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- Roundup
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- TV
- The Doctor Is In
- Who Would You Do

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DIRT 06.17.2008 by em & lo

College Confessional: Growing Up With a Feminist Father

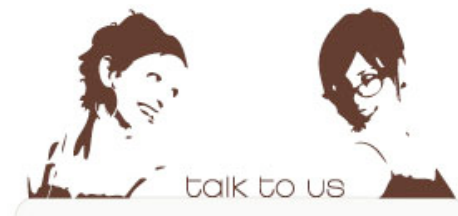


With Father's Day this past Sunday, our intern Ariel Servadio talks about how cool dads don't freak when you work here:

When I was little, my father read me a book from his childhood, *Friday the Arapaho Indian* by A.M. Anderson. I heard the "true story" of a young Native American girl named Friday and her historical adventures. But if you've ever read Anderson's book, you'll know what I discovered when I was much older and my dad confessed the truth: Friday the Indian was a boy.

As a sleepy child, I heard the story of a powerful and adventurous young woman doing extraordinary things-- and I believed it. As my father painstakingly changed pronouns and altered sex-related details while reading to me every night before bed, he planted the seed of limitless possibilities in my brain. It wasn't until I was nine years old that that idea was challenged: It was the end of third grade and the elementary-school music teacher was preparing our class for joining the school band the next year. When we were asked what instruments we would like to play, I raised my hand and said I wanted to play the bass guitar. "No," the music teacher replied, "I need big, strong boys to play the guitar next year." So I got stuck playing the alto saxophone. At least it wasn't the flute, I guess...

This idea of boys being big and strong and able to do things that girls couldn't was new to me. Both my parents took a proactive role in teaching me I was capable of anything and everything, but my dad went above and beyond what was usually expected of a



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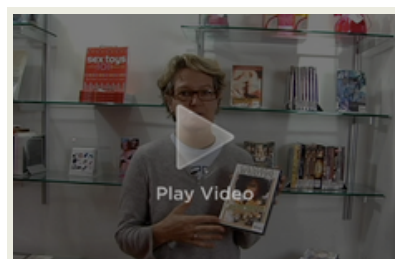
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father-daughter relationship. He taught me skills that many would reserve for only a son: I know how to fire a gun, drive a dirt bike, skin an animal, clean a fish, rappel down a tree, fight with martial arts and defensive tactics--the list goes on. He bought me just as many chemistry sets and microscopes and sports supplies as he did Easy-Bake Ovens. He wasn't afraid to talk to me about sex or the processes of the female reproductive system, either.

I distinctly remember being about four when I watched my first informative video about the birds and the bees--a cartoon featuring a man and woman with squiggly-drawn genitalia. My mother says that was all my father's idea. And when I got my first period at 11 years old, my mother was in the hospital busy having my little brother, so I had to go home and tell my father what had happened to me in school that day. For many of my peers it would no doubt have been a traumatic event, yet for me it was completely comfortable and natural to talk about it with my dad. Because he never made sex ed weird, or made me feel ashamed about going through puberty, I think I've always had a healthy outlook on sex--one that's made me curious and confident and responsible (and, needless to say, brave enough to intern at a sex blog).

I grew up thinking that the world was my oyster, thanks in particular to my father. I don't think he would actually ever describe himself as a feminist--I've rarely heard him use the word. But I know that he is, because I am.

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Tags

College, Feminism

1 Comments

Marissa said:

And this is why I refuse to date men who are not feminists! I want my future children to have this experience as well.

I was also lucky enough to grow up with a father who is a feminist (even if I have never heard him label himself as such). Just 2 weeks ago he told me how much he hates the word "bitch" because there is no masculine counterpart that means precisely the same thing, as Bastard is no longer that offensive.

June 17, 2008 4:35 PM

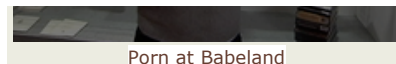
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about em & lo

Em & Lo, more formally known as Emma Taylor and Lorelei Sharkey, are the self-proclaimed Emily Posts of the modern bedroom. [more >>](#)



about
dr. kate

Dr. Kate is an OB/GYN at one of the largest teaching hospitals in New York City. [more >>](#)

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