

Parenting Is a Long Game



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I had really good parents. Thankfully, I still 'have' them, but I intentionally used the past tense to focus on the formative years. My parents loved me, loved each other, taught me right from wrong, and gave me trust even when I sometimes did not deserve it.

This may surprise some of you then when I share that when I left high school as an Honors Student with a full academic scholarship and a myriad of leadership accolades that I turned into, at times, a person I was not always proud of in college and even as a young professional.

Why I Made Poor Choices

I partied, abused too many substances, fought, made poor

financial decisions, and did not treat people – particularly those I was dating – very well. To paint a clearer picture – I was the poster-boy for your stereotypical fraternity guy. To be clear, as a fraternity guy, I know that this picture and stereotype is ill-informed in general – it just was not for me.

So, what happened? I was raised right. I knew right from wrong and still I chose to do wrong. This seems counterintuitive. It is. And now, it is quite embarrassing. But, it was the truth.

How My Parents Responded

Throughout all of my carrying on I knew three things. First, my parents loved me unconditionally. Second, I knew they were not fools and they would continue to hold me accountable as much as they could. Most importantly, I knew the type of man I wanted to become even if I was not acting in a manner in which anyone could tell, except me. I also was very confident I would become that man, just on my own time.

How I Became Responsible

As my life unfolded, I fathered a son out of wedlock with a woman I had only dated a few times. This occurred at the age of 24. The moment I received notice of this I realized it was time to grow up. I made the decision at that moment to become the man that my parents raised me to be.

Now, as it turns out, that mistake is one of the very

best things that have ever happened to me in my entire life. But, that is not the point of the story. The point is that parenting is akin to sowing seeds. Parents are continually pouring into their children and you never quite know what is going to stick and how. Moreover, even if something sticks, it may not come to yield very quickly. Thus, parenting is a long game.

So, if some of you reading this right now are trying to figure out what you did wrong or why your kids are not acting the way you have raised them to behave, the answer may be that you have done absolutely nothing wrong. Sometimes, as humans, we have to find our own way. And even for the most stubborn among us, like myself, we often come back to the truths and lessons taught to us by our parents on our own time. In hindsight, I wish I would have aligned my behaviors to the values my parents instilled in me earlier, but I cannot go backwards. All I can do at this point is to be thankful that my parents never quit parenting and never quit loving me. Even when I did not deserve it, I always knew that they trusted that I would turn out to be a good man. I hope they can now say that they were right.