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What Is A Dad? Remembering and Celebrating...Life Coach Millie Grenough Conducts Informal DAD Survey

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STAMFORD, CT, June 15, 2011 /24-7PressRelease/ -- In honor of fathers everywhere this Father's Day and in particular her own father, Life Coach and Author Millie Grenough decided to conduct an informal DAD survey. She interviewed her numerous siblings - six in all, along with her colleagues, coaching clients, friends and other family members. She sent an email with three questions and asked people to take a maximum of two minutes to respond to all three questions on the belief of "First thought, best thought," as advised by poet Alan Ginsberg.

The questions posed in the Grenough survey were as follows:

1. What do you think is the best thing you received from your dad - whether he is living or dead?
2. Do you carry it forward in some way? If so, how?
3. What "legacy" would you like to give to future generations/the world?

How a Dad takes care of himself, and how he cares for his family, has a major impact on his own health and happiness, and that of his family and community - whether it be his neighborhood, his workplace, or even rippling out to the larger world. If curiosity gets the best of you, read on for the responses Grenough received. If not, take out a piece of paper and spend two minutes of your time responding to these thought-provoking queries.

"After all, I think a lot about my own Dad. He left this earth many years ago but he is still very much alive in all of us -- his seven children -- and in the many people he met in his lifetime. From growing up in St. Louis and Montreal, his school days (a favorite quote of his - "Sure, I went through high school - in the front door and out the back."), his Army colleagues in the World War in Europe, and the many people he met in their homes in his 30 years of collecting a few dollars of John Hancock Insurance payments, his influence helped to shape the person I am today," states Grenough. "And I being a student of human nature, I can't help but wonder how other people feel about their Dads and what makes a good dad, so I felt compelled to explore on."

What is a good Dad? There are lots of different opinions, depending on whom you ask, what culture they live in and what a person's own experience has been. The answers that Grenough received were intriguing. "First of all, I was surprised by how promptly people responded - and by how many of them thanked me for asking them," said Grenough.

An engineer wrote "Thanks for asking. This little exercise has made my Father's Day much more meaningful." In a few cases, because their fathers were not so great, the respondents saw this as an opportunity to realize how much they appreciated their mothers.

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Here is a sample of some the answers Grenough received. When asked "What is the best thing you received from your dad?" a couple of people smiled, either in person or via e-mail. One said "My good looks and curly hair." Another: "A camel hair coat and the outing that went with it - wish I was 25 pounds lighter so it would still fit me!" Another: "My smile. I had braces, retainers, head gear, etc. for 7 years and every time I get a compliment on my smile I think about how lucky I am to have had the opportunity to have a perfect smile, especially when he didn't have the same opportunity."

Many appreciated qualities and activities that their dad role-modeled. For example:

"It sounds corny but it is true: love and respect of oneself and others, which I try to emulate every day..."

"The gift of perseverance and doing your best..."

"He insisted that I get a college education..."

"Work ethic and respect for other people..."

"His love of fishing and gardening."

"Always mend relationships with good friends..."

"That each of us is unique and awesome. And how important it is to give and to love."

"He thought I could do anything I wanted to do - unconditional support..."

This poignant response is from a Latina woman whose early childhood was spent in a one-room house with a single light-bulb: "Hope, change, transformation - faces of the same coin. His hope for a better life for me and our family brought him to the United States."

From a male Asian research scientist: "His mental toughness and his values on friendship."

From a female Native American: "His unconditional and unselfish love, patience, values, direction, support and guidance he gave to me his adopted daughter as well as to his biological children and his grandchildren, and to learn not to hate and not to expect so much from others."

From Grenough's younger sister: "Learning, later in life, about his kindness to others - somewhat to the chagrin of our mother. At his funeral, people came up to us and said, 'If it weren't for your dad, we would have lost our insurance policy...'"

And from one of Grenough's brothers: "His simplicity, his support for mom, and when I was growing up with other kids who had 'important' dads and they liked our Dad better..."

And from a woman who had a different twist: "The best thing I received from my dad is knowing that I can never depend upon a man! He did teach me though that I had a strong mother."

The response to the second question - Do you carry it forward in some way?- continued the thought-provoking process. The responses included:

- "I try to share what I learn with those that I work with and meet."

- "Absolutely, I carry it forward every day."

- "Absolutely, whatever I am faced with, I am sure to carry it through to the end, whether it be work or in my home life. If you are going to start something, it's best to finish it!"

- "I definitely think that I carry it forward."

In nearly every instance, the respondents unequivocally echoed the fact that what they had learned from their dad they continued to carry forward to every aspect of their lives whether it was positive or not. This substantiated the finding of the important impact fathers have on their children and that it lasts forever.

Question three required much more thought for Grenough's respondents. When asking "What 'Legacy' would you like to give to future generations/the world?" Grenough again got lots of varied and interesting, reflective responses which included:

- "Give the shirt off your back if anyone is in need ... hand over that \$1 to someone who has nothing ... always pass a good deed forward ... bring peace and kindness to those around us."

- "Live, love, balance, be truthful - four principals that guide my life."

- "To realize and enjoy the beauty of life."

- "Listen to those before us. Respect their wisdom. However, you are responsible for your actions and their outcomes. It is not about me, it is about us."

- "Go for it! Life is too short not to embrace opportunities that reveal themselves and make the best of whatever situation you are faced with."

- "The Legacy I would like to leave relates to adoption - that adoption is rewarding and so needed in this country and I plan to adopt a child in my parents' honor."

And from the woman who had a very different twist:

- "The legacy that I would like to leave the next generation is that you can always change your future for the better, regardless of your past or family members' past track records."

Whatever your experience with your Dad was or is, Grenough recommends taking time to appreciate it now from the perspective of today. The following exercises may provide a bit of clarity.

1. Ask yourself:

What legacy did my Dad leave me? If he is alive, by all means, let him know what you appreciate/love about him. Tell him. Write him a note. Call him. Whatever you do, let him know.

2. Ask yourself:

What do I want to leave as my legacy? Put these thoughts into words. Write them down in a place where you can look at them frequently.

3. Get real and ask yourself:

How can I put your legacy into action today?

In summarizing her findings, Grenough was reminded of a quote from Marion Wright Edelman, the founder of the Children's Defense Fund who once stated "Be a good ancestor, stand for something bigger than yourself, add value to the earth during your sojourn."

"Ms. Edelman's words remind me that life is much bigger than I am. It is bigger than my immediate goals, my immediate family, my clients, and my surroundings. Her words speak right to the heart of legacy. I would relish the opportunity to ask Ms. Edelman my three questions to see how she would answer," concludes Grenough.

If you are ready to put a new perspective on your life and if enjoying your life matters, treat yourself to an OASIS in The Overwhelm. Find more practical and simple strategies in Grenough's book OASIS in the Overwhelm, available at www.milliegrenough.com or www.amazon.com.

Millie Grenough, Clinical Instructor in Psychiatry, Yale University School of Medicine, is the author of OASIS in the Overwhelm: 60-second strategies for balance in a busy world and OASIS in the Overwhelm 28 Day Guide: Rewrite Your Brain from Chaos to Calm and OASIS en la Adversidad. A sought-after keynote speaker, team builder and retreat leader, Grenough coaches individuals and groups, via webinars, phone, and onsite trainings. Grenough's

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