

Extraordinary Fathers

What personality traits do some men have that allow them to be an extraordinary Father? As we recognize Father's Day, I have identified the following personality traits that constitute being a highly influential and effective Father. The following characteristics are taken from Dr. Abraham Maslow's study of personality traits of a self-actualized person, Dr. Victor Frankel's model of logotherapy and my husband, Mike Archer, who has been an extraordinary role model for me and our son.

- "Resilience"

The ability to bounce back from adversity. These men are able to accept that life has limitations and disappointments and can overcome or manage obstacles by finding creative ways to problem solve. They are then able to teach their children how to deal with disappointments in a way that helps build strength and character. For example, My father grew up in a very poor family. His father died when he was thirteen. He quit school in order to work and provide for his mother and sisters. He later finished school and became a successful business man.

- "Humility"

The capacity to ask for help. These men are willing to admit they do not have all the answers and they can benefit from the expertise of others. The most successful men are those who are open and willing to listen to other's advice without feeling threatened.

- "Empowerment"

Finding resources to respond to life events in a way that allows for resolution rather than victimization. These men can differentiate what they can and cannot control. Dr. Victor Frankl was a holocaust survivor. When his family was killed and he was stripped naked, he realized, "they can take everything from me except my freedom to respond any way I choose to what they are doing to me." While he was in the concentration camp, he wrote the book *Man's Search for Meaning* which continues to be one of the most influential books ever written.

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- "Interpersonal Relationships"

The ability to interact with others with compassion and empathy. These men are able to communicate and listen in a way that helps them understand other's point of view. For example, a father may not be able to understand why his child has a certain feeling, but he will listen without being overly critical or condescending.

- "Flexibility"

To adjust expectations with current reality. These men are willing to make adjustments in their opinions and choices when they are presented with new facts or circumstances. They are not so rigid in their belief system that they dismiss their child's point of view.

- "Temperance"

To identify and channel emotions without internalizing or acting out of control. These men take responsibility for their reactions and can admit when their behavior is inappropriate. They are able to ask for forgiveness and be willing to make necessary changes. They can speak their truth without blaming or hurting others.

- "Acceptance"

The ability to respect self and others. These men are secure with themselves and can allow others to be different without making judgments. In fact, these men appreciate diversity and are open to learning from others, including their children!

- "Humor"

The capacity to laugh at self and others. These men can find some humor even in difficult situations. Randy Pausch, in his book "The Last Lecture" stated that after he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer he had planned a scuba diving trip with his friends. One of his friends said, "Randy, don't bother using sunscreen." He laughed and said, "humor is one of the greatest gifts our species has."

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- "Meaning"

To recognize that regardless of changing circumstances, life never ceases to have meaning. Victor Frankl concluded, "There is always someone looking down, a friend, family member or even God, who would expect not to be disappointed." My husband was diagnosed with leukemia and suffered greatly during his chemotherapy and bone marrow transplant. He never complained or asked "why me?" Instead he kept focusing on me and our son. He knew his struggle to survive was more than just for himself.

The healthiest Fathers are those who can teach and model that *"Success is in the Journey, not the destination."* Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr.