

Things change when daughter takes over as the instructor

BY KENNY LAPINS
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SUNDAY MORNING WITH ...

I can make guacamole, sort of. I have had to learn how to cook since my divorce, to feed my daughters healthy dinners as well as to woo women. They don't teach boys this facet of cooking in high school Home Ec class, but apparently a man who can cook is highly desirable and sexy. School districts around the nation really should include that angle in the class description and syllabus — enrollment would skyrocket.

Anyway, I'm making slow and steady progress toward feeling comfortable in the kitchen. The Internet is a huge help, of course. Any recipe in the world is at my fingertips, accessible even as I roam the aisles of the grocery store in search of its ingredients.

But I've got an ace up my sleeve even more valuable than having the sum of human knowledge at the ready: my daughter Abigail.

At age 10, she is the one who can make a killer guacamole. Without a recipe. With whatever ingredients are on hand. Delicious every time.

So when I claim, "I can make guacamole, sort of," what I am saying is, Abby can make guacamole, and I made Abby.

It's a great system we humans have. We get a chance as we grow and develop to be the best version of ourselves that we can. Then, as we get older, if we're lucky, after finally amassing the wisdom that would have been helpful during our teens and 20s, we get a second chance to create that best version of ourselves through our children.

For example, it's too late for me to be a popular, confident high schooler. But I now have the wisdom that would have made that a no-brainer then.

So my second chance will come in a few years when I send Abby off to high school and arm her with the knowledge I lacked. I acknowledge it is foolhardy for me to hope that she will come home each day and tell me about her experiences. Likely she will be a typical teen girl and shun her dorky, ol' dad. But a man can dream.

What's even better is that Abby has taught me how to make her guacamole (although every time I try, I add too much salt). Just consider the karma of that for a minute. It is weirdly cosmic when you stop and think that you can learn something from one of your children. It almost seems selfish.

I think back to the times I sat with her for the midnight feeding when she was an infant. We would rock back and forth and, as she drank, I would talk with her. I never jabbered on in nonsensical babytalk. I would



Kenny Lapins' column runs every four weeks on Sunday as part of "Sunday Morning With ..."

quietly and calmly talk to her in a normal voice about science, philosophy, foreign languages, and literature in the hopes that exposing her to knowledge at whatever age would be beneficial.

This habit of mine has remained to this day. Abby finds my little lessons about everything — crepuscular rays, the physics of everyday phenomena, how to whistle, why boys are so annoying — a necessary evil of having me as a Dad. But it worked: she has become a person who is curious about the world.

I am more than happy to endure her disgusted and exasperated "Daaaaad!" when I start pointing out there are at least 1.5 million ants on the planet for every human being, that star is actually Mars, the brain is made up of about 75 percent water, and whatever else my mostly water, fact-crammed brain decides to spout off about as we walk down the street.

I endure her embarrassed groans because, again selfishly, this is how I ensure she will return the favor. If I turn her into a fact-junkie, I'm guaranteed to get back information I didn't know, that she has uncovered — or perhaps even discovered herself.

So there it is. I have helped create a person who seeks knowledge and has developed her own interests, such as cooking. And one day she taught me how to make guacamole.

Someone who once relied on me to change her diaper, wipe her nose, and hold her hand as she figured out how to take her first steps, is now teaching me things I didn't know. So where did this knowledge now in my head come from?

Me, but not me. The master becomes the student. It is a phenomenon that we have all seen and heard before.

But it is completely different to actually experience it. It somehow seems like the easy way out. As if I snuck into a theatre through the fire exit and watched a movie on how to make guacamole for free. Hopefully the second feature will be about how much salt to put in, because I think I missed that part.