

PARENTS: A THANK YOU

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Everyone has them, but not everyone is one.
Sometimes we love them. Sometimes we hate them.
Sometimes they feel the same about us. Sometimes we are embarrassed by them.
Sometimes they would rather not claim us. Sometimes we have cherished moments.
Other times are not so well remembered.

Sometimes we can hardly wait to talk with them. Sometimes they call us.
Sometimes we feel like we are choking. Sometimes we hover too closely.
Sometimes the hugs go both ways.

Sometimes we are proud. Sometimes they are, too. Sometimes what they do
makes us cringe. They try not to laugh too much at us either. There is often silence
between us and yet now there a thousand things we want to say. Sometimes the
touch is soft and gentle. Sometimes only anger and bitterness remain where touch
wasn't so kind.

Sometimes we remember the smells and smile. Sometimes it's furniture
polish, and sometimes it's fresh cookies, and sometimes only the faint whisper of
pipe smoke remains. Sometimes it's burnt toast and Cream of Wheat. Sometimes it's
perfume and sometimes it's not!

Maybe there are pictures and maybe there is nothing left -- or wasn't much to
begin with. Maybe the silence is blessed, and maybe its emptiness is too much to

bear. Maybe you are lonely and maybe you are complete. Maybe sometimes we can't even tell the difference.

Did you remember to brush your teeth and tie your shoes? Did you remember to take out the garbage and do your homework? Did you remember to feed the cat and not hit your sister? What do you remember?

Did they remember to call on your birthday? Did she mend your socks and sigh at the sight of your first date? Did she fluff your pillows and make meat loaf and sneak an extra cookie into your lunch box? Did he tell wonderful stories and sing off key? Did he teach you to fish and to turn over leaves, looking for elves?

Did she ever call you by the right name or did she never call you at all? Did he come home, or was there never a home to come to? Did they raise you with love or with anger? Is your life filled with light or with little? Did they love you? Did you know it?

Did you remember to say thank you -- ever? Did they? Did you both ever dance in the living room or sing in the car? Did you know the way to the park by heart, and did you ever hold hands in the movies when it got scary?



We all have them, but we may not be them. We may not know their names, their faces or their touch, but we know their legacy ... it is who we are. We carry their pain, their joy, their triumphs, their despairs. We are the footsteps they could never make on paths they could only dream about. We are the future they believed in.

They are our past and a part of our present and only a whisper of our future. Their gifts to us may be many or few, but they are a part of who we are. And how we live our lives is, in part, an echo of their voices.

Was your childhood filled with laughter and song or sadness and tears? What are the gifts you received and what have you done with them? Have you built monuments to love or carved stones of anger and mistrust?

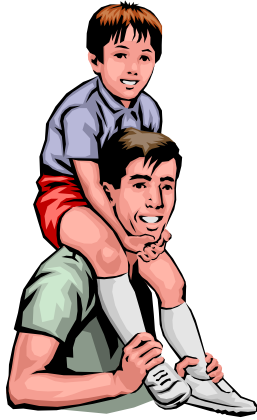
What have you carried with you all these years, in memory of those who came before you?

We all have them, but we may not be among them. Whatever else may be, we are the children of a tomorrow our parents could not see. Perhaps their vision was clouded with pain and grief, hurt and suffering. Perhaps they could not see beyond their own fantasies and lived in a land of wishful thinking and daydreaming. Or maybe they loved you deeply and you know it ... now as clearly as you did then. No matter, whatever else you are, you are a reflection of two people whose lives came together to create YOU.

And now, in this season of blooming days and gentle nights, when the wind is soft with spring's first kisses, it is the time to remember our mothers and fathers. Cards and calls, candy and caresses may be among your gifts to them this season of remembrance. Or perhaps they do not make a card to say whatever it is you would like them to know. Maybe Mother's Day and Father's Day are empty ones for you because you never knew your parents or wish you didn't. Or perhaps it is empty because they have gone and so have you ... gone, but have you noticed we do not forget?



Mother's Day and Father's Day are days to remember the people who gave us life. Perhaps they did not give you happiness, but you are in charge of that anyway. They gave us breath and that is enough. The rest of the story is ours to write.



And so, on this Mother's Day
and on this Father's Day, I will say
THANK YOU for giving me LIFE
and all its challenges. I learned about
love from my Mom and Dad ... though
they taught me in very different ways. We each have been



given a gift, an opportunity to live. How we do that and what we carry with us in our own search for happiness is up to us. We can cry or laugh, dance or stumble; the path ahead belongs to us. Walk joyfully, with the knowledge that your footsteps carry the dreams of those before you. And know, too, that perhaps you are not alone on your journey. Are you following or leading?

We were once someone's future, and then we became the present and now, perhaps, we are the past for someone new. We all have them and some of us have become them ... parents, the link between what was and what will be.

Thanks, Mom, for the meat loaf recipe. Thanks, Dad, for the stories. Thanks, my children, for walking ahead of me and not laughing too hard!

