

Talk, Talk, Talk

I've been having meaningful conversations with my oldest granddaughter over the last couple of years since she turned 3 and I've learned a lot. You can laugh, but these discussions are quite important to my sense of balance in life and at least one of us appears to be rapidly maturing.

I've learned that big brown eyes can steal your heart, and when rolled in a certain way they can tell you that someone sees right through you and your baloney. I've learned all about little friends and pre-school manners and how to be nice. Or not. And that not only is the world both exciting and disquieting when Kindergarten looms on the horizon, but that any big change in life can be scary.

And so Alex and I sit on the couch like an old married couple while she watches Dora, a favorite little-girl cartoon character who appears to be a conglomeration of ethnicities, diversities and the latest niceties. Alex's concentration on the DVD is lost from time to time maybe because this is viewing number 938 and she wanders in and out of one spoken thought or another about life in general as a modern young lady. She got peanut butter on her shirt yesterday. Her little sister can be a pain. Her friend Gina is coming over to play tomorrow. When I attempt to identify with her musings and tell her I remember similar things when I was a little kid, she reacts with complete rejection of the idea that I was ever a kid. "No WAY!" I've learned not to argue. Instead, I tell her I'm going to the moon as soon as I get my bicycle fixed.

"That's nice," she says, rolling her eyes. Sarcasm has come late to Alex at 5 years of age. But I like to think I had a hand in it.

An adult lady friend of mine maybe she's almost seventy, I've certainly never asked once explained that I have a job as a grandparent. It isn't to be a stand-in parent or a counselor or a seer. It is to be a grandparent. When I asked what that meant, she said, "I don't know what it would be for you. You'll figure it out." I can't tell you how many times in life "You'll figure it out" has been an annoying, but precisely accurate truth.

I can teach as well as learn. Maybe I am to teach Alex that mildly funny people come in great big packages. Maybe, that Daddies can sometimes be serious, but grandpas are more often silly, so that she will grow up to someday be a silly, loveable grandma. Maybe, that a person isn't really listening to you unless they get down on the floor with you. And they may not mean what they're saying unless they have their arms around you. Maybe I'm not here to teach her anything at all. Maybe I'm just supposed to be here to listen. That would be quite a lesson for both of us.

I hope we'll always have these talks. Even when she is ... like ... a teenager? They do me a world of good.

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