

## If Only...by Kim

Alright men, you're hearing from the wife who lived in anguish over her perception of a man who had difficulty being the father her children needed. Women, if you are reading this, perhaps you can identify.

How many times did I listen to what kind of father children needed, only to feel like, "*If only* my husband could be that kind of dad...?" Rather than focus on what I had control of (being a good mom) I anguished over what I could not control. I was married to an "out of control" man who screamed at his family, struck fear in our home, and went from being wonderful to unpredictable at a moment's notice. The wonderful revelation I had from early on was that I cannot control another person. I can only control how I react or RESPOND to that person. It is important to instill that in our children. How many mothers need to hear this?

A mother's instinct is to protect and nurture her children. For many years, I debated if my children would be better off away from their father. But in my heart of hearts, I knew that divorcing a man who may not be the ideal father does not guarantee anything. That man is still your children's father and he always will be. Through the past few years of teaching and mentoring young people about fatherhood, it is clear that a person's biological father is immensely influential in one's life. Whether a child knows his father or not, the need is always there to be loved by him, to find a sense of significant through him and to find identity as his child. I have yet to meet a person who had absolutely no emotion regarding his or her father. It may be buried deeply, but it is there.

Mothers cannot protect their children from all the hurts in life. Men know this. Men embrace a certain amount of pain because they know that it builds strength. Why is this so hard for many of us women? Security in our children doesn't come from protecting them from hurt. Hurt is a reality of life. Research shows that children gain security from parents who are committed to one another, who allow them to make decisions and assume responsibility, and who love them through their mistakes.

Do you want your child to be confident and secure? One of the secrets of being an effective father is to love your child's mother in order to produce that kind of child. The same can be true of a mother's role, but the key word here is respect. If we women usurp a man's role, if we speak or act disrespectfully toward him when we don't agree with him, we are actually interfering with him being an effective father. Worse yet, we can be a detriment to our child's confidence.

Women, can you let go of your need to control your child's life? There comes a point in the parenting process when you are responsible TO your child and not FOR your child. Children must make their own choices in order to grow. Are you stifling that? Are you trying to be both mother AND father? Guess what. You cannot be a father. Ladies, let go of that which you do not have the right or ability to control...and listen, listen, love, love – both your child and your child's father.