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Family Man

It is hard to believe that someone can turn their life around in an instance, but my father is a prime example of change. My dad's past was riddled with chaos and bad decisions. My dad wasn't interested in looking at the big picture; he was more interested in the big pitcher of beer. He was head strong and stuck in his ways, and he almost seemed helpless. Even though getting in fights and spending nights in jail should have been his calling, it took a little more than that to make him evaluate his life decisions. The day he found out that he was going to be a father he "stopped dead in [his] tracks, and never looked back." My dad registered for classes at Chaffey College and started working as a security guard for Kaiser. He was a full time dad, student, and worker. After many long nights and exams, my father earned his doctorate in Physical Therapy. My dad is proof that people can change from one extreme to another.

My dad wasn't always the hard working man he is today, and at one point he was at the opposite side of the spectrum. He was constantly in jail because of bar fights, but it was pointless because he would just get in fights in the jail cell. He "practically lived in the cell", but he never saw a problem with it because "[his] friends were always in there with [him], it was a big party." It seemed like parties were always on his mind, even in high school he would tend to have a little too much fun. He never liked school, so he rarely went. He would call in sick and go to the beach to play in volleyball tournaments. My dad graduated from high school by half of a percent, and when his parents asked him about college he laughed. He "didn't want to waste their money on

something [he] he wasn't going to give his all.” My dad started working at a steel company right out of high school, so he never went to college. The steel factory was “dark and gloomy, and people were always losing fingers because of the machinery.” My dad always brings up the time when he had to look for his boss's fingers; he found them and got a raise. My dad admits that he should've taken that as a sign to go to school, but he was already set in his ways. He didn't want to stray from what he knew, which was partying and fighting. My dad seemed to be going nowhere fast, but a miracle was about to change his life forever.

My sister wasn't necessarily planned, but she came at the best possible time. “The minute I found out I changed” my dad still swears by this, and my mom vouches for him. The second my mom told my dad she was having a baby “he changed, something about him even looked different, i've never seen anything like it.” My dad quit his job at the steel factory and got another one as a security guard at Kaiser Hospital. He worked the grave yard shift so he could take classes at Chaffey Community College during the day. My dad got off work at 4 in the morning, and his first class was at ten in the morning. There were some days when he “wanted to drop dead on the couch” but he didn't want his daughter to forget she had a father. He hardly got sleep because my sister wasn't a healthy baby. She was always sick, and would cry all night. After many doctors appointments, and money, my parents finally found out that my sister was allergic to milk. “It was a tough couple of months”, but the thought of being a father, and coffee, helped him push through the days. He tried his best to get good grades, and surprisingly he got straight A's. He wanted to be an inspiration to my sister, and he wanted to show her that she could succeed at anything if she put her mind to it. He “began to love something more than [himself], and she wasn't even born yet.” He was living his life in way so that it could be a good example for my sister. Her opinion already mattered to him. When my sister was born, my father

started evaluating his life even more, and he realized the job he had still wasn't suitable. My dad ran into some crazy situations working the nightshift. He said "people were always trying to break in, but they were bad at it." One time, a couple tried to break into the hospital to get prescription drugs, and when they saw my dad approaching them they "had the weirdest expression on their faces". The man slowly lifted up a gun and pointed it at my dad. My dad examined the gun and laughed, "It was an air soft gun held together by Batman duck tape." Even though it was a funny story to tell, my dad realized that the situation could have been serious. He never wanted to leave his family in a place where they weren't being supported. He wanted a job that was "stable, and more reliable." He also wanted a job that would support his family no matter what. He was looking forward to having a big family, and he knew this salary wasn't going to cut it. My dad was motivated to get a better job, so he went to Loma Linda medical school to get his doctorates in physical therapy .

My dad had a full schedule; he was taking care of my sister, going to school, and still working the night shift. He would come home exhausted, but it was a small price to pay. He was finally looking at the big picture, and he knew that all of long days would be worth it. While my dad was going to school, my mom began to work to bring in more income. At first it was difficult because they would have to take my sister to day care, or they would leave her with a sitter. A group of mothers, and my dad, convinced Loma Linda to open a day care at the school. So on days when my mom had to work, my dad would take my sister to school with him. He would go see her in between classes, and some professors were even open to letting my dad bring her to class. The professors loved having her in class "she brightened up the room, and she helped [him] stay on track." Even though the day care made it easier for my dad to see my sister more often, he still wished he could see her more. Sometimes he felt like he was in over his head,

but he “would push forward and try to ignore all of the negative thoughts”. My dad believes that “negative thoughts can be the death of people, and it keeps people from there goals.” My dad kept this in his mind when things seemed to be going south. For a while money seemed scarce, because there were so many things that needed to be paid for. All of the money he saved up was going towards school and home, it was hard to pay for school and food, but “[he] still would work extra hours to buy [my] sister toys.” He wanted to give his family everything they wanted, and he was so close to getting a job that would make it easier. “The toughest part was when finals came around” because my dad would spend most of his time studying, and it seemed like he hardly saw my sister. He wanted to pass the finals so going to school would actually be worth something, but being away from her made him “feel like a terrible father; and it was the worst feeling in the world.” In the end, all of the studying paid off. After years of hard work and late nights, my dad finally earned his Doctorates degree.

Now when I listen to my fathers old stories, it sounds like he is talking about a completely different person. Becoming a parent brought my dad closer to his parents. They were always worried that he was going down the wrong path, and that often caused arguments between them. My dad looks back and realizes that “he put them through hell.” He is grateful to be in a happier and better place in life. He looks forward to going to work everyday, and constantly compares it to his Steel Factory job. Things couldn't be anymore different between the two jobs, and he loves to look back and laugh at the extreme differences. My dad is now the chief Physical Therapist at his work, which is “kinda like being the boss, but better because you don't have to fire people.” My dad is a happier person now, and he doesn't “need a party to have fun anymore.” I've always looked up to my dad because he's never given up on himself, and he never takes a day for granted.

Many people judge others based on their current situations because they don't believe that people can change. Even though my dad's past isn't the brightest one, he used it to his advantage to achieve his goals, and to become a better person. Being a full time student, father, and worker helped my dad gain the characteristics that are admired by people today. Even though he didn't make the decision for himself, it was the first time he put someone else's needs before his own. My dad became less selfish and started being more open to change. My father never gave up, even when he was at his lowest points, and he now expects the same attitude from my sister and I. Life can include crazy twists and turns, but sometimes even what seems like the worst moments can lead to something better. My father's story has taught me never to doubt anyone, and that change can start at any moment.

Works Cited

Norton, Adam. Personal Interview. August 25, 20`5.