



JPA

Juvenile Protective Association



June 2018

The Dreams of Fathers and Children

Remembrance and memories are important in the field of mental health. With Father's Day occurring this month, I asked my husband, John, what he remembered and how he felt when our son, Christian, was born 26 years ago. He told me that in the early years, as he would hold Christian against his chest, he found himself dreaming and planning out his little boy's future. He envisioned an entire life he would share with his son. But it didn't take all that long before he realized our son was also dreaming and planning. And over the years, his dreams and plans looked different from his father's. My husband told me that as he learned about what was important to Christian, he also learned about himself. Mostly, he said, he learned to let go of his dreams and his plan. In their place, he found something far more valuable — unconditional love.

John's remarks reminded me of another dad I know from my days of working with first-generation students attending college. At his daughter's graduation celebration, I asked him why he had agreed to let his only daughter travel to Georgetown when so many other fathers of first-generation students insisted that their children stay close to home. He didn't pause before saying, "Because my dream for her wasn't important. Her dream was."

It seems to me that one of the things these fathers must have grappled with is letting go of the very children they lived to protect. What a contradiction. But in the end, they fulfilled a higher purpose by honoring the dreams and plans of their children instead of their own. In today's world where posturing and winning seem all important, it's nice to know that strong, proud men can be humble and set aside their desires, and that they do these things not out of weakness but out of love. And to that, we can all say Happy Father's Day.

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