



**FAMILY RENEWAL RESOURCES PROJECT**  
parenting forever, through whatever

### **Kids n Dad Shared Support (KND) - Home to the Family Renewal Resources Project (FRRP)**

An Essay: And the Band No Longer Played Puff the Magic Dragon!

I am writing this, I have just finished watching my nearly 22 year old granddaughter do her last dance solo as she complete her last semester at University of Toronto. For her it feels like the end of a 18 year love affair- a veteran of competitions; and yet on this day she is like the 5 year old wearing her first booty shorts and nervously trying to find her mom and dad in the audience of her first 'competition'.

Her family changed in time; but dance remained a steadfast part of her life. It was to be a day of a melancholy celebration, not just for her, but for all of her family and our often divergent journey. In reality though for her parents, it was a remarkable accomplishment- for all that their lives changed- they were there for her at this closing and the beginning of the next episodes of her life.

On this day my daughter, gave me the opportunity to take my two grand boys (ages 8 & 10) to the theatre to surprise their sister. We arrived at the same time as my other daughter (aunt) and my 8 year old granddaughter. Kayla spotted them from down a long hall way and broke into a full run, tears and hugs freely flowed.

I know that all of this as a grandpa was uncertain. As a separated dad, there were times when I feared or suffered through interrupted parenting and the grief and sense of loss that most separated dads know too well and too often.

As a maternal grandparent in a changed family, I had the opportunity to shape grand parenting on a day to basis. I became the driver often, and those times were and remain special in my memory. It was a rare day that her 'thank you grandpa' didn't leave m misty eyed as she departed for the studio or home. I was able to 'be there' from buying those first booty shorts (didn't know what booty pants were) to her final solo. She tolerated my playing Les Miserable whenever she entered the car. For that I ask her forgiveness.

Remarriage as a separated dad is complicated at best, overwhelming at worst, and often a mixture of both. A new partner to a separated dad must build a relationship mid-stream with vulnerable, even wounded, step children, who they see on a part time basis.

Yet the amazing thing is that grandchildren when they come along, know you only as grandma, or gram or oma. Dance became part of grandma and grandpa's lives. Grandma loves the theatre and soon we had 'our thing' with our granddaughter and outings to Drayton Theatre and Stratford became a welcome feature in our lives and that of our granddaughter. It will be so for a lifetime for her and for her children.

A few years ago my daughter and son-in-law took a picture of this seventy one year old grandpa (me) with my three year old granddaughter hand in hand on the Gulf of Mexico in Naples, Florida. This year at the ripe old age of 7 she started dance. I again bought the booty shorts (I do know what they are now); it apparently became a tradition. I now get to drive her to dance and at the moment we have replaced the nursery rhyme disc with the best of Queen. I am looking forward to the next 12 years

Becoming a dad is transformational for men. It changes everything. It gives a purpose, a new priority to life that had been previously absent. Fathers recall the moment when they became dad and the love and commitment made at that time to their child... through whatever.

Recently a distraught father spoke about the emotional birth of his child. His eyes misted over as he talked about the newborn's serious health concerns and the oath he made that first night to be at the child's side, forever. His fear now was that with the end of his marriage his oath to be his child was now in jeopardy. His fear is the common fear of every separated dad as they enter a journey with unpredictable outcomes for every parenting relationship.

A father from our community wrote the following words that capture what many dads 'settle for' in order to restore calm to their children's lives. For most it feels like it is a breaking of their oath to their child.

His words: '...it's the days you wake up with the kids and put your kids to bed that count. Full days with dad. I love them, my kids love them. The rest become transition days, you are excited to see them on one end and depressed to see them off on the other, emotional baggage that unchecked can pollute your limited time together.' (a separated dad)

I became a father in my own unique way through the courageous decision of a young woman through an infant adoption. I vividly recall our social worker placing our son in my arms. Ten minutes later, she returned to ask if we wanted to keep him. I still laugh at the question- she didn't seem to understand that he became my son...through whatever, the moment she placed him in my arms.

The adoption process was a time of anxiety, scrutiny and fear. Would we make the list of approved parents? Control rested in the perspective of the social worker and her mandate to ensure the best interests of that child. It was a difficult process, but one that you necessarily endured. Push back against the intrusiveness and judgment was not a viable option. My son and later my daughter had not yet been placed in my arms.

Curiously the birth of my youngest daughter had no such intrusiveness or scrutiny as she was placed in my arms by a caring nurse in the birthing room.

The next many years no one questioned whether I was a full parenting partner or quite frankly whether I was the best of parents or the worst of parents or somewhere in between. I was dad!

The common bond of separated fathers commences, almost unwittingly, the moment that the intimate relationship breaks down. It is a return in some ways to the scrutiny of the social worker **EXCEPT that** the children are your children NOT the children of birth mothers or social workers or lawyers, judges or.

Diane McInnis on May 25, 2018 wrote the following excerpt in the Record from her essay advocating for Collaborative Law.

'Lawyers are rigorous advocates for our clients, which in an adversarial system, pits one parent against the other, in a blood sport of trying to discredit the other person and inflate his or her own virtuous behavior'.

The consequences of a blood sport legal foundation is too often prolonged chaos over calm and interrupted parenting often for dads and paternal grandparents

"My boys' dad is not an unpleasant obstacle; he's an integral part of their lives." (Jennifer Fink, a Wisconsin mother from Building Boys) Integral is defined as the completing of the whole (your child).

A life-long role that each parent joyfully committed to the day their son or daughter was placed in their arms.

When I was on that beach that night on the Gulf of Mexico, I was accompanied by probably 200 children, mothers, fathers and grandparents, all quietly standing in awe of this majestic/spiritual experience. I knew that my father and gramps also were with me in spirit, hand in hand, with the little one. Being a dad and grandpa was the most important part of their lives.

My hope is that I have honoured their lives, in my own way.

Father's Day is every day for a father who has made it through the darkness with his children and grandchildren...hand in hand.

The following was written by a dad who had the personal strength, support system, resources, resiliency and tenacity to make it through the darkness to an uncertain outcome. For too many dads all of those characteristics were necessary to ensure an integral parenting relationship.

'He is such a great kid (as all kids are). He is the type of kid that will spontaneously hug and kiss you and tell you that he loves you! He even does this in the school yard where he can be seen by his buddies. It's the kind of gestures that leave me in tears and feeling so lucky to have him in my life.'

Thank you to all the dads who graced our program over the past 18 years. It has been an honour and every child is better for your presence in their life.

Barry Lillie (son, father, grandpa)

2013 Recipient of the Fernand Lozier

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