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Baseball, America, and Fatherhood

How I Make the Most of Being a Part-Time Dad.

Summer was finally here. The long-awaited All-Star Team had been assembled, and I was the Coach. My son George, was one of our two best players. Together, we set out to win the City Championship and then States. The boys were only 10, so this was just a test run before the “big deal” their 12-year-old season would bring: a chance to play in and win the Little League World Series.

Little League has turned watching their annual playoff tournament into a national event. ESPN covers all the games, there are sideline reporters, the families’ backgrounds are shared through interviews and close-ups. Kids and coaches are mic’ed up during the game. Stars are born on ESPN2 as kids from around the world swing away at their short, but life-long dreams. The Little League World Series is the pinnacle. It’s what they all longed for. An endless summer of baseball finishing with a dog pile on National TV.

It was just a baseball tournament, but to me, it was much bigger. I wanted to create memories for these boys, teach them a thing or two about life, and win, baby, win. I know they’ll only be ten once, and for some of them, this will be the highlight of their childhood. If there was anything I could do to help make that happen, I was going to do it. Daily practice, nightly research, and analysis. Countless emails and text messages amongst the coaching staff. Hundreds of miles driven. A constant state of planning, hope, joy, and disappointment. Managing parents, league officials, umpires and my own emotional state. Little League Baseball in the Summer of 2017 was my full-time job - As head coach, I poured myself into the boys and their dreams. It was hard to tell who was more excited me or the kids.

The faded dreams of parents have a way of finding rebirth in their children.

You see, the faded dreams of parents have a way of finding rebirth in their children. In your sons and daughters, you see limitless possibilities. Your dreams are like a roulette wheel tilted in their favor, each heroic outcome outnumbering the chances of a wrenching defeat. Yet, life is a ruthless bookmaker and darkness wins out slightly in the long run. No one has good luck forever. I never had the chance to win the big game,

but man, I did fantasize about it. Every kid does. "It's the bottom of ninth inning, two outs, two strikes, bases loaded, all it takes is one grand slam to win the world series, it all comes this moment right here...now can he do it?" While I always was the backyard champion, the chances of pulling it off, in reality, were quite poor. Growing up has a way of revealing the true probabilities of success. The odds were low. That situation, the dream situation, the chance to become a 'legend' - will likely end with shame and pain rather than elation.

We had a great run. We won the City Championship handily and moved quickly through the State Tournament. We'd won 9 games in a row and were flying high until game number 10. We were losing most of the game but George hit a home run in the bottom of the last inning to kick off a furious comeback. A true hero's moment. We scored a few more runs to secure the win and a spot in the State Championship game. There was only one more game left for the title. A team of country boys from the far end of the state was the only thing standing between us and the perfect end to the perfect season.

As the baseball gods would have it, the game was a back and forth challenge. We were up, then they'd come back. The lead changed a few times. As the beautiful game has done so many times in the past, the final moment set up every boy's backyard dream. It was the bottom of the last inning, we were down three runs, there were two outs, and the bases were loaded. The next batter up was my son, George. It was movie script stuff here. Proud Dad and Coach looked over and thought "here it is kid, this is the dream stuff right here." With one swing, George could end the game and give us the Championship. He'd done it before. He could do it again.

When George walked up to the plate I said, "You got this, you got this." His dream and mine fused as one naive fantasy. At the time, I believed I was giving him a bit of strength to get that hit and win the game. But in reality, I was setting him up to fail. Did my own dreams cloud my judgment when I smiled and said he could do it even though the odds say no? Did I hope he'd live out my fantasy along with his own? Or was I being a good father and leading him to a painful 'growth experience' because, in the long run, it'd be good for him? I don't know. Being a father can be hard sometimes.

In the end, no dreams came true that day.

I stood ten feet from my son as he swung and missed on strike three, his head turned to show me the instant sorrow. I watched the joy vanish and agony arrive. The tears burned like the shame of letting down your teammates. His sadness transmitted directly to my heart. This was my son, a part of me up there. I wished I could do something to help him, but my only job was to rub his back as his head hung and body shook. The gods and odds of baseball caught up to George that day, ending an incredible run. We won the City Championship, 10 games in a row, and had the State title in our grasp. But George's final empty swing ended the game, the tournament, and now the summer.

After practicing every day for two months, after playing 15 games in six weeks, after building a team, a real team, it was finished. I lingered on the field for an hour afterward, milling around, delaying the final packing. Putting the gear away was putting it away for the summer and that meant less time to spend with boys, less time to spend with my son.

I am divorced and I don't get to see George as often as I would like. Every other weekend and one night a week isn't enough. A boy needs his father more than that. I need him more than that. So five years ago I decided to become his little league coach. We had already built a love of baseball together, and this seemed like the perfect way to spend even more time with him. Instead of once a week, I now set the practice schedule to increase my time with him. Rather than spotty clumps of time in the summer, we now have the whole summer together...playing baseball.

For me, it's obviously more than just a game. Little League baseball is my access to George where I can have a big impact. Dreams of baseball and genuine fatherhood together means this shit is serious and means so much to me. I won't imagine what it would be like without it. I love baseball, I love my son, and I love being a father.

Some of the other kid's fathers never even showed up to the games. I could tell which boys had supportive home lives, dad's who loved them, or mother's who babied them. It was easy to spot a kid who got away with murder at home or was used to being in charge. When some of them get to my teams, I'm the first hard ass they've ever encountered. But, my players always end up looking up to me because they know I give them everything I've got. I don't treat them like little kids.

It's almost tough love and it's new and foreign, but eventually, they cling to it and grow as humans and ball players. To me, they're each my son for the season. I love them and it shows. I want them to learn how to play ball and be a man at the same time. Not every dad is like me, and I think boys appreciate it. Baseball is about fathers and sons, men and boys, wisdom and youth.

Baseball connects our nation's generations in ways other institutions never can.

The rules have been the same for more than 100 years. The pitcher must throw a strike, and the batter always has his chance. In 1917 the game fueled dreams and broke hearts just the same as today in 2017. Grandfathers can look in the eyes of their son's son and know exactly what he is feeling. The leather glove, the dirt, the summer heat. More than a past time, baseball is a thread which unites today with yesteryear, something we are losing as the world evolves. Baseball, from the National League down to Little League is a pillar of our culture.

Baseball awakens with the flowers, the gardens of life and hopes of summer victories stretch and yawn as they prepare to bloom. Players and nature ending their winter

blues in unison. The crescendo of a baseball season gathers strength through what once to a child seemed like an eternal summer but now feels fleeting to grown-ups before it even begins. They don't call 'em the "Boys of Summer" for nothing. Temperatures rise with hopes of championships as the gnats swirl in the outfield. The unity with the seasons is one of baseball's most beautiful metaphors and experiences. Each year it ends, but each Spring it begins all over again..again.

We tell kids they play sports for fun, but we know the real reason. Some truths are impossible to explain, kids can't hear them, and parents don't want to do the work. Team sports effectively illustrates and shares by example where parental lectures may fall short. Losing hurts like nothing else, and life is full of it. Loyalty is hard to explain, but when you feel it you never forget. Practice and hard work are essential and payoff...sometimes. Focus and attention bring progress. Discipline is just a baseline for success. Often life is decided by nothing but luck. We win sometimes, we lose sometimes, and sometimes, it just rains. Lessons learned by joyous or painful example stick much longer. We're building young men out here, young men who will one day be our new leaders. That's a lot to put on a kid playing baseball, but we gotta train em up somehow and sneaking eternal wisdom into a child's game is how we build for the future.

I'm the first hard ass they've ever encountered.

A few days after we lost the State Championship, my son looked at me with a choked up face and said, "I just miss it, Dad." He missed the time spent with his friends, the carefree joy of getting dirty and playing a game we love. He missed the opportunities to shine, and even a chance to fail. When you're ten, the State Championship is the biggest deal of your life. And now it's moving into the past. My son is learning what we all end up understanding one day: life is a collection of memories and we must seize all chances to make new ones.

We grabbed our gloves and went to the park to play catch. I stood thirty feet in front of him as I had so many times before. Feeling nostalgic, my own memories swelled to the moment. I saw rotating images of the growing boy doing the same thing with me that day as he had every year before. When he was two or three and had that floppy baby hair no mother ever wants to cut, we'd use whiffle balls and toss them underhanded in Logan Circle as rush hour traffic snarled around us. When he was five and got his first real glove, I'd throw the balls from my knees. At seven he'd wear his t-ball jersey as we would sneak out of family events to play catch in the alley behind my father's house. By eight and nine I started throwing to him like he was an adult. By ten his pitches hurt my hand so much it was time for me to buy a real catcher's mitt.

Every version of my son I can remember is tied to this game of catch.

These are the moments I will cherish forever, this is the real fruit of my efforts. Standing face to face with him for 45 minutes with nothing to do but talk, throw, laugh, and just be with each other.

This simple game of throwing and catching gave us the best of times and I thank baseball. Today, playing catch gave George a chance to move on. Small steps forward, putting distance between today and what he can only see as a failure right now. Losing the big game burned but with time, the kid'll be alright.

I hope so at least. Along with baseball I also gave him my own irrational expectations. My relentless self-criticism. My clouded self-image. My unyielding need to win. When he beats himself up, it hurts, it's my reflection, it's partly me, partly my fault. Maybe one day we'll both learn to give ourselves a break, to be kinder and gentler, to be our own best friend rather than our own worst critics. I've struggled with that for many years and I'm afraid he may too. But until then we have each other and we have baseball. And I think that's just about all we need.

Gentrification and Cultural Death

(Tales from an Urban Real Estate Developer)

The old woman squatted on an overturned milk crate with her elbows on her knees. Weeks of junk mail covered the entry way floor as she guarded her empty run-down home. She wore dirty sweatpants and someone else's t-shirt along with 70 years of hard living. Today, she fought her dementia and memories from a life which had expired years ago. This was her last stand. I came to claim my new asset and she dug in to defend it.

I bought the house from her son, a reasonable middle-aged black man who knew the time had come to cash out and put mom in a home. He signed the papers and collected the check in the morning, it was a more money in one day than he could earn in a decade. \$400,000 in cash should be enough to soothe the pain he felt seeing his deranged mother fight the white man in her old home. When he tried to remove her, she kicked and clawed at him. She couldn't let go or understand what was happening. She just saw an invader at the door and went full momma bear on me.

"I ain't letting no white devil take my house. Is this the real estate man you was tellin' me about? I told you not to do nothin' with that man. He's a bad man. They're all bad man. Ain't got nothing good about him at all. Nothin' good. I ain't going nowhere. You gonna have to call the po-lice to get me outta here. No sir. No way. I ain't doing shit!"

When I bought the house, I had no idea the guy's mom was still around. It just seemed like an easy transaction, he wanted to sell, I wanted to buy. Totally normal. It was the typical property I liked to get: poorly maintained with good bones, needing complete renovation, and in a transitioning neighborhood. You could call it gentrification, but I just saw it as time moving by.

The neighborhood had gone through generational cycles before, each time bringing disruption. First, the Jews lived there, raising families, running businesses and establishing the Columbia Heights neighborhood as a desirable location. But then the riots came in '68 and they were run out of town. After Martin Luther King was killed, the

blacks here burned and looted half the town. The main commercial strip, 14th Street, was gutted and set ablaze. White flight ensued and the neighborhood changed.

Black families moved in after that. They too raised their children and built a community, but the commercial district never recovered. Burned out vacant properties lined the main street while more and more people crammed into the already small town houses. Aunts, uncles, grandma, adult siblings, and distant cousins lived on top of each other. Despite all these people living there, no one invested in the homes and they remained stuck in the 60's, antiquated, run down and crumbling.

Over time, the crime got so bad the only upgrades were to weld security bars on the doors and windows. Not much of an improvement. Even the internal roof hatches got blockaded. Criminals roamed free, and people were worried they'd break through the roof and come crashing into their homes. The residents were caged in while the muggers, home invaders, and drug dealers ran amok.

Eventually, everyone got old and started to die. And that's when the changes started again.

Homes which were bought for ten thousand dollars in 1970 were now worth hundreds of thousands, sometimes even a half a million. Despite being unlivable to most people, these properties represented opportunity and hope for developers like me. The death and decay of this community meant chances for big money and a bright future for another.

I guess that's what they mean by gentrification.

Even though the old people walked away with a fortune, they were angry.

Time, crime, and neglect whittled away at their community until there was no choice but to leave. The new people had already started coming, driving up prices and taxes, bringing new ways of doing things, and flaunting their relative wealth. A meticulous garden and fresh paint wedged in between broken windows and trash littered gravel 'yards.' I can imagine what it's like to be shamed by the obvious comparison. That doesn't sound like home to me.

Getting your hands on the right property at the right price was a dirty business. It takes a certain kind of person to work that deal. If the owner didn't die, then some other reason usually forced them to sell and sometimes sell quickly. Maybe they failed to pay their taxes and the city was about to auction the property. Or maybe an unscrupulous lender gave them a loan they could never pay back and foreclosure was imminent. Or maybe the son tricked his mother into giving him power of attorney so he could sell the house and steal her money.

Finding those situations and capitalizing on them means interacting with people in crisis overwrought with emotion. And sometimes it was just plain shady. We call

people who get properties this way “wholesalers.” Wholesalers were the ones I generally bought from. I didn't want to get into people's personal lives or take advantage of them when they are weak, so I used the middle man. But this time, somehow, I ended up walking right into the worst kind of family drama.

“Momma, we sold the house, just like I told you we was gonna. It's time to go, momma, it's not your house no more. It's not our house no more. You sold the house momma, you sold the house to this man here. He owns the house now. Momma, it's time to go.”

“I ain't going no where! Imma sit right here in MY house. You can't tell me this ain't MY HOUSE no more. This shit here is MY HOUSE. I don't wanna sell the house. I never wanted to sell the house. What did you do with that real estate man? I told you not to talk to him!”

The real estate man must have been the wholesaler because I'd never met this family before that day. I assume he came through and worked a deal with the son, and in turn flipped it to me. You never know how it's going to work until you get to closing. The wholesaler's don't usually show up because it's always testy. Everyone feels a little ripped off. The seller sees how much I'm paying the wholesaler, and realizes he could have sold for more. And I see how little the wholesaler paid, showing me once again if I was willing to get my hands dirty I could generate more profits. The only one who really makes out is the wholesaler who basically buys and sells a property without ever using any money. Ever wondered who puts up those “WE BUY UGLY HOUSES” signs? It's the wholesalers. They get paid for getting dirty.

“Momma it's time to go, momma lets go. It's all over. It's all over.”

Finally, the son gave up and left. It was just me in my suit standing in the doorway and this poor old lady sitting on her milk crate refusing to leave. I had little choice. She was trespassing and it was time for us to get to work gutting her home and memory completely.

I called the police. A white cop showed up, checked my paperwork, and began the sad task. He tried to talk her into leaving, but she wouldn't go. My guilt kicked in and I had to leave just as the policeman started to remove her by force. I couldn't watch him drag this old lady from her home against her will. That dirty work was too dirty for me. I felt bad, but what could I do? This was time passing her by. It was the end of her life and the end of this community's life. And I had money to make selling a renovated home to a young white family or couple of gay guys.

I guess this is what they mean by gentrification.

That true story has stuck with me for almost 15 years. I can still feel her confusion and pain, the son's lament. I can still hear the quiet suffering of the dying community and

the clanging hammers of change. However, contained within this sad scene are several nuggets of wisdom.

Here's what I learned:

1) Communities are not forever.

We all long to be a part of a meaningful community. This can come in different forms. The obvious example is a residential community with kind neighbors and helpful kids. One where you can share a beer with the guy next door while your youngest rides her bike. But community can also exist based on specific topics or activities. My Muay Thai community has some of the best guys I've ever met, guys who would do anything for you. And the community I've built around my son's Little League teams offers endless opportunities for service and leadership. What they each have in common is their fragility. A community must be built and then maintained, otherwise it will sadly fall apart.

Take time to invest in your communities and watch them flourish. Neglect them, and see them die.

2) Change brings opportunity.

Opportunities in real estate, business, and life come when big changes reorient the playing field. Having the vision to see what comes next is how winners get ahead, while losers look up one day and ask, what happened? As Wayne Gretzky said, don't go where the puck is, go where the puck is going to be. We can apply that across our lives. Only you know your circumstances enough to discover the hidden opportunities of change, so the main idea here is - don't let change scare you, seek it out and find the new path forward. Some people saw a decaying neighborhood with run-down houses, but I saw a chance to make money and build something beautiful. Believe me, I had plenty of investors turn me down before I found someone who shared my vision. Persistence paid off in the end, and today my real estate portfolio continues to flourish.

3) Sometimes life can be dirty.

I never wanted to take that woman's home away from her. I was simply paying a man what he wanted for his asset. But behind the transaction was a world of pain. A world I didn't want to see. Before then, I guess I just pretended everyone was a willing happy seller, but that moment on the porch watching the cops start to drag the old lady away showed me the other side. Life can be hard and shitty sometimes. Doing things the "right way" won't protect you from that. Follow your moral compass when times get tough. Stay true to your values and once the grimy parts are over, you will still be proud.

The experience with the old lady and her son, their shared home, and the end of their community largely soured me on residential rehab work like that. The wholesalers got the best end of those deals by and large, and profits were more about buying cheaply than selling for top dollar. So, instead, I moved on to commercial real estate, where adding value comes from professional work and solving complicated problems. Rather than buy a property from aging locals or dirty wholesalers, I now work with commercial brokers and investment groups. But that doesn't mean the game has changed all that much. They may be wearing suits now, but the dirty parts still come, this time with legal action and capital decisions instead of family drama and broken homes.

Because make no mistake, life is full of conflict no matter what you're doing.

In order to be successful, beyond having talent and vision, [you gotta have the stamina](#) to win these conflicts. There will always be someone looking to take what is yours, move you out of the way, or out-right fight you. The winner is usually the one who can endure a war of attrition. And to do that you gotta be strong.

Get your mind right. Get your body right. Get your life right. So when the time comes for conflict, you can shoulder the burden and come out as the winner you rightfully are.

The Calculus of Divorce

(How To Convert Pain to Progress)

I remember telling my eldest daughter I was leaving. She was four years old. I explained it casually: Daddy is getting his own house and sometimes you will come live there.

She had no idea what I was saying, no clue of the ramifications. I didn't either. I had no idea what I was doing at all. I only knew that after years of trying to find some peaceful path within my marriage, I couldn't hold out hope for resolution any longer. I'd finally given up and decided to leave. It was the best and worst thing I've ever done.

Pain and wisdom walk the same path. But you must overcome the pain to eventually reap the reward of wisdom. Pain which lingers or reappears tells me I've yet to glean the deeper wisdom I've been offered. There is more work to be done.

If you follow me on twitter, [@jackmurphylive](https://twitter.com/jackmurphylive), you've seen my pain still bubbles near the surface. I recently wrote a [twitter essay](#) on divorce and fatherhood which resonated with many people and inspired me to take a deeper look at my feelings. That reflection turned into insights.

This article is my way of sharing that with you.

The pain from failed marriage was as hard and true as any natural law. It was immutable desperation. Despite the uncertainty surrounding virtually every other aspect of life - what would happen next, who would I become, how would my children respond - I did have one thing to latch on to: the complete exhaustion of hope.

The end of hope leads to desperation. And this desperation lead me to an uncertain decision where I underestimated the pain of being away from my children. While leaving was clearly the best choice, I still idealized the greener future while minimizing the inevitable consequences of not being there every night to tuck-in my daughter.

I replaced the pain of a failed marriage with the agony of being separated from my children.

As I explained to my daughter what was going to happen, we both were lost in fantasy.

My daughter actually got excited because I explained she would have a new room. She wanted to know if she could have a DVD player and a TV by her bed. I told her yes. It was a lie. Just like when I told her everything would be ok. But she didn't know. I didn't know either.

Those were the last days of her joy I remember. When I used to come home from work, she would run out of her room and greet me even though she should have been sleeping. I couldn't get mad because she'd scream and jump into my arms, her joy infectious and disarming.

I came home late often those days. [I was working hard trying to save our businesses and our home.](#) Trying to save our lives. The world was crashing down around us and everyone else who worked in real estate, yet I worked to the end. Why was I working so hard? What was I trying to save? The life I was about to discard?

When you think they will be children forever, it is easy to say tomorrow. When you think you'll have them in your home every day, it is easy to say next time.

The saddest irony was me working hard to save something that had already expired: my failed marriage. Wrapped in the inferno of a market crash, my union and home life disintegrated before I could save any of it. In the end, I worked and lost it all. I wish I would have stayed home and held them while everything crumbled. At least I would have those memories along with the debts. Instead, my house is empty, my kids are gone, and I still write those checks every month a decade later. Decisions. Decisions.

I feel like I lost her that day, the day I lied about the DVD player. And every day we are together I debate whether to explain what is really happening between me and her mother. I wish I could describe why I really left. I wish I could reveal her mother was a broken rotten person who tortured me when we were together and today keeps me from seeing her. I wish I could explain the only reason I'm not tucking her in every night, is because her mother absolutely made this the only possible outcome.

What a weight off my shoulders that would be. The truth set free would lighten my guilt and feel oh so sweet. But such relief would only be temporary and cowardly. My benefit would come at the expense of my daughter's increased distress. As much as I hope it would restore things to how they were, the truth is things will never be the same.

I hope one day she can see it from my perspective. Maybe then she will respect me for never giving up, always striving to be a better man and father, and never letting her mother keep me from her.

It would be easy to take the path of self-satisfaction and eviscerate their mother, but being the bigger man means enduring pain at times, and this is my burden today.

No child wants to hear bad things about their parents. My little girl still needs some hope, she's just a baby in the real world. Bitterness and cynicism can come later. I love her too much to take that away now.

I suspect however, her mother will show her true colors to her soon enough. My son understands already. He asks her to see me and she says no. He cries to me that he would live with me 100% of the time if "they would only let me."

He is feeling the dissonance of a mother he loves not acting in a loving manner towards him. It is painful to watch. Winning like this is no victory at all.

There is little satisfaction in knowing resolution will come at the expense of your child's idealization of their mother.

Parents becoming mortals in the eyes of their children is an essential process of maturation. My job now is to let that happen naturally. As children we find safety in the fable of parental perfection. It is a useful fantasy, a survival tool. The "high road," if there is one in this conflict with my ex, is to allow my children's illusion of parental perfection to persist as long as nature requires. Cramming their mother's weakness upon them today would be selfish.

The best thing I can do in this case is let them live and discover the truth on their own, sublimating what may be best for me into what is best for them. Sacrifice is part of being a father. But sometimes, the kids need me to put myself first. And that's where things get confusing. Despite knowing it's best for everyone, I still feel guilty when I have to take care of Daddy before all the rest.

But I have to remember ultimately it is for them. I shouldn't be so tentative. I can tell I'm scarred from the DVD lie.

I forget, I made the choice to be a better man, and in turn a better father. I chose to give my daughter a chance at a happy home with parents released from a destructive relationship.

But simply leaving was not enough. The pain from our loss must transmute into wisdom and growth or it will be empty. I chose the path which seemed to offer the best chance for a healthy father, able to have worthwhile relationships with his children, and able to model appropriate male behavior for them both. Thus,

I made an excruciating, calculated decision to leave my ex-wife in hopes of providing my daughter a better life.

Who knows what would have happened had I stayed. I could have self-destructed completely. I could have found myself wasting away from alcohol abuse and self-loathing. I would have been showing her a dad who was a piece of shit. Instead, I

hope, I'm showing her what a healthy, loving father is through action rather than just words. Words which would have been empty and hollow had I not made my changes, changes which were impossible while married to her mother. This is the calculus of divorce.

Parenting is the most important thing I'll ever do: how to keep perspective on such a monumental task?

Taking care of myself is the first step towards caring for others.

We have a moral obligation to maintain our health and fitness as providers. Sometimes I get overwhelmed with fatherhood. It is an enormous and complex task. I constantly wonder if I've already failed. But then I remember, as I wrote in [the Jack Murphy Basics](#), we must first care for ourselves in order to provide for our family, our community, our nation, and eventually the world. It all starts with self-preserving acts of strength and resilience. Physical health, mental well-being, mindset control - these are the foundations for any successful life and fatherhood is no different.

Parenting is challenging.

Build your core such that you can better serve your children and community. This will have the dual effect of keeping you fit and ready for the challenge, as well as demonstrating to your children how to live a healthy life. Fathers lead. Lead yourself and children towards health, strength, and mental toughness.

Being the best man I can will make me the best father I can be.

Innocence is temporary.

Greater scholars than I have deduced that life is suffering. This suffering comes from our limitations as humans. Once we accept our power is limited and that to live is to suffer, we can free ourselves of any guilt associated with not being a perfect parent.

For me, chipping away at the guilt of my own fallibility is a daily process. Accepting this helps to ease the pain of not being perfect. Accepting this helps to ease the pain of seeing the real world creep in and impact the most precious things, our innocent children.

Seeing the end of the innocence in your children is painful, wrenching, and deeply saddening. I had the naive notion I could keep the wolves at bay forever, but this is foolish. Innocence is fleeting; it provides a structure in which children can learn basic skills, but over time, innocence is a liability.

No matter what happens, this innocence will be lost. The choice we have as parents is to either become the one who helps ease their transition or be the events which strip

them of their purity. The choice I've made as a father is to swallow my pride, bite my tongue, and be the loving guide my child needs. No matter the urge to spill the truth, I will wait until events naturally unfurl, revealing the world to her as it is. And when they do, I will be there for her to help her make sense of it.

Don't trade one toxic relationship for another.

The post-divorce relationship with your ex can easily become just as toxic, if not more so, than the one you left in the first place. Ending one damaging relationship just to enter into another does little to help you or the children. Divorce creates an opportunity to start fresh. Don't let this opportunity pass without careful consideration and effort. It is important to limit the negative impact adult squabbling has on kids. It is not easy, but it is crucial. I wish I could say I am able to heed this advice every day, but I fall back more than I'd like. Another reason I am writing this essay is to solidify these thoughts in my mind such that I can incorporate them in my daily behavior:

- Don't communicate through the children
- Keep it simple, keep it civil
- Keep all commentary to yourself
- Chose a structured method of communication and stick to it

Remember, you're no longer in a marriage with this woman. You are in an adversarial position with someone who has something you want and she wants to maximize what she can get from you. It's not only a business relationship, it's worse. Speak to her like you would a valued client. Your job is to get the most out of her you can, irrespective of your feelings. Easier said than done, but absolutely essential.

Listen to the pain.

If you feel pain, if you feel anxiety, if you find yourself reflecting on old memories - take the time to reprocess and strip away the emotion to find the undiscovered guidance contained within.

"Any memory older than 18 months that still elicits negative emotion needs to be more deeply considered. Part of you is trapped there."

— Jordan B Peterson (@jordanbpeterson) [December 22, 2016](#)

I sat down for my daily writing one morning and out poured the DVD lie I told my daughter. I wrote a letter to her which evolved into this article. As I wrote it, I cried. I examined my loss in a new light, I re-lived my regret. The pain forced its way to the surface and demanded reexamination.

Once I began to reflect more deeply and break down my turmoil I was able to take my personal experience and translate it into more relatable truths. These were the

elements of wisdom my body insisted I review as it surfaced emotions long since confined to the unreachable backwaters of my memory.

As auto-regulating men we must continuously assess, reassess, adjust and move forward. We alone are responsible for our well-being - physical, mental, and emotional.

But we can not and do not have to do it alone. Technology has brought men together on the basis of ideas and condition - rather than geography or happenstance. This is a revolutionary change which we can use to enhance our lives together.

As you go through your own process of loss, pain, regret, reflection, and wisdom - don't do it by yourself. Reach out and find community. The power of the internet means at any one given moment, there is likely a group of men experiencing the exact same thing you are. Find collective strength with them and grow together. This involves a deeper level of communication and empathy than has been expected of men in the past, but give it a try. You will benefit.

Thank you for finding me, thank you for reading my words. Thank you for joining me on these explorations. Together our strength is greater.

4 Ways to Be More Dominant Right Now

Women across the continent fantasize about being sexually dominated. A [recent study](#) shows nearly 65% of women of all ages admit to having fantasies of being dominated. Another 52% of them want to be tied up, and 36% of them fantasize about being spanked.

Think about that for a second.

Two out of every three women admit to fantasies of being dominated.

Two out of every three women you see on the street have deep desires of being taken roughly in bed and submitting to a worthy man.

Yes, 2/3 of women want to be submissive.

Half of them want to be tied up!

And this is just what they will admit to in a survey. I'm sure in truth those percentages are actually much higher.

If any of you were harboring the notion that not all women are "like that" or only freaks want to be submissive - I hope these numbers get the smoke out of your eyes and allow you to see women's true nature:

Women love to be dominated.

Women want to be submissive.

Women want you to be aware of and know how to do this instinctively.

Because, unfortunately, dominance cannot be solicited.

If she is requesting more dominance in bed, you're in trouble. The question reveals her mind has wandered and been left wondering, where is the real man to turn me into his fuck toy?

Where is the man who puts his desires above mine, and in turn, pleases us both?

Where is the man who will give me confidence via his leadership?

Women are furiously typing into google "How do I get my BF to be more dominant."

They are craving it, searching for it, because men aren't giving it to them.

Instead, men are trained to be pussies.

With just a few google searches we can read how society, culture and the environment are working together to feminize men and boys. Culture teaches them to do the exact opposite of what turns women on as they're taught to behave like girls.

The current climate of 'everyone's a rapist,' consent classes, and the motto, "Above All Be Nice" - that's not helping men get laid. Nor is devaluing male characteristics like aggression or risk-taking. There's nothing wrong with being dominant. Especially when that's what women want.

Virtually nothing our boys and men are taught today helps them succeed in relationships - sexual or otherwise.

Instead, the true nature of women's desire is obscured, and men are left fumbling with a dead end roadmap. A map created by women, ironically, and handed down through mothers, sisters, teachers: be yourself. Be nice. Women love nice guys. Don't worry, someone will love you for who you are!

Rubbish.

Even 50 Shades of Grey didn't end the illusion once and for all. Our programming can't be undone with one movie. When you look at the corn-fed girl from Nebraska, or the innocent looking nerdy girl - odds are they want you to dominate the shit out of them. Even the most ardent feminist yearns to be dominated sexually. You just need the tools.

You're a bear that's been taught to be a bunny rabbit.

What we're doing here is a version of cognitive behavioral therapy. We are reprogramming ourselves, installing a new response behavior after identifying a source of major dissonance.

We're increasing awareness of the problem: **only bad girls want to be dominated / men aren't taught how.**

And teaching ourselves the replacement thoughts and skills: **chicks are dying to be dominated / men can and shall dominate them.**

Next time you see a cute girl, maybe a girl next door type - think to yourself: that chick is one of the 65% secretly submissive women out there, just dying to be dominated by a man. Use that as motivation. Discard the idea of nice girls wanting nice boys, it's just not true. Dominance is what they want, let's give it to them.

However, being dominant isn't a magic bullet. It alone is not going to optimize your relationships. It is yet another tool a man must develop and refine to become self-actualized and maximize his potential.

We know that being fit, having Game, and improving your lifestyle are the essentials.

[\[READ: The Jack Murphy Basics\]](#)

But we want to build beyond that.

First, I showed you a [moral framework for sexual health](#), illustrating a judgment-free yet morals-based guide to honesty and healthy sexual relationships.

Next, I gave you a plan for "Red Pill in Love," showing you how to [maximize your upside and minimize your downside](#) when creating long-term love relationships. I even taught you [love's cycles and danger points, including how to develop it along the way](#).

Now, I'm going to introduce the idea of dominance, in and out of the bedroom.

What I'm about to give you is a *Pocket Guide to Increasing Dominance*. This is a short list of quick-hitting, easily accessible test behaviors you can use to gauge your comfort with being dominant and she in being submissive.

Give these a try and see how you both react.

Do you feel more comfortable?

Do you have more confidence?

Maybe a little more energy?

How does she react? Is she compliant? Did she bat her eyelashes? What did she say? Does it get easier the more you do it? Use this Pocket Guide as a test-run.

In time I will write more about the fundamental theories and broader application of dominance, both in sexual relationships and in general - but for now, give these tips a shot and report back. Let me know what works in the comment sections.

Without further ado:

Jack Murphy's Pocket Guide to Dominance In and Out of the Bedroom

Be the leader, have a plan, handle business

Women adore men who lead them. Even women who intellectually hate the idea of male dominance respond well in person to male leadership. It is built into them. Being indecisive is also built into them. They need a man to take charge.

An old joke explains: A woman is on death row. The guard asks "what would you like to eat for your last meal?" The woman pauses a moment, looks up and says, "I dunno, what do you want to eat?"

First dates, quick dinners - whatever - you better be the one making the plans. Never ask what she wants to do. If she asks days before your date what the plan is, say 'I don't know yet, but I'll have one.'

Then make sure you have one. You've set her up to anticipate your leadership. Follow through.

This leadership takes many forms. It started with you asking her out, it continues with you having a plan for the date. While on that date, there are a few high leverage moments where you can really establish the frame and set yourself apart even if you do a standard dinner or drinks.

When you arrive - talk to the hostess. Arrange for a table. Is it not good enough? Firmly but politely ask for a different one. Take charge. Ideally, you'll take her to a place that knows you well, someplace where you will get great service and a predictable experience. But until then, make good with what you can do. Get the good table.

While waiting to order, ask her what she wants. Find out exactly. Then when the waitress comes, order for both of you.

You will likely blow her mind with that. It's simple but effective. When I ordered for [@the red hen](#) on our first date, she was impressed and turned on immediately. It arouses a woman to see you take charge while also taking care of her. She got what she wanted to eat, and she got a dose of dominance to turn her on.

Because lets be real, the date is foreplay with the goal of sex later, whether that night or the next. The dominance you wish to exert in the bedroom starts in your non-sexual interactions.

Each act of compliance on her part increases her investment in you and the date/relationship.

Ordering her food now makes ordering her to lick your balls later just that much easier.

And in the bedroom...

You've worked your way through the date showing your dominant frame naturally as the night progressed. The setting is established, you're ready to dominate her in the bedroom. But of course, you need her consent. But how does a dominant male get consent without losing frame?

“Are you ready to get fucked?”

Consent is real. You must have the consent of your woman before you have sex with her. But asking her for affirmative consent like they teach in colleges will dry her pussy up quickly. If you ask her, “can I have sex with you?” you might get it that time, but odds are you won't get it the next. It submits you to her desires and permission. This is the opposite of what she wants.

Instead of requesting permission, ask her if she is ready. “Are you ready to get fucked?” is my all-time number one go-to line. It has never failed me. It sets the tone perfectly. It demonstrates you have a plan in the bedroom, you are confident in your ability, and you assume she has the desire. It assumes the sale.

In reality, you're not asking her if she is ready, you're asking her: how badly do you want me?

It is aggressive, hungry, and enticing. It's dominating.

You're in charge of yourself, her, and the situation (in that order).

Talk to her while she goes down on you

This one is a little more advanced, but its one guys in relationships can certainly put to use right away. When she goes down on you, and she should be going down on you all the time, talk to her. Tell her what a good job she is doing. Tell her how hot it is. Tell her how much you like it. Tell her what you're going to do to her next. But don't say, “oh my god that's amazing, that's the best head I've ever got, ummmhnnngg.” No.

This is about you being in control, even when she is sucking your dick. Remain calm. You talking to her while she blows you is more important than you getting your dick wet.

The very act of her blowing you is submissive. But when you add the talking, it demonstrates how controlled you are. It shows her that even while you're getting head, you can still mold her the way you want.

Expert level tip: The blow job becomes ritualized. The Red Hen and I refer to the act of her going down on me as “home.” While she goes down on me, I use the time to review her behavior and coach her towards more of the behaviors I like. She is fixating on my dick, and I'm deepening my dominance. I say things like, “You love sucking that

dick don't you?" "Sucking my dick makes you feel safe and taken care of." "You're being a good girl, I love it when you're a good girl." "Keep being such a good girl for me and you'll get more of your reward." "Sucking my dick is your prize for being good."

Imagine if you could get your girl to see giving you a blow job as her REWARD for being good.

That's the next level guys.

The King Position / "Come be my Queen"

From blow job hypnosis to cuddling, dominance shines through in all situations. A quick and easy way to add dominance to your life beyond sex is to only cuddle in this one position, the king position.

Yes, cuddling is part of the self-actualized male's arsenal, and I love to do it all the time. It is a great way to solidify your dominance of her physically and to chill out, satisfied, soaking it all in.

After a thorough session, you give her the care she craves by letting her cuddle up to your body. It allows the dominance to season while she inhales your pheromones. And as she relaxes and bathes in the oxytocin flooding her system, cuddling strengthens your position in her mind and body. Double down on the hormonal effect by allowing her to snuggle on you. Cuddling after sex can actually increase your intimacy *and* your dominance.

But - only in one position: The King Position - where you lay on your back and she snuggles under your arm, her head on your chest/shoulder, arm and leg wrapped over/around you.

Say, "come be my queen," and motion for her to join you. You are dominant by position, she submissive by being smaller and snuggling up to you. And by using the word "Queen" you're putting her second to you, the King. You've elevated her to royal status, but men, you're still the fucking KING.

Have her scratch your chest and rub your nuts from this position for extra measure.

WRAP UP

Dominance can't be taught in one blog post. It can't be explained in detail without more discussion on theory and it's more widespread application in life. Over time, I will write more on day-to-day dominance as well as how to be more so in the bedroom.

Dominance is not something you turn on and off. If you're not naturally dominant, it will take time to adopt the proper mindset and refine how it expresses itself. Once it takes

hold, it will be natural and effortless, something you don't even think about. What seemed crazy once before will now become the new normal.

Today, I live with a woman in a full time dominant/submissive relationship and it seems perfectly normal to me. Yet ten years ago, I would have thought it insane. I had to learn baby steps back when I started, and the tips given in this article are meant to be just a teaser for you and your girl. Try them out, see what happens, and report back in the comments. They are not steps towards a full-time BDSM relationship like mine, but rather a cure for the feminist indoctrination young men and boys receive from birth. This is counter-programming meant to help you find your true self as an individualist man in today's society.

The take away I want you to get from this article is that underlying each of my suggestions is the notion of *thoughtful stewardship*.

Your job is to lead her to better places. Teach her new things. Show her new ways of thinking, acting, and fucking. Literally, take her hand and show her the way. As a benevolent dictator, you're not making uninformed unilateral decisions. You are casually learning the facts and then acting on them in a dominant way. Being dominant doesn't mean being rude, demanding or angry.

Rather, its an elegant way of controlling her, the situation and the experience such that everyone is better fulfilled. It speaks to the fundamental nature of our roles as humans: men as leaders and women as complements. Your being dominant in day-to-day activities will make her feel safe, it will impress her, and it will solidify your position as the leader in the relationship.

And when dominant with her in the bedroom you will increase your confidence, enhance your connection and blow your sex right through the roof.

Zen and the Art of Not Dying

What I learned Free Diving in Thailand

Divorce brought me to a crossroads. Losing my family and the life I built felt like a death.

Rather than wallow in the months following the separation I decided instead to seek out and develop my Zen. I hopped on a plane and flew off to the Gulf of Thailand to read, box, and free dive.

Some people seek out beers, women, and sex shows in Thailand, but not me.

I traveled the world to find the deepest challenge I could find - the limitless power of the ocean.

Freediving (Diving Free)

No tank. No air. No life support. That's how we begin. Face submerged into the cold water, three sharp kicks, a duck-like dive head-first ass-up into water and down you go. The end of the easy part.

Assaulting the ocean is a daunting task, overcoming your urge to breathe while submerged is even harder. There comes a point, rather quickly, after you've dived down beneath the surface where every bit of common sense demands you return to the safety of the open air, but today you've decided to conquer the ocean and overcome your instincts to prove a point.

Seeking challenges and rites of passage are a part of life. We all find ways to prove our worth to both nature and ourselves. Some of us run marathons, some of us fast for hours, some of us accept seemingly impossible tasks to push our limits and expand our horizons.

Today the horizon reaches out infinitely in all directions. There is no shore nearby, no oasis of safety, no boat, no dive partner. There is nothing but forever below and forever outward.

The Panic

5, 10, 15 feet down you go. Eight minutes of breathing exercises done at the surface as you cling to a buoy hardly prepares you. As the pressure expands in your lungs the urge to breath becomes more than a desire, it becomes the singular drive in your existence.

You want to open your mouth and fill your lungs with the safety of fresh air, but all you have is your goggles, your mind, and your will to live. Blue dreams of death envelope your body: what am I doing, why am I doing this, I have to stop, I have to save myself.

The panic attacks you quickly. 20 feet down, ears closing in on your brain from the pressure, your blood rushing to your head bringing the last bits of O₂ in your body to the one place it matters. Breath dummy, your body says. Breathe now. LIVE.

Today you are at war with yourself. It's not the ocean and its remorseless ability to vanish you into the depths forever. It's not your dive partner. No, it is your ego you've elected to conquer.

Few things make such an urgent demand than the will to live. Open your mouth, and the salty water will fill your lungs, dragging you to the bottom. But if you do not, your body feels like it will explode.

The irony of no air to breathe is that you feel like you've breathed too much. Your chest expands, the force against your esophagus builds demanding a release. You don't consume air as much as it invades your lungs and punches its way out of you until you can't hold it any longer.

But to get that sweet release means only one thing - the next moment your lungs will fill and you will take another step on the path to death.

This is the moment you've sought. You traveled around the world to paradise only to plunge yourself into the depths of danger and panic. Get back in the boat you say, get back to shore, have a beer and relax on the sand in the warm life-affirming sunshine. Forget this dark, cold, unforgiving water. What the hell are you doing?

Panic. You must breathe. Your body twitches, your head jerks upwards and fear sets in even deeper - the boat is so fucking far away there is no way you'll ever make it. Will you quit? Will you give in? This is the time of truth. This is what you trained for. This is what you paid for.

Surrender to win

Peaceful relaxation is the only way to survive the perception of drowning. Thoughts of your training return to your consciousness. "Just calm down," you tell yourself. You can do this.

You can survive in the depths of the ocean.

Thoughts of life and death turned upside down as you descend deeper into the blue unknown.

God bless your amazing machine of a body. It sounds the alarms well before they are needed. The safety measures kick in as the thoughts of danger arise not as the actual threat attacks.

Our bodies are built to spend extended periods of time below the surface of the ocean. We have something called the [mammalian dive reflex](#) which transforms us from landlubbers drunk with an abundance of oxygen into creatures of famine, physiologically changing to conserve every last bit of air in your body.

All the blood leaves your extremities and rushes to your central organs and brain. Your diaphragm contracts your lung cavity into a fraction of what it is on land.

And then the spasms begin.

The longer you go without breathing, the more intense they become. Like an extreme hiccup, the muscles contract forcing each last bit of air in your lungs closer to your heart. You can count them, the rhythm steady as your heartbeat. Focus on the contractions. Feel the upward thrust of your guts every second as your body switches into dolphin mode. Rather than panic at the sensation you've never experienced, find solace in knowing your body is taking care of you.

Instead of dying twenty seconds in, you're now discovering 60, 120, 180 seconds later that you can not only survive but thrive.

Using your mind to conquer your body brings a sense of well-being and safety. Euphoria bleeds into your body like an oil spill creeping outwards into every bit of your consciousness.

The mammalian reflex calms you down, stress reduced in a time of near death experience. Gone is the overwhelming sense of panic and in its place is a warm comfort of a drug-induced bliss.

The panic now subsided, you return to senses and refocus on the task at hand. Where am I? What am I doing here? Your sense of mission returns.

Your body is ensconced in cold water crushing down upon you from all directions. A glance to the left shows cloudy blue nothing. A look to the right is the same. Downwards is darkness. The only object you can see is the rope descending from the surface, weighed down in place and displaying the prize you are seeking: the 100-foot depth marker.

Don't struggle. Don't stress. Don't freak out.

Each thought uses oxygen you can not spare. Each shot of negative energy saps you of the one thing you can not do without.

You must find peace in the face of infinite pressure.

Push your boundaries, obliterate pain, leave your limitations floating on the surface with the buoy as you endure this self-selected journey of inward exploration.

Defeating the sense of impending death is the ultimate in mind control.

I had faced and conquered challenges of all sorts, be they business, relationships, or even a well-trained foe in the ring. But nothing prepared me for the moment of overriding my body's most crucial instinct - the blasting message of imminent death.

Freediving is something I recommend to everyone.

Plunging deep into the ocean with no oxygen tank and only an insane urge to find the deepest place you can go, isolated and alone, face to face with the infinite is a life-changing and affirming experience.

But not everyone will find their way to the Gulf of Thailand and the island of Koh Tao like I did.

After my divorce, I got on a plane and flew around the world to find the deepest farthest place I could find away from my fears of a new life, and plunged into the fears of dying.

I spent two weeks free diving in the winter of 2009.

And in it, I found life lessons I could never experience anywhere else.

Here is what I learned:

Even when you think you're going to die, you probably aren't.

If we can overcome the most primal urge we have, to breath life-affirming oxygen, what else can we overcome? The body presses matters urgently because it is our alarm system, it is designed to bring danger to our attention. But then our mind decides what to do. In many cases, listening to those instincts is the savvy move, but when you have to dig deep, your reserve of power and stamina will be deeper than you assume.

Those of us who can press through discomfort to find the true volume of will we possess will be surprised and empowered.

A prepared body can overcome challenges of the mind.

Before one dives deep into the ocean without a scuba tank, armed with nothing more than a set of goggles and questionable urge to challenge the sea, you don't just dive deep and hope for the best. Before submerging, the free diver spends 8-10 minutes preparing the body through deep breathing exercises, changing the chemical balance of the blood. This conscious manipulation of the body to steel itself against the urges of the mind can translate into our daily lives. Cardiovascular workouts, weight training, and proper diet gird your human machine against the challenges of depression, anxiety, and stress. Train the body, and the mind will follow.

We are more adaptable than we think.

We are creatures of habit, and most of us find change to be stressful. Yet, the fear of change is usually far worse than the change itself. We have stores of energy and achievement hidden from ourselves, just waiting to be tapped. If we can use the mammalian dive reflex to go from landlubber to water lover, what else do we have hidden inside of us? Underestimating our real power is a common limitation. Think big, go big, and be pleasantly surprised when you are capable of far more than you imagined.

Mindset is everything.

Being submerged under the sea with no reserve oxygen is stressful. The mind resists, and panic can overtake you. Each additional layer of anxiety uses more of the very thing you must reserve, your precious air. Using the conscious mind to calm the subconscious becomes essential to survival. You must tell yourself it will be ok. You must remind yourself you can persist. You must use your brain to calm your worried body. Freediving reveals the power of the mind over both the body and the subconscious. Use your proactive will to overcome that which seems impossible. Train your mind using self-talk. Convince yourself you will overcome and succeed. Conquer the ocean and use that experience to conquer the world.

If the power of the mind is enough to overcome the panic of death, imagine what it can do in less severe circumstances?

Wrap Up

Even if you can't make it to Thailand to freedive, there are ways to practice this at home. Try holding your breath. Time yourself. See how long it takes before the urge to breathe kicks in. When you give up, note the time. Then try it again. And again. And again. Push through that moment of panic, ignore the pressure in the chest, dismiss the urge to taste that sweet, delicious air. Expand your limits. Find that you can overcome even the most critical conditions, that of "believing" you are going to die.

Breaking through that urge and into a new world of depth and exploration changed my life. It taught me, no matter what my body says, it is not as bad as I think. We can overcome.

We can go past the point of no return and come back.

If I can defeat the ocean, I can defeat anything, even myself.

The key is remaining calm, delivering messages of positive reinforcement to yourself, and changing your perception of the impossible.

If I can turn myself into a sea-faring mammal, then who knows what else I can become. Push past your perceived limits and unleash the animal within you.

Find your Zen and Master the Art of Not Dying.

[\[READ MORE: The Key to Success: The Comeback.\]](#)

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Therapy Helped Me Become a Better Man