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父爱深深

Chicken Soup for the Father's Soul

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Mark Victor Hansen
Jeff Aubery
Mark Donnelly
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——父爱深深

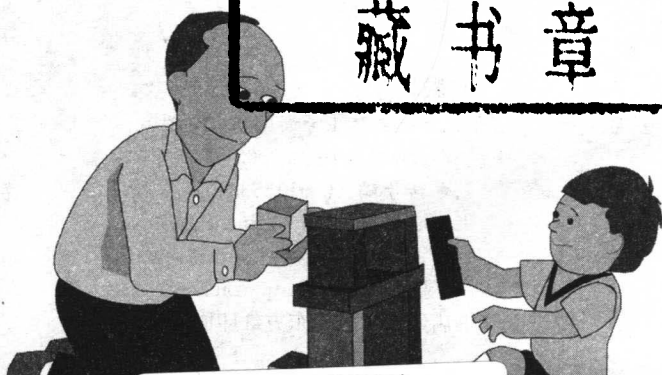
CHICKEN SOUP
FOR THE FATHER'S SOUL

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*In loving remembrance,
we dedicate this book to
Robert L. Donnelly.*

*Your heart, soul, love and wisdom
live on within these pages.*





Introduction

Motherhood. The word evokes warm images of comforter, nurturer, healer and giver of unconditional love. *Fatherhood*, on the other hand, summons more stalwart visions of protector, provider and purveyor of wisdom. A father's love, though just as strong and reliable, is not always wholly captured or conveyed with quite as much emotion.

We embarked on this project three years ago because we wanted to try and capture the elusive essence of fatherhood in all its myriad forms. Often misunderstood, the relationships between fathers and their children are many times more difficult to define than the bond mothers form with their offspring. In the course of this journey, we found that fathers, too, can be comforters, nurturers and healers. They can be comedians, coaches, leaders and teachers of life's greatest lessons.

Each contributor to this book writes of someone touched and transformed by fatherhood. Many of the stories were written by fathers, but you'll also find insights from sons, daughters and grandchildren who have felt, understood, and have been changed for the better because of the love of a father.

Perhaps some of the stories will help you to better



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appreciate the vital role you play as father; others may give you new ideas on how to express love to your family. Yet others may touch a place in your heart and awaken a truth hidden about the depth of love your own father harbors for you.

We were enchanted and enlightened by these stories, and we hope that you will be, too. We discovered that even though some fathers don't express their feelings verbally, they experience just as much emotion, and at times even more deeply, than mothers. Fatherhood is filled with incidences of pain and healing, confusion and insight, tears and laughter. It is indeed unconditional love, but in a different flavor than motherhood. It is this quiet celebration of the father's soul that we have sought to bring you.

*Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Jeff Aubery,
and Mark and Chrissy Donnelly*

INTRODUCTION





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FATHERHOOD

Fatherhood is the greatest opportunity in the world—to have children and watch them grow at various stages of life. I stop and look at these pictures three or four times a day, remembering what a wonderful time that was in my life. Children are the greatest gift that God can give you.

Bill Bell





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A Moment Can Last Forever

Loading the car with the paraphernalia of our youngsters, ages three to nine, was hardly my idea of fun. But precisely on schedule—and at a very early hour—I had performed that miracle. With our vacation stay on Lake Michigan now over, I hurried back into the cottage to find my wife Evie sweeping the last of the sand from the floor.

“It’s six-thirty—time to leave,” I said. “Where are the kids?”

Evie put away the broom. “I let them run down to the beach for one last look.”

I shook my head, annoyed by this encroachment on my carefully planned schedule. Why had we bothered to rise at dawn if we weren’t to get rolling before the worst of the traffic hit? After all, the children had already spent two carefree weeks building sand castles and ambling for miles along the lakeside in search of magic rocks. And today they had only to relax in the car—sleep if they liked—while I alone fought the long road home.

I strode across the porch and out the screen door. There, down past the rolling dunes, I spotted my four youngsters on the beach. They had discarded their shoes and were tiptoeing into the water, laughing and leaping each time a wave broke over their legs, the point obviously being to see how far into the lake they could wade without drenching their clothes. It only riled me more to realize that all their dry garments were locked, heaven knew where, in the overstuffed car trunk.

With the firmness of a master sergeant, I cupped my hands to my mouth to order my children up to the car at once. But somehow the scolding words stopped short of my lips. The sun, still low in the morning sky, etched a gold silhouette around each





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of the four young figures at play. For them there was left only this tiny fragment of time for draining the last drop of joy from the sun and the water and the sky.

The longer I watched, the more the scene before me assumed a magic aura, for it would never be duplicated again. What changes might we expect in our lives after the passing of another year, another ten years? The only reality was this moment, this glistening beach and these children—*my children*—with the sunlight trapped in their hair and the sound of their laughter mixing with the wind and the waves.

Why, I asked myself, had I been so intent on leaving at six-thirty that I had rushed from the cottage to scold them? Did I have constructive discipline in mind, or was I simply in the mood to nag because a long day's drive lay ahead? After all, no prizes were to be won by leaving precisely on the dot. If we arrived at our motel an hour later than planned, no forty-piece band was going to be kept waiting. And how could I hope to maintain communication with my children, now and in later years, if I failed to keep my own youthful memory alive?

At the water's edge far below, my oldest daughter was motioning for me to join them. Then the others began waving, too, calling for Evie and me to share their fun. I hesitated for only a moment, then ran to the cottage to grab my wife's hand. Half running, half sliding down the dunes, we were soon at the beach, kicking off our shoes. With gleeful bravado, we waded far out past our youngsters, Evie holding up her skirt and I my trouser cuffs, until Evie's foot slipped and she plunged squealing into the water, purposely dragging me with her.

Today, years later, my heart still warms to recall our young children's laughter that day — how full-bellied and gloriously companionable it was. And not infrequently, when they air their fondest memories, those few long-ago moments—all but denied them—are among their most precious.

Graham Porter



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Wake-Up Call

I was sitting in a bathtub full of moldy sheetrock when my thirteen-year-old son asked the question. "Can you take me golfing sometime?" he said.

I had a bathroom to remodel. It was fall, and the forecast for the next week was for a 100 percent chance of Oregon's liquid sunshine. I wanted to say no. "Sure," I said, "what did you have in mind?"

"Well, maybe you could, like, pick up Jared and me after school on Friday and take us out to Oakway."

"Sounds good."

Friday came. The showers continued. Looking out the window, moldy sheetrock seemed the saner choice. But at the appointed hour, I changed from home-improvement garb to rain-protection garb and loaded the boys' clubs and mine in the back of the car. In front of the school, Ryan and Jared piled in. Ryan looked at me with a perplexed expression.

"What's with the golf hat, Dad?" he said.

It was, I thought, a silly question, like asking a scuba diver what's with the swim fins.

"Well, I thought we were going to play some golf."

A peculiar pause ensued, like a phone line temporarily gone dead.

"Uh, you're going, too?" he asked.

Suddenly, it struck me like a three-iron to my gut: I hadn't been invited.

Thirteen years of parenting flashed before my eyes. The

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birth. The diapers. The late-night feedings. Helping with homework. Building forts. Fixing bikes. Going to games. Going camping. Going everywhere together—my son and I.

Now I hadn't been invited. This was it. This was the end of our relationship as I had always known it. This was "Adios, Old Man, thanks for the memories but I'm old enough to swing my own clubs now, so go back to your rocking chair and crossword puzzles and—oh yeah—here's a half-off coupon for your next bottle of Geritol."

All these memories sped by in about two seconds, leaving me about three seconds to respond before Ryan would get suspicious and think I had actually expected to be playing golf with him and his friend.

I had to say something. I wanted to say this: *How could you do this to me? Throw me overboard like unused crab bait?* We had always been a team. But this was abandonment. Adult abuse.

This was Lewis turning to Clark in 1805 and saying: "Later, Bill. I can make it the rest of the way to Oregon without you." John Glenn radioing Mission Control to say thanks, but he could take it from here. Simon bailing out on Garfunkel during "Bridge over Troubled Water".

Why did it all have to change?

Enough of this mind-wandering. I needed to level with him. I needed to express how hurt I was. Share my gut-level feelings. Muster all the courage I could find, bite the bullet and spill my soul.

So I said, "Me? Play? Naw. You know I'm up to my ears in the remodel project."

We drove on in silence for a few moments. "So, how are you planning to pay for this?" I asked, my wounded ego reaching for the dagger.

"Uh, could you loan me seven dollars?"



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Oh, I get it. He doesn't want *me*, but he'll gladly take my money.

"No problem," I said.

I dropped Ryan and Jared off, wished them luck and headed for home. My son was on his own now. Nobody there to tell him how to fade a five-iron, how to play that tricky downhill, how to hit the sand shot. And what if there's lightning? What about hypothermia? A runaway golf cart? A band of militant gophers? He's so small. Who would take care of him?

There I was, alone, driving away from him. Not just for now. Forever. This was it. The bond was broken. Life would never be the same.

I walked in the door. "What are you doing home?" my wife asked.

I knew it would sound like some thirteen-year-old who was the only one in the gang not invited to the slumber party, but maintaining my immature demur, I said it anyway.

"I wasn't invited," I replied, with a trace of snottiness.

Another one of those peculiar pauses ensued. Then my wife laughed. Out loud. At first I was hurt. Then I, too, laughed, the situation suddenly becoming much clearer.

I went back to the bathroom remodel and began realizing that this is what life is all about: Fathers and sons must ultimately change. I've been preparing him for this moment since he first looked at me and screamed in terror: not to play golf without me, but to take on the world without me. With his own set of clubs. His own game plan. His own faith.

God was remodeling my son. Adding some space here. Putting in a new feature there. In short, allowing him to become more than he could ever be if I continued to hover over him. Just like when I was a kid and, at Ryan's age, I would sling my plaid golf bag over my shoulder and ride my bike five miles across town





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to play golf at a small public course called Marysville that I imagined as Augusta National.

I remember how grown-up I felt, walking into that dark clubhouse, the smoke rising from the poker game off to the left, and proudly plunking down my two dollars for nine holes. Would I have wanted my father there with me that day? Naw. A boy's gotta do what a boy's gotta do: Grow up.

I went back to the bathroom remodel project. A few hours later, I heard Ryan walk in the front door. I heard him complain to his mother that his putts wouldn't drop, that his drives were slicing and that the course was like a lake. He sounded like someone I knew. His tennis shoes squeaked with water as I heard him walk back to where I was working on the bathroom.

"Dad," he said, dripping on the floor, "my game stinks. Can you take me golfing sometime? I need some help."

I wanted to hug him, rev my radial-arm saw in celebration and shout, "I'm still needed!" I wanted to tell God, "Thanks for letting me be part of this kid's remodel job."

Instead, I plastered one of those serious-Dad looks on my face and stoically said, "Sure, Ry, anytime."

Bob Welch