

Single success

Not all families need fathers for discipline

Hercules was lucky in one regard. Among the 12 tasks assigned to him, raising a child by himself wasn't one of them.

My sister is a single parent, and given the fact that I only see my niece for a couple of brief visits to Washington each year, I had the opportunity recently to reflect on how the last four years of single parenting has affected both my sister and her daughter.

Some people might argue that the lack of a father somehow equates with the lack of an authority figure, or a male role model.

Louis Farrakhan, for example, portraying himself as spokesman for the Million Man March in Washington, D.C., said black, fatherless families in America were the result of African-American men failing to take their fatherly responsibilities seriously.

In my sister's case, the assumption that a father figure is needed or required would be mistaken on both accounts.

Where providing a sense of authority is concerned, rather than rely on verbal or physical reprimands, she practices a stern policy of cause-and-effect explanation with my niece, along with a fair measurement of "Time-Outs," thrown in.

Watching this approach, I had to admire the patience and work involved with helping one child learn and grow in an encouraging environment. She would take my niece aside, and explain why standing on the couch is a bad thing to do, or that tracking in the house with muddy shoes is wrong, even if the cat does get away with it.

We both agree that yelling at kids



Fred Poyner

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is counterproductive and doesn't positively instruct them morally or intellectually.

When I look around at the way kids are growing up today — committing crimes at younger ages, dropping out of school and reliving their poor upbringing through their own future families — I think my sister might be the exception rather than the rule when it comes to good parenting.

On the question of whether a father figure is necessary to raise children, I think every situation is different. Getting the courts involved in the breakup of a family is unfortunate, but it is oftentimes the only way for a child to escape an abusive parent or a home environment where one or both parents are

contributing to the child's eventual downfall.

In my sister's case, being a single parent also means dealing with a host of problems that millions of other single moms have to face. Because she goes to college, she has to find someone to watch her daughter on a daily basis. Then there is always the looming knowledge that her choices won't affect just herself in the long run, when it boils down to being the primary provider for her family.

In applying for future graduate schools, she has to consider what funding is available through each particular school because she has a dependent, the safety of the area surrounding the school and how a move will affect her child's development. Because my sister and I moved around considerably while growing up, I'm willing to bet she's given that last one a lot of thought.

But the fact is, for the past four years, my sister has managed pretty well, along with all those other millions of women who are in the same proverbial boat. They have demonstrated that the concept of a family far exceeds the white picket fence daydream that traps so many people into marriages of convenience and loveless families destined for breakup somewhere down the line.

Nobody has the right to sit in judgment of single parents or criticize how their families are put together. Their jobs are hard enough as is.

Besides, the only basic ingredient any family needs is love.

Poyner is a graduate student in museum studies and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Wanderlust

Business suits not in senior's future plans

I still don't believe that this is actually going to happen.

I've been living with a certain basic level of paranoia for weeks now. I'm afraid to look at my mail. Every time the phone rings, I cringe. I'm sure that this time, the voice on the other end of the line will be some nasal bureaucrat saying that the university has a problem with me graduating.

We're sorry, but we can't let you count that last geography class because we know you were tipsy when you took the final. We're sorry, but it has been determined that 60 of your total credit hours were in classes taught by extraterrestrials, and the new chancellor doesn't believe in them. We're sorry, but you owe the library two limbs and a vital organ in payment for the air you breathed there. Under the circumstances, we cannot possibly allow you to graduate. Well, we could, but we won't. You'll have to start over as an economics major and take math classes. ALL math.

Such are the nightmares accumulating in my head. But as far as I know, my graduation will happen. I paid the tuition. I paid the fees. I paid off the bookstore, the library and the health center. And I paid the fee to apply for a degree.

Everyone wants to know what my plans are. Some of my professors ask with concern. Others seem relieved that I'm actually getting out of their hair once and for all, and don't care what I'm planning to do as long as I'm doing it somewhere else.

I usually tell professors and relatives that I'm planning to run away with the circus. It's not that far from the truth.

Fellow students ask about my plans with a mixture of envy and disbelief. No one thought I'd graduate before they did. My fellow graduating seniors tremble in fear as they ask.



Jennifer Mapes

"I'd like to write 'bend over and smile, we're the ...' above the door where it says Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid. But I've outgrown this place. I'm ready to move on, and I'm ready to move far."

Do you have a job? Have you sent any resumes? Have you had any interviews? What ARE you going to do?

I do have plans for after graduation. But my plans do not involve a resume. My plans have nothing to do with interviews, career choices or business suits.

I used to think that I was here so I could get a decent job as soon as I got a diploma. But the "job" has always remained an elusive concept for me. I had a few vague ideas about it. I hoped I'd make a lot of money. I hoped I'd be telling other people what to do. I thought I would like to have power, influence and lots of nice stuff.

I used to think that I wanted to get out into the "real world" and take it by storm.

But some of my friends work in that real world now.

They put in long hours doing things they don't much care about. They don't have time to do any of the things they used to enjoy. They are plagued by office politics and corporate stupidity. They are constantly in fear of losing their jobs to "downsizing" or the company making room for the manager's daughter.

My education has been a long process of figuring out what I don't want. So if that's the real world, give me an ivory tower and a couple of mortar rounds to lob from it. I'm not coming down.

I know I don't want a nice car, a beautiful house, expensive clothes or snobby friends. I don't want to get married or have children. I don't want to go to graduate school yet, and I don't want to move out of my mom's house and get a life.

I do want to travel. I have a plane ticket and a passport.

A few weeks after May 4, I'm going to grab a couple of changes of clothes and a sleeping bag and put them in a backpack. Then I'm going to take myself, the pack and my Nikon, and I'm going to wander around the world for as long as I can get away with it.

There are a few things I'd still like to do at UNL. I'd like to blow up that cursed Mueller Tower. I'd like to write "bend over and smile, we're the ..." above the door where it says Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid. But I've outgrown this place. I'm ready to move on, and I'm ready to move far.

There's another real world out there. It's full of people whose cultures and languages I don't understand. It's full of places that are dirty, smelly and potentially hazardous to my health.

But I have to go out to see what's there. I'm going to do what I love. I hope that the money will follow.

Mapes is a senior advertising and history major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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