

PHILOSOPHY

One of the most eventful conversations that I ever had was on my very first date with my wife. In fact, it wasn't really even a date. She and her folks had come to my hometown and had stopped by to visit my parents, as they had been friends for years. At the time, my wife and I had not seen each other since we were infants, but I thought it would be a great idea for me to show her around town (especially since she was so cute.)

To make a long story short, we sat on the front porch of her sister's house talking till the wee hours of the night. We spoke about everything! In particular, we talked about the type of marriage each of us wanted to have. We talked about the way we wanted to raise our kids. Now, having this sort of an in-depth conversation on the first night we had ever met probably seems a little over the top. But for us, on that night, it was just a natural conversation.

We were able to share our philosophies and what was so unusual is that our philosophies aligned. What became even more important is, once we knew we were right for each other, we were willing to live out those philosophies in the way our children were raised and the way we lived our lives. Gentlemen, you did not father that child by yourselves. It takes two to make a child and it takes two to rear one.

The only way to be successful in raising a child is when you and Mommy share the same philosophy. Family life is tough. Living with a number of people that depend upon your decision-making, your ability to earn an income, your consistency and discipline is challenging in the best of times. If you and Mommy do not agree philosophically on just about everything, you are in deep trouble. The two of you have to be aligned. You cannot be debating with each other when there are kids watching the outcome.

The day you first marry will be a life-changing event, as the two of you now have to work as a team. When that first little one comes, you will have to tag team just to keep up with that squirming little ball of energy and poop

and it will stress you to the max. When number two comes, you have to learn man-to-man coverage. This is still pretty stressful, but manageable if you are working with the same philosophy. By the time number three or four come along, you have to play zone defense. You had better understand the positions, because they outnumber you and you can lose the game.

The two of you have to be aligned on everything from the number of kids to the manner in which they are disciplined and from the way you budget to the way that you will share family time. Listen up ... you are not the ruler of the family; you are an equal and complementary partner to your wife. The two of you have to agree on which decisions belong to Mom, which ones belong to Dad and which ones are joint decisions.

Debating this within earshot of the kids is not a good idea. They WILL divide and conquer and they WILL use one of you against the other. I don't know where this "deviousness" comes from, but it is there and they use it masterfully from a very early age. The point is, when you see a division in opinion coming, call time out, get with your wife, discuss the next play and then get back in the game.

In my opinion, the best time to get philosophically aligned is before you ever become engaged. If you can't get aligned philosophically, you probably aren't the right fit, so move on. The next best time to align is before you start having kids. This gives you a chance to get things aligned before the battle joins. But for gosh sakes, as a worst case, take the time to talk and get on the same page before the kids are old enough to eavesdrop and know how to use divisions against you!

Once you have learned how to talk and align ... keep it up. As the kids grow, they will continuously come up with new and challenging offenses. You and your wife have to stay a step ahead or they will run amok. If you and your wife can't control a two year old, then you don't stand a chance when the little booger picker is a teenager.

When the two of you came together and created them, you signed up for the responsibility to raise them, as well. Make sure that you get aligned on a philosophy that gives you the best chance to succeed and gives your child the best chance to become a happy and productive adult.

MAN UP Memos

- ✓ Successful parenting requires alignment between parents.
- ✓ Kids will divide and conquer if you are not aligned.
- ✓ Get aligned before engaging tough issues with your kids.
- ✓ If you can't control a two year old, you don't stand a chance with a teenager.