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The Family Friend

A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.

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Challenging Choices for Fathers-Work vs. Family

Dr. Vincent Viscomi is one of thousands of fathers who loves his work and family. Trying to choose one over the other seemed like an impossible task. Although he was aware of the fact that his children would frequently go days without seeing him and his wife attended social events without him, he just couldn't find a way to make the decisions that he knew he needed to make.

"Even after being in a horrible accident because I fell asleep at the wheel driving between hospitals, I still could not see my way clear to make changes in my life," said Dr. Viscomi. "In my head I knew I needed to make some choices, but I didn't feel free to make those choices. I talked with a number of my physician friends who seemed to be dealing with the same kinds of challenges. While my wife and I struggled with the issues at hand, our counselor asked me, 'What would you rather be doing, sitting at home with your child reading a bedtime story

and tucking him into bed or working up a patient in the intensive care unit?' I could not answer her because I enjoyed doing both. After a lot of discussion with my wife, I realized I would be happier if I could spend more time with my children and less time at work. With the encouragement of friends and assistance from hospital administrators and co-workers, I began the process of change."

"People struggle with making choices for a number of reasons," said Dr. Tim Irwin, Industrial and Organizational Psychologist. "Often men find their identity and security in their work. Making certain choices is fraught with tremendous risk such as decreased income, and the fact that walking away from a career often implies failure or weakness. Additionally, one's circumstances may appear to give a person greater or lesser degrees of freedom to make choices. Some people believe they are stuck and have no choice."

According to Dr. Irwin, people make choices for one of three reasons:

- (1) **Pain**-people get themselves in very painful situations. Pain is a powerful motivator. For exam-

ple, it took a serious automobile accident for Dr. Viscomi to realize he had to do something different.

- (2) **Realization of consequences**-The reality of what will happen if things don't change sets in.
- (3) **Realization of how much better things could be**-A person begins to get a picture in their mind that things could be significantly better if they pursued a certain course of action. Rather than waiting for something better to happen, they say, "I must do something different." For instance, a spouse may quit his/her job, take a job that requires less travel, or go to school to open up better opportunities. Dr. Irwin refers to this as being on the offense.

"Now that I have made the decision to spend more time with my family I don't want to give that up," said Dr. Viscomi. "I don't think I have ever been happier. I recognize that this is time I can't get back. I recently overheard my son talking with one of his friends. The friend commented that they used to never see me at anything

and now I am around all the time. My son replied, 'He's less of a doctor, but he sure is a better dad.'

"This choice has allowed me to meet a lot of dads, be a Cub Scout master, coach my kids' soccer teams, attend social functions with my wife, and be home for dinner. It is a much more rewarding life. When I was trying to make some healthy choices, one of my physician partners told me I needed to get my priorities in order—faith, family and job. I believe I have finally accomplished that. I have found significance in my faith, children and wife. When my priorities are in order I can better meet the needs of everyone I serve including my patients."

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FAMILY FIRST

The Daddy Doll Under the Bed

When I was a little kid, a father was like the light in the refrigerator. Every house had one, but no one really knew what either of them did once the door was shut.

My dad left the house every morning and always seemed glad to see everyone at night.

He opened the jar of pickles when no one else could.

He was the only one in the house who wasn't afraid to go in the basement by himself.

He cut himself shaving,

but no one kissed it or got excited about it. It was understood whenever it rained, he got the car and brought it around to the door. When anyone was sick, he went out to get the prescription filled.

He kept busy enough. He set mousetraps. He cut back the roses so the thorns wouldn't clip you when you came to the front door. He oiled my skates, and they went faster. When I got my bike, he ran alongside me for at least a thousand miles until I got the hang of it.

He signed all my report cards. He put me to bed early. He took a lot of pictures, but was never in them. He tightened up mother's sagging clothesline every week or so.

I was afraid of everyone else's father, but not my own. Once I made him tea. It was only sugar water, but he sat on a small chair and said it was delicious. He looked very uncomfortable.

Once I went fishing with him in a rowboat. I threw huge rocks in the water, and he threatened to throw me overboard. I wasn't sure he wouldn't, so I looked him in the eye. I finally decided he was bluffing and threw in one more. He was a bad poker player.

Whenever I played house, the mother doll had a lot to do. I never knew what to do with the daddy doll, so I had him say "I'm going off to work now" and threw him under the bed.

When I was nine years old, my father didn't get up one morn-

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ing to go to work. He went to the hospital and died the next day.

There were a lot of people in the house who brought all kinds of good food and cakes. We never had so much company before.

I went to my room and felt under the bed for the father doll. When I found him, I dusted him off and put him on my bed.

He never did anything. I didn't know his leaving would hurt so much.

It still does.

By Erma Bombeck, June
21, 1981

Men Are Four:

He who knows and knows he knows—He is wise—follow him.

He who knows and knows not that he knows—He is asleep—wake him.

He who know not and knows not he knows not—He is a fool—shun him.

He who knows not and knows he knows not—He is a child—teach him.

—Arabian Proverb

Happy Father's Day!