

A Personal Experience

The first time I really got to know my daughter:

It was the fall of her seventh grade year. We were on our first Dad and Daughter High Adventure Treks' overnight canoe trip. Fifty-two dads and daughters had packed an unbelievable amount of gear into 26 canoes and paddled 8 miles to a sandy island on the Brazos River.

On each campout we would do some exercise or game designed for the dads and daughters to know each other better. For this weekend, with the help of three ministers and a psychologist, we put together a list of 8 "mirror" questions (a mirror question is one each person asks the other, with the answer being followed by the question, "Why?"). We had set aside 45 minutes for this exercise, which was to be part of our Sunday morning devotional. Each dad and daughter was to find a quiet part of the island where they could sit alone and ask each other the list of questions. What an extraordinary time that was! We sat in the warm sand beside the quietly flowing river, with the morning sun shining on our backs, and the 45 minutes stretched into an hour as we began a conversation that continues to this day. It started very simply:

"Megan, what's your favorite color?"

"Green. No, red. But I really like purple, too. Daddy."

"Megan, why are those your favorite colors?"

And her answer started painting a beautiful picture of what was inside my child's mind. Then she asked me:

"What's your favorite color, Daddy?"

"Blue."

"Why, Daddy?"

"Because..."

And I began painting for my Daughter.

The questions were simple, yet revealing: "What are the three most favorite things in your room?" "Here's what I like best about your face." All followed by, "Why?" It was amazing how many dads took that list home and asked their wives those same questions.

For the first time in our lives, Megan and I had a meaningful, two-way, relationship-building conversation; which profoundly changed us both. Even though it was designed as a game, it was the first time my daughter had asked me a personal question. And it flattered me to have her sit and listen to my answer. By the same token, this was probably the first time in her life that I had spent more than a few minutes asking Megan questions and then listening to her answers – really listening – with my *undivided* attention! That one hour, when she was twelve years old, was priceless for both of us. Had we never gone on another campout, we would have lost out on some special adventures; but thanks to that one, we would never lack the ability to talk to each other.

As we were leaving our quiet place, we spent a few minutes searching the shoreline for a special stone to give each other in remembrance of our first canoe trip. I don't know how I found it. It was only the size of a dime. But it was a stone shaped perfectly as a heart. Megan has it on her bookshelf today, between her soccer trophies. She handed me a small rough stone the size of half a marble. "Daddy, this special one is for you!" I turned over the gray, rough half, and on the inside was a crystal just starting to form. I carry it with me today.



Kipp and Megan 5th grade

-Kipp Murray, Founder



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