride in his son’s intellectual leanings, even though he could not teach Abe knowledge from books. He did instill the determination to never quit under any circumstances as he encouraged Abe to pursue the talents of his bright mind. Abe’s father knew he was destined for greater things. When young Abe’s parents Tom and Nancy moved the family to Indiana wild country to begin a new farm, they read Abe Bible tales and taught him the Calvinist Christian view of the world. (7)

Martin Luther King Jr. made history as the leader of America’s desegregation, but what you didn’t know is that Martin’s father, Martin Luther King Sr. was described by Martin Jr. this way: “My strong determination for justice comes from the very strong and dynamic personality of my father.” Martin Jr. had one particular childhood memory etched into his mind. His father took him to Atlanta’s segregated downtown to buy shoes. When the clerk insisted that father and son move to the back of the store to be waited on, Martin Jr. watched his father speak firmly to the clerk saying “We’ll either buy shoes sitting here, or we won’t buy shoes at all.” Martin Sr. took young Martin’s hand and confidently walked out of the store. (8)

Even if you’re not interested in football, you know Vince Lombardi. You can’t read a book on success where Lombardi is not quoted. You know about Vince Lombardi, but you don’t know about Harry, the father who made the man. Harry Lombardi showed a gruff exterior and talked tough about pain saying “No one’s ever hurt. Hurt is in your mind.” Harry sometimes lectured Vince on his triangle of success: sense of duty, respect for authority and strong mental discipline.

Harry Lombardi regaled his children with philosophies about freedom and responsibility. Vince’s father expected him to worship every day when he was growing up so it had become as much a matter of discipline and routine as devotion. (9)

Let’s summarize so no one misses the point.

Saddam Hussein, Joseph Stalin, Karl Marx, Adolph Hitler...children of failing fathers.

George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., Vince Lombardi...children of FAITHFUL fathers.

Any questions?

Got trouble? Got Marriage trouble? Got employee trouble? Got boss trouble? Got an endless stream of life’s troubles that won’t leave you feeling safe or secure? It’s simply, completely and forever a father problem.

It is a simple fact of life...the more ANGER or FEAR you had in the first 10 years of your childhood, the more trouble you ARE or HAVE today.

Did you end up with a failing father? How can you be certain? You can be sure by giving your father the Real Dad Score using the Real Dad definition.

What is the Real Dad definition? It is the single summary definition that sets the master standard for what a true father must be in order to turn out positive, productive, contributing adults which create great future generations.

Do you want to see the simple definition of a Real Dad? First the definition, then how to score your father.

A Real Dad is consistently tough but fair. He takes a genuine interest in the challenges, opportunities and joys of each of his unique children.

That's it. Imagine we had a hundred million fathers who could fulfill that single, simple definition. What kind of nation would we have? But I'm jumping ahead.

How do you give your father a Real Dad score? It's very easy. First, scan your memories of the first ten years on earth. These were the first ten years when your brain neuron network was being formed. These are the years that really mattered. In those ten years, score your father against the definition. On a 100% down to 0% scale, your dad was consistently tough but fair, he took a genuine interest in your challenges, opportunities and joys and treated you like a unique person.

Now scan your first ten years of memories, some scenes with your father jump out, but beyond those, you have this feeling, this sense about your father in that childhood time that allows you to emotionally yet accurately give him a rating against this very clear and simple standard of what a Real Dad is.

If your father scored in the 90%'s, you are a very successful person and everything you touch turns into something good. It doesn't mean your life is trouble free, but it does mean that you get through troubles and come out on the other side in a better condition than when you went in. Most of all, you learn from your mistakes and don't make them a way of life.

If your father scored in the 80's, you are leading a content life where struggles are few and far between, certainly not a pattern. You're still successful.

If your father scored in the 70's you may have some issues, but they are not anything you can't work around. Some anger, some fear but you can do what you need to deal with it.

A Real Dad score in the 60's range shows the beginning of life troubles. Failing fathers produce patterns of difficulty in family, friends, self image, health, money, time and peace of mind that are troubling and persistent throughout the lives of their children.

Look around you. You have uncles, grandfathers and dads. Look at their children. You know their children! Know any challenging children in your family tree? Look at their fathers and see the tree. You've heard the slogan, but now see the truth in it: "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree." That's the profound truth. The Father makes the quality of apple, son/daughter, and with few exceptions, apples stay where they fall.

Real Dad scores in the 50's and below are much more intense. As your Real Dad score drops below the 50's trouble has been a pattern of your life. This trouble can come out in a multitude of ways, but the worst sides of your father are coming out in you through your career, your marriage, your social life, everything!

Do you have a raging temper when situations become frustrating? Just look to your dad. Do you have the ability to win friends and influence people? Thank your dad.

Real Dad is a phrase that describes the adult male who was present in your first ten years of life. The most successful people have their biological father as the person who fulfills the Real Dad definition, but in life, that is not always possible. It is so very important for you to know that the programs your father gave you are not your fault. You were programmed at a time when you did not have all the facts. You were not able to logically sort out your own opinions. You took on your father's values without a choice.

If you have troubles today, it's not your fault, but it IS your responsibility. There are ways for you to change course on those values that bring trouble to yourself and others. These ways can be found.

Should you blame your father with anger and resent that he saddled you with these problems? How could you? Your father did everything based on what he knew at the time. What else could he do? Become a wonderful father suddenly? After all, it was your grandfather's values your father was living on. This is the reason generations of successful families produce generations of successful adults as seen in the case of the Rockefeller and the DuPont's. It's also the reason there are "crime families".

So what can you do to become a Real Dad if you're not gifted by the father you were given? First you must really and truly want to. Do you have a child or children you feel responsible for? Do you feel something deep inside that cares about the adults they will become? If you did not have a Real Dad yourself, is there a desire inside you to change the course of history for your children?

If you do, then you need a single thing to focus on. You must focus on one idea that will act like your faithful compass. This compass is one message that puts everything you need in one place, with one goal: Become a Real Dad. This is the statement that will you'll check, and will check you in every situation with your children. Without this compass, you will drift and forget. Your kids will pay life long for the troubled values you give them in their first ten years.

Here is your compass...

I am a Real Dad. I am consistently tough but fair. I take a genuine interest in the challenges, opportunities and joys of each of my unique children.

Repeat this to yourself. Repeat it again. Say it over and over while you're driving in the car alone. Say it under your breath when your children are testing you in their most difficult moments. At the end of this article is the compass set in type that you can hang on the wall or carry in your wallet. If you are serious about becoming a Real Dad, put one in your bedroom, your living room, your bathroom, your kitchen. Your children will even help you remember. They will quote the Real Dad definition and keep you a Faithful Father. In those times when your children challenge and frustrate, fight your dark side. Your children need you to succeed. No matter where they are in those critical ten years, they will be cheering you on to be a Faithful Father...a Real Dad.

Now, some important definitions:

CONSISTENT: This means you are not controlled by your moods. You don't ignore a discipline problem on Tuesday, then pounce on your children for the same act on Wednesday.

TOUGH: This means you learn how to discipline your children from people wiser than you. Your toughness is appropriate, never overboard. You set limits for your kids and those limits are strong, firm but based on positive values. When you are tough, you always remain emotionally in control.

FAIR: You are not weak or a pushover. You are fair. You know how to forgive your children, teach them through every day situations. You teach but also listen to their ideas, giving them the benefit of the doubt when you must.

GENUINE INTEREST: If most fathers are really honest, they would admit their interests are often for themselves, not their children. Showing genuine interest in your children on a consistent basis requires you to stay focused on a big cause...you are producing America's future adults and you are doing it now, tomorrow afternoon, at the ice cream stand and community pool. Let them know they are very important to you.

CHALLENGES: Children must learn through failure. When they fail, you, their father, must give them the opportunity to discover that ALL growth takes place through failures, not successes. Show them how to get up and get through it.

OPPORTUNITIES: Your children's opportunities are tiny compared to yours, but you must notice when a new event brings them a chance to learn- a vacation invitation with a friends' family, a new club to join, a lemonade stand. Encourage their opportunities to learn about this world. Be interested and ask them questions to get them thinking.

JOYS: When things go right, dad and his kids must celebrate. You must notice and get just as happy as they are. Joy is what happens between a father and his children when failures have done their work and success arrives in small and big doses.

UNIQUE: Each of your children is not the same. Notice all the ways they show their uniqueness. Let them know you notice in a multitude of ways and they will be fiercely loyal to you.

If you want to know more about how your values pass from generation to generation, read the article "Your Invisible Lifestyle: Is it helping or hurting your marriage?" available from the author along with the definitions of A Real Mom, A Real Husband and A Real Wife. Contact the author at larry@winrprofile.com.

- (1) Saddam, King Of Terror -Con Coughlin -Thorndike Press
- (2) Hitler, The Pictorial Documentary of His Life -John Toland -Doubleday & Company
- (3) Stalin As Revolutionary -A study in history and personality- Robert Tucker -W.W. Norton & Company
- (4) Karl Mark, His Life and Thought -David McLellan -Harper & Row
- (5) Bureau of Justice
- (6) Divorcemag.com
- (7) All Cloudless Glory, The Life of George Washington, from Youth to Yorktown -Harrison Clark -Regnery Publishing
- (8) Abraham Lincoln - Thomas Keneally -Thorndike Press
- (9) The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr. -Warner Books
- (10) When Pride Still Mattered -A Life of Vince Lombardi -David Maraniss -Thorndike Press

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