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MEG MEEKER, M.D.

STRONG FATHERS,



STRONG DAUGHTERS

10 SECRETS
EVERY FATHER SHOULD KNOW

Chapter Two

She Needs a Hero

“What are you going to be when you grow up?” You probably started hearing that when you were eight years old. Chances are, your first thoughts were about Superman, or you wanted to be a cowboy, a fireman, a knight, or a football star. What you really wanted to be was a hero.

Well, I have news for you. Your daughter wants a hero—and she has chosen you.

Think about heroes: they protect people, they persevere, they exhibit altruistic love, they are faithful to their inner convictions, and they understand right from wrong and act on it. No fireman counts the odds when he runs through sheets of flame and showers of concrete to save just one terrified person.

Heroes are humble, but to those they rescue, they are bigger than life.

So how do you become a hero to your daughter? First, you should know that she can’t survive without one. She needs a hero to navigate her through a treacherous popular culture. And you should know that being a twenty-first-century hero is tough stuff. It requires emotional fortitude, mental self-control, and physical restraint. It means walking into embarrassing, uncomfortable, or even life-threatening situations in order to rescue your daughter.

You might need to show up at a party where your daughter’s friends—and maybe your daughter—have been drinking, and take her home. You might need to talk to her about the clothes she wears and the music she likes. And yes, you might even need to get in the car at one in the morning, go to her boyfriend’s house, and insist that she come home.

Here’s what your daughter needs from you.

Leadership

When your daughter is born, she recognizes your voice as deeper than her mother’s. As a toddler, she looks up at your enormous frame and realizes that you are big, smart, and tough. In her grade school years, she instinctively turns to you for direction.

Whatever outward impression she gives, her life is centered on discovering what you like in her, and what you want from her. She knows you are smarter than she is. She gives you authority because she needs you to love and adore her. She can't feel good about herself until she knows that you feel good about her. So you need to use your authority carefully and wisely. Your daughter doesn't want to see you as an equal. She wants you to be her hero, someone who is wiser and steadier and stronger than she is.

The only way you will alienate your daughter in the long term is by losing her respect, failing to lead, or failing to protect her. If you don't provide for her needs, she will find someone else who will—and that's when trouble starts. Don't let that happen.

Nowadays, the idea of assuming authority makes many men uneasy. It smacks of political incorrectness. Pop psychologists and educators have told us that authority is suffocating, obtrusive, and will crush a child's spirit. Fathers worry that if they push their kids or establish too many rules, they'll just rebel. But the greatest danger comes from fathers who surrender leadership, particularly during their children's teen years. Authority is not a threat to your relationship with your daughter—it is what will bring you closer to your daughter, and what will make her respect you more.

In fact, girls who end up in counselors' offices, detention centers, or halfway homes are not girls who had authoritative fathers. Quite the opposite. Troubled young women spend most of their time in counseling describing the hurt they felt from fathers who abandoned them, retreated from their lives, or ignored them. They describe fathers who failed—or were afraid—to establish rules. They describe fathers who focused on their own emotional struggles rather than those of their daughters. They describe fathers who wanted to avoid any conflict, and so shied away from engaging their daughters in conversation, or challenging them when they made bad decisions.

Your natural instinct is to protect your daughter. Forget what pop culture and pop psychologists tell you. Do it.

And be ready. Your daughter wants you to be an authority figure, but as she matures, she will likely test you to see if you're serious. Dads, as a rule, know adolescent boys will eventually start to challenge them. The one-on-one basketball games will get more competitive, and the son will start to buck dad's authority.

Let me tell you a secret: many daughters challenge their fathers too. They'll dive into a power struggle with you, not to see how tough you are, but to see how much you really care about them. So remember that when she pushes hard against your rules, flailing, crying that you are mean or unfair, she is really asking you a question: Am I worth the fight, Dad? Are you strong enough to handle me? Make sure she knows the answer is yes.

When I was in college, my father was so protective I thought that he was a borderline psychotic. I attended an all-women's college (my own decision) and really didn't give my parents much trouble. I was the oldest girl in the family and had a firstborn's sense of responsibility. One summer night before my senior year, a handsome fellow who had recently graduated from college and held a very respectable job invited me to dinner. When he came to my house to pick me up, my dad introduced himself. Unfortunately (or fortunately) for me, something about the

fellow rubbed my dad the wrong way. I couldn't see it because, quite honestly, the guy was really cute. My father asked what time I would be home. Yes, he reminded me, I was living at his home for the summer and that included a curfew. I told him that I would be home at midnight.

We went to a fancy restaurant and afterward went to another for dessert and drinks (the drinking age was eighteen back then). Needless to say, I was so enamored with my date that I forgot about the time. It was 12:30 a.m. All of a sudden, at this lovely, quiet restaurant, I heard my name called over the PA system, telling me that I had a phone call. I was mortified. I knew exactly who was calling. I was so embarrassed that I simply asked my date to drive me home. I was furious with my father. He was waiting at the front door with the porch lights on. My date walked me into the house. The poor guy needed to use the restroom, but before he could get there, my father told him he didn't care for the way he had kept me out so late, especially when he had known I was supposed to be home an hour earlier. Then he actually told the poor guy that he was no longer welcome in our home, because he had been disrespectful to me! My date was so upset he left without using the bathroom.

I was seeing red, poised to verbally duke it out with my dad. I was twenty years old, I told him, and fully capable of deciding when I should be home. I refused to be treated like an out-of-control adolescent girl. I yelled at him. He yelled back and let me know in no uncertain terms that I was in his home and he had every right to tell me when I had to be back. I didn't speak to him for two days. I wasn't as upset about the rules as I was embarrassed by being called at the restaurant and, worse, to have my date kicked out of the house!

I went on a few more dates with the man (he never came back to the house; I met him out) and really thought he was wonderful. He was gracious, intelligent, and fun to be with. Also, he was very polite and, whatever my dad said, I thought he treated me with respect, and I liked that. One day, I dropped by his house unannounced. I felt very relaxed with him, and just felt like saying hello. When I knocked on the door, I was greeted by a gorgeous twenty-something blonde. I felt sick. Particularly when I found out that the skunk wasn't entertaining just her, but other women as well.

I realized then that my dad recognized in this man something that I hadn't. The tough guy back home, who insisted on curfews even when I was a grown-up and who told me exactly what he thought about the men I dated, was right, as he'd been right many times before. He never once reneged on the authority he felt as my father—and I can tell you now that nothing feels better to a teen or young daughter than being protectively embraced by dad's strong arms. His authority kept me out of trouble, it made me feel loved, and more than anything, it made me proud that he was my dad.

Your daughter needs your guideposts of right and wrong, of proper and improper behavior. When she hits third grade or high school or marriage—all new experiences for her—she needs to know what you think is best for her. You've been there before. She trusts your opinion. So let her know. Don't be afraid. And don't shy away from the big questions in life. She'll want to know what you think her life's purpose is: whether you believe she should indulge her own passions or devote herself to helping others.



When Ellie was fifteen years old, she came to me for a checkup. She was excited, and after a few minutes of chatting she told me why.

"My dad and I just got back from Peru," she blurted. "It was so cool. You can't believe how beautiful the mountains were and how amazing the people were we met."

"How nice, Ellie. Who all went on your trip?"

"Just my dad and me."

"What about your mother, your brother and sister? Didn't they want to go on vacation with you?"

"Oh no, we weren't on vacation," she said. "We went to bring medical supplies to people in the Andes who don't have any. My dad and I planned our trip a year ago and this was something he just wanted to do with me, I guess."

"That must have been fun."

"Well, I really wouldn't call it fun. It was incredibly hard. We hiked up the mountain every day starting at about ten thousand feet and set up clinics in empty rooms and sometimes outside. I took blood pressures and gave fluoride treatments to kids and grown-ups and my dad treated their sicknesses."

I stopped my exam, picturing this elfish young girl hiking up mountains, shoving trays of fluoride paste into strangers' mouths, and sleeping outside.

"What in the world prompted your dad to take you on the trip?"

"Oh, I don't know. He has always been the kind of guy who looks out for people who are poor or sick. Even here at home since I was really little he would take me with him to the soup kitchen in town. One time I remember my mom got real mad at him because we went to pick up Chinese food for dinner. On the way home he saw a guy rummaging through a trash can at a park. He stopped the car, jumped out with all of our Chinese food, and asked the man what he would like to eat. The guy chose the egg rolls—my mom's favorite. That's why she got mad. He never told her about the guy in the park, she just thought he forgot them. So I guess going to Peru was just what's natural for him. He loves taking care of others."

"What about you?" I asked. "Did you like what you were doing in Peru?"

"Oh yeah, I loved it. It was amazing. I really wanted to go. You know, watching my dad, who's this big-shot, really smart doctor, go off to help people who don't have enough food, who die of gross stuff like worms and junk, makes

me want to do it too. I know a lot of my friends' dads don't do stuff like this. But my dad's amazing. He's always thinking about what others need more than what he wants. I think that's cool and I want to be like him. That's why I went."

By living his beliefs, Ellie's father led her to the same spot.

Do a gut check on your own beliefs, and think of what sort of woman you want your daughter to be. She'll learn not only from what you say, but from what you do.

One of the best things fathers can do is raise their daughters' expectations of life. That will directly affect how your daughter talks, how she dresses, how well she does in school, even what sports or musical instruments she chooses to play. You can help her set goals, help her define a higher purpose for her life, and as a result, her self-esteem will skyrocket. And it will bring you closer, because she'll recognize you as a leader and an ally, helping her to chart a better course.

My teenage patients know that I am a strong advocate of teens postponing sexual activity. They know that I will talk to them about sex. They know what I will say. And even if they don't want to listen, they almost always respond positively because they know I'm on their side, that I care about their future.

Fathers need to be strict, but they also need to be kind, accepting, and loving. It's a matter of balance. The don'ts are easy. Don't let your daughter think of you as the enemy. Don't use your authority in ways that are cruel or that sting. Don't try to live your life through hers. Don't try to make her your robot. But do lead.

If you don't accept the authority that is naturally yours, if you don't set high standards, if you don't act to protect your daughter, if you don't live a life of moral principle, your daughter will suffer, as my patient Leah suffered.



I met Leah when she was sixteen years old. When I pushed open the exam room door, I saw her sitting with her mother. They looked very solemn. They weren't reading magazines or talking or even looking at the pictures on the walls.

"Hello, Leah, I'm Dr. Meeker. It's nice to meet you." I offered my hand.

"Hi."

She didn't look up.

I waited.

She still didn't look up.

Her mother broke the awkward silence. "I'm Leah's mother, Dr. Meeker. She really doesn't want to be here. I made her come because something's wrong. I'm really worried she's depressed."

As Leah's mother spoke, I watched Leah. All I saw was the top of her head. She sat hunched over, her hands tucked in the opposite sleeves of her shirt, her legs crossed beneath her in the metal chair.

When her mother spoke, Leah didn't flinch.

"When do you feel her depression started?"

"Well . . . you see, Dr. Meeker, this is kind of embarrassing."

Leah looked at her mother and shook her head, trying to stop her.

"Leah, we have to talk about this. I know it's tough but it's very important."

Leah's gaze returned to the carpet.

"You see, a couple of months ago Leah went to her friend's house. He was her best friend. They had known each other since the fourth grade. Anyway, they spent a lot of time together. You know, not dating or anything. Actually, Leah was just beginning to date another guy, his name was Jeremy." Her mother paused, and Leah began to shift in her seat.

"Well, anyway, this friend—her boy 'friend,' not Jeremy—asked Leah to help him with a paper he was writing. Dr. Meeker, they studied together all the time. This particular day, I think it was a Tuesday—no, Leah, was it a Thursday?"

I was growing impatient but waited.

"Doesn't matter. She said that, yes, she would help him and they went to his house after school. Apparently—now, Leah, you correct me if I'm wrong—apparently they were sitting on the couch studying and out of the blue he pushed himself on her."

Leah's mother stopped for a moment. Leah began sobbing.

"Leah," I tried. "Is that what happened?"

Leah nodded her head. Her mother continued. "I don't know all that happened, you know, sexually. But whatever it was it really upset her."

Leah cried harder.

Over the next forty-five minutes, I learned from the tentative sixteen-year-old girl and her mother that Leah's trusted friend had suddenly "turned on her" and forced her to participate in many sexual acts.

"Leah, do you realize what this boy did to you was illegal? He should be in jail right now. What did your father do?"

She delivered her father's response in a monotone voice. "My dad said to me, 'Boys will be boys,' and left to go golfing."



The assault was devastating to Leah, but the blow that had brought her down was the fact that her father didn't care and didn't defend her. He could have been Leah's hero. He could have stormed over to the young man's house and demanded an apology for his daughter; he could have demanded that the young man turn himself over to the police. But instead, he went golfing.

If her dad had done anything to defend her—even a simple angry phone call to the young man—he could have spared his daughter months of agony. Instead, it took eighteen months of counseling to help her depression abate.

It is a fundamental principle of human behavior that having an authority makes us feel good. Yes, all of us. While instinctively we want to buck it, when the sky falls in, we run to it. When confronted by any problem, any challenge, any mess that we can't get ourselves out of, we want someone who has answers, someone who can offer support, someone who can offer a helping hand and who knows what to do.

Dad, that's what your daughter wants from you. Your daughter doesn't have to like your mannerisms, your rules, your clothes, or your political views, but **you never want to lose her respect**. And you won't if you live your moral beliefs and act with authority. If you do that, you will be a hero in her eyes. It's what she wants you to be. And I can say, as a pediatrician: Don't back out. Please. She needs you, possibly more than you can imagine.

Many psychiatrists believe that a father's response is the most important factor in how quickly a girl recovers mentally from a sexual assault. In fact, how a father responds to his daughter's sexual assault can be as significant a turning point in her life as the assault itself. Think about this for a moment. A sexual assault is possibly the most traumatic event a girl can experience. Now consider that many psychologists and psychiatrists say *your response* to your daughter's assault is as important as the event itself to your daughter's future emotional health. This makes sense, and here's why.

When a child (or adult) is humiliated or harmed, her natural instinct is to get back at the offender, to fight, to defend herself. Every ounce of her screams to claw, to run, to do something—but she is physically weaker than her attacker. Now she sees you. In her eyes, you are big, tough, and smart. Her gut tells her, "He can help. He's the answer. My dad will make things right because he loves me. My dad will kill him. He'll stand up for me." Before you

even learn what's happened, she has imagined your heroic response. Mom can't do it, but you can.

If you do what your instinct tells you to do. If you get angry and take action, she will feel affirmed. She will feel loved. She will feel defended. She will feel a sense of justice. She will feel a sense of closure over the horrible incident. When you respond as her hero, both of you win.

But if you respond as Leah's dad did, you achieve the exact opposite effect on every count. Your daughter will feel discredited, unloved, and undefended. She will feel that dad is not someone she can count on. She will feel no sense of closure, no sense of justice having been done, and she will even think that the horrible assault is what she has to expect from boys. And the result will be deep and long-lasting depression.

Leah was betrayed by her friend, failed by her father, and suffered depression, confusion, and a sense of helplessness and anxiety that a mother's care couldn't begin to alleviate without eighteen months of counseling. Would Leah have recovered sooner if her dad had acted as a hero? I know the answer is yes because I've seen hundreds of Leahs. And I submit that if he acted as a man ought, rather than shrugging his shoulders in weakness, he might have prevented Leah's depression.

Dad, it's not optional: your daughter needs you to be her hero.

Perseverance

One of the toughest aspects of being a hero to your daughter is not just deciding what is good and right for her, but also keeping her on track. Fathers can demand tremendous discipline from themselves, but they can find it much harder to stand firm with their children. Fathers get tired. Daughters can become defiant, manipulative, and wear their fathers down. This is where perseverance comes in.

I have seen this operate in my own home. My husband and I work together. With patients he is clear, decisive, and expects that his advice will be followed. Then he comes home. When our seventeen-year-old daughter insists on going to a beach party with friends until one in the morning, he listens attentively. It's ten o'clock at night and we're both exhausted. She isn't, so she looks at her dad and offers, "*Pleeease*, Dad." Then something peculiar happens. Rational convictions leap from his brain. This man who only hours before was clear and firm about what was best for his patients goes to complete mush. "Oh, honey, I guess if you promise to be home by one, you can go."

"Are you crazy?" I blurt out. "Seventeen-year-old guys and seventeen-year-old girls on a beach until one in the morning? I don't think so."

Too often fathers give in to daughters and then rationalize it away: "All kids experiment with alcohol and sex and a little bit of drugs, I can't keep her from that forever," or "Now that she's seventeen she's mature enough to handle herself." But this is the same daughter who, when she was ten years old, you pledged to protect from all

these things—and the dangers aren't over. They're getting worse.

Sure, other kids are experimenting with sex and drugs and alcohol, but other kids aren't your daughter. And your daughter will respect you more if you don't give in. The minute you waffle on your convictions, you lose stature in your daughter's eyes. She thinks you're smarter than other parents, tougher than her boyfriend, and care more about her—and what's right for her—than other people. Let me tell you a secret about daughters of all ages: they love to boast about how tough their dads are—not just physically, but how strict and demanding they are. Why? Because this allows daughters to “show off” how much their fathers love them. If only you could be privy to the private conversations of girlfriends.

If you only had to fight for her once, twice, or even ten times, the process wouldn't be so tough. But you might have to fight for her two hundred times. You only have eighteen short years before she is on her own. If you don't show her the high road now, she won't find it later. Perseverance in setting her on that road isn't easy. She might appear embarrassed by your interventions. She might sulk. She might even say she hates you. But you can see what she can't. You know how sixteen-year-old boys react when they see her in a halter top. You know how even one beer can make her unsafe to drive. You know a lot more than she does, and however hard it is to persevere in leading her the right way, you have to do it.

And that means not just setting and enforcing rules, but leading by example. When you persevere, even when your principles cost you dearly, she learns the lesson. She'll see you as a hero, and if she admires what you do, she will do it too.

Now here we must face a thorny issue—divorce. It's important for every good father to know the impact of divorce on his daughter. Only then can you help her.

Volumes of research on daughters and sons consistently reveal that divorce hurts kids. That's just the way it is. Daughters often feel abandoned, guilty, sad, and angry. They often become depressed. No matter how much a father tries to convince a daughter that it wasn't her fault, it doesn't matter. Up through adolescence, young people usually see themselves at the center of their family and friends, and that whatever happens, happens in large part because of them. So your daughter might not only feel responsible for your divorce, she could also feel devastated and guilty that she can't change your or her mother's mind about it. These feelings exist regardless of what you do. Only time and maturity help her sort this out.

But your daughter will also feel abandoned. She'll ask, “What was wrong with me? Wasn't I worth sticking around for? If Mom really loved me, why did she walk out?” This is where you must begin to help her.

Your daughter expects parents to stay married. If she sees you or her mother renege on that commitment, she becomes confused. Heroes, in her mind, keep fighting. In reality, though, sometimes you can't. If mom leaves, has an affair, or abandons the family through drinking, your fight is limited.

But whenever, for your daughter's sake, you can fight, you must. How you fight, how you persevere, how you

manifest your courage will *always* influence your daughter. Sometimes perseverance for your daughter's sake means sticking with her crazy mother. Maybe it means **sacrificing your own happiness for hers**. This is what heroes do. It is what your daughter expects. Making the heroic choice at work, in marriage, and throughout your life will shape your daughter, who she is and what she becomes. You need to lead her wisely, consistently, heroically.

And sometimes heroism gives us second chances.



Doug turned to look out his window. The whole point of vacationing in Florida was to celebrate twenty-five years of marriage with his wife, Judy, to reconnect with her, to bring something fresh to their relationship. The last thing he wanted to hear were Judy's complaints about how friends of hers had been criticizing her back home.

Suddenly, his eyes went black. He heard shrieks from tearing metal. Glass shattered, tires burned and burst. His body was thrown. His mind couldn't make sense of it. Was a bomb exploding? Was he dying or drowning?

Then came a terrible silence. Doug forced himself to be calm. His engineer's thinking took over. *Just take a few deep breaths. Figure out the problem. Face it, find a solution.* He shoved open his crushed car door.

Doug paused. He was telling me about the horrible accident that had happened more than ten years ago. His great fear, he said, was that as he shoved against the car door to escape and then rescue Judy, he heard nothing: no cries, no screams, nothing. Then he saw Judy's shoe. As he spoke, his black eyes turned away, and he cried.

Through his tears, Doug continued. The accident had happened on the Florida causeway, heading toward the Keys. An oncoming car had crossed the center line and hit Judy's side head-on. She was immediately thrust into a coma. Weeks went by as she lay in the intensive care unit of a strange hospital. Doctors told Doug that Judy would soon die. But she didn't.

While he waited, Doug asked a friend to search the remains of the rental car. He wanted to find his daily planner. He needed to restore order to his life. After all, he was an engineer.

His friend returned with the planner in hand. As Doug took it, he had an epiphany. He told me, "If God could return my day planner from the mangled steel of that car, surely he could give me back my wife."

Doug prayed. He persevered in hope that someday Judy would open her eyes, get off the hospital bed, and walk.

Then Judy did open her eyes. She fixed her gaze on Doug and the doctors. But behind her eyes, she wasn't there. She recognized no one, remembered nothing.

Doug's daughter Mindy took over the story.

"When my father brought my mother home from Florida, I was nineteen and scared. The mom I knew had died and someone else wore her clothes and stood in her shoes. She looked thin and ill. She couldn't remember the movies we had seen together, the endless nights she had helped me with homework. I was grieving and felt crazy.

"Life was really, really hard. The mother I knew was gone. My dad's wife was changed. I felt extremely protective of my little sister and I felt protective of my dad. Our relationship became quite peculiar. I took over much of my mother's role—which of course neither my dad nor I wanted—running the house and looking after my sister."

Mindy's body language was telling. She wasn't stiff or uncomfortable; she was attentive and clear. She looked directly into my eyes as she spoke. Sometimes she cried and occasionally she laughed.

Before the accident, she had deeply loved and revered her father. After the accident, her love and respect for him had soared. He became her hero.

"When he brought Mom home, she couldn't remember anything. My dad brought out photo albums and hired a teacher to help. It wasn't my dad's nature to be patient, but week after week, month after month, he worked with her. And he helped us kids, me and my younger brother and sister.

"Other fathers might not have been able to take it: to wake up every morning to a wife who didn't know you; to reteach her twenty-five years' worth of life. But my dad never gave up. Of course he knew that my mother would never be the same. He didn't know what was ahead. And that was the amazing part—he always looked forward.

"He changed his work schedule. He retired early and moved my mother up north, where life would be quieter and simpler. I know he still worries a lot about her."

"What was the greatest lesson your father taught you?" I asked.

"Undiluted faithfulness." She beamed. "He never caved. He stuck it out. He held on to God with his life and he fought for my mother."

Now, as an adult, Mindy realizes her father wasn't fighting just for Judy; he was fighting for her. He wanted Mindy to have stability. He wanted her to share his strong faith. He wanted his oldest daughter to find her own depth of strength. Was he her hero? Absolutely, Mindy told me. No one else could hold a candle to him.



Doug is a hero. I'm sure he doesn't think of himself that way; heroes never do. But Doug is what a father should be. All men are capable of doing what Doug did.

You may not think so. You may think his life sounds miserable. You may even think he's a fool to have stuck it

out.

But you haven't seen Doug's face as he talks. You haven't heard his calm voice imparting the wisdom he has learned from this experience. It is extraordinary. Doug has something I want, and something you want. It is an indescribable peace, a joy that comes only from persevering and doing what is right, even in the midst of anguish.

Doug is a great hero because he saved his family. That's what heroes do. They meet the deepest needs of the human heart.

This is sobering stuff and I don't take any of what I am saying lightly. It hits hard, but it is truthful and someone has to tell fathers to uncage their masculinity. In too much of popular culture, masculinity is either disparaged (often by feminists) or displayed wrongly (as in rap music). True masculinity is the moral exercise of authority. And your little girl needs it.

Here are a few pointers that all dads should have.

1. *Make a plan.* Your aspirations for your daughter will be clearest when she is young. When she's an infant, you know with crystal clarity what you will expect from her: everything from what she will be allowed to say and do to whom she can date. Write it down now, and keep it clear in your mind and in hers. Teens love to tangle with your thinking. So have your rules inscribed like the Ten Commandments—and stick to them.
2. *Have courage under fire.* Yes, you will be fired upon—by friends, pop psychologists, television programs, your wife, and your daughter. Keep your cool, but be firm and consistent. In the best men, kindness, strength, and perseverance go together.
3. *Be the leader.* Remember that you have far more life experience than your daughter. Even if her IQ is higher than yours, she can't make decisions as well as you can. You can see the big picture and weigh the consequences of actions in a way that she can't. Young children, particularly smart young children, have an astonishingly cunning ability to manipulate fathers. So, nice men, beware. When your two-year-old daughter has a temper tantrum, put her in time-out and ignore her until she calms down. When she's sixteen, do exactly the same. If you need to ground her for a week, or a month, do it. And don't ever take personally the venom spewing from her lovely tongue. She's still a kid. So you lead; don't let her. She'll have the entire rest of her life to run the show when she has her own home.
4. *Don't cave, persevere.* Heroes see a battle through until the end; they never run away. So stay in the fight, stay engaged with your daughter and your family, spend as much time at home as you can, stay consistent, loving, kind, and patient, and remember that you are more resilient than your daughter is. Parents often say that kids are resilient in crises like divorce. But they're not; kids just don't have a choice. You do. You can make the choice not to run when things get tough. You daughter can't tell you this, so I will: If there is any way you can stay married, do it. Even if your marriage seems doomed, stay in it, stay at home with your children for as long as possible, for their sake. Getting divorced when your daughter is twenty

is better for her than when she's fourteen. And you might find that the best remedy for a bad marriage is sticking it out. Things really can improve.

Don't bend under peer pressure. You will have friends (probably most of your friends) who will be much more lenient with their daughters. So what? The risks out there are very real. I see them in my examination rooms every day, and I appreciate—and daughters and wives appreciate—fathers who are heroes, fathers who don't relax until the battle leaves home (and really not even then).

This is a tall order, but I have seen enough heroic fathers to know that it's an order that every good man can fill if he sets himself to it. All it requires is that you be a man, a real man, which means a man of courage, perseverance, and integrity. You were made a man for a reason. You were made a man to be a strong, loving husband and father. So listen to your instincts, and do what's right. Be a hero.