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Honor thy parents

Note: this is a very personal post. Thank you for letting me share this with you, and for helping me with the healing process. Sometimes, writing makes everything so clear...

The call I dreaded

Last night I found out that my Grandfather died. I had been in Mexico on business, and the message my mother left was vague. By the time I called he was already buried. While I am sad, it was also a blessing for him. He had been in assisted care for years, and had spent the last month in hospice.

When I called my mother, it reopened wounds. To call my family dysfunctional would be generous. To call my mother sane would be a lie. Her "issues" have torn apart my family. Years ago I broke out of her gravity field. This topic alone is worth dozens of blog posts.

The end result is that I don't interact with my family. I have not seen my mother for 13 years. We had not talked for three years. Since she is the dominant figure in my family, this meant I also am cut off from my dad, sisters, aunts, uncles, etc...

For years I was in a dilemma. How do I honor my parents but protect my wife and kids(yes she is that bad)? It was hard, but I started to examine the concept of honoring my parents. What did it mean? Does it mean I need to obey my parents? Does it mean I need to submit to them? No, that is not the definition of "honor."

To honor is "to hold in high regard, to show respect to." Honor has nothing to do with submission or obedience. My parents are not at the same place in life, they don't understand things the same as me. In many ways, I have moved far beyond them. They raised me. They gave me food and shelter. They gave me love as they knew how. They did their best with the tools they had. For that I am grateful and I honor them. And for that I forgive them for everything else.

I also understand the role I played. I was not as mature as I am today. I felt I always had to be right, that I always had to win any conflict. I know I did not help bring things back together. I was young, I was immature, and I was as wrong as my mother. And for that, I forgive myself as well.

Life lessons

I believe life keeps throwing the same challenge at you until you solve it. For years I found myself fighting battles all too often. There always seemed to be a battle at work. Friction with a neighbor. I usually won and I moved ahead in life, but it was wearing me out. The stress was killing me.

I've been working on this for the last couple years. I've made strides, but there was still friction. Then there was the call last night to my mom. She was trying to pick a fight, and accused me of turning my back on my family. My old self would have jumped in or ignored it entirely.

Then a strange calm came over me. I was direct, honest, and assertive. I plainly told her that I disagreed. I told her that the reason it had been three years was that I was tired of being the only one trying. It was always me initiating the phone call. When I stopped calling...

When she disputed the facts, I wouldn't fight. I calmly said that she had the right to her own opinion, and that we would agree to disagree. This was my mantra, and I held to the facts. I would not take the bait. All this while expressing my love, hurt, and disappointment.

When she could not goad me into a fight, she ended the call. Am I sad? Yes, I had hoped she would be mature enough-or love me enough-to put our relationship first.

Am I glad this call finally happened? I'm not glad my grandfather died, but I am glad my mother and I talked. It gave me the chance to tell her how I felt. It gave me the chance to stand firm without fighting. It gave me the chance to learn the lesson life was trying to teach me.

Did I honor her? Yes.

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