

The old dreams were good dreams; they didn't work out, but I'm glad I had them.

Robert James Waller, The Bridges of Madison County

Priceless

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I know that you've seen those commercials where the cost of some activity is compared to the 'priceless' nature of its true value. My favorite is the one where a father takes his son to a baseball game. The cost of the trip, the tickets, the food, and the souvenirs is itemized. But at the end of the commercial, the value of sharing such an experience is deemed priceless.

Many times it is not just an experience that is shared at such times, but a dream. I remember that my childhood was filled with dreams and plans, and I was very happy engaged in that activity. Sometimes when I wonder what I did and how I felt in my youth, I remember how busy I was with them and I am greatly comforted.

When I became a father, I came to realize that one of the tough parts of this was that I had to help my child balance his dreams with the reality of the world. I remember that once he wanted to make a food processor out of Legos. I mean that he wanted to make a real food processor. So I had to help him make something that was fun and that represented what he wanted. But I also had to help him understand that it wouldn't really process food!

I had to be careful not to crush his creative spirit, because someday he could invent the greatest gadget in the history of mankind! I had to help him with his project, even though I knew that it could not succeed. And I had to make sure that even in his disappointment he would move on to his next compelling idea.

I didn't have Legos when I was young, but I had old discarded radio parts that my dad gave me. I built things with them and nursed my dreams along just fine. That is what imagination is all about; not just having a creative idea, but being able to enjoy it without having it working perfectly.

I firmly believe that you must share in the dreams of your children. We must discuss them without flatly putting them down and destroying them. Their dreams are so important that we must handle them very carefully, even though we know that they may be just a passing phase. We must not quench or squash them. If it involves something that we really do not want to do, we must adjust ourselves to their view and help them anyway.

One of my son's teenage dreams was to own one of those Volkswagen buses that was modified to be a camper. Working together to get this van to run was worth all of the money we spent! It fulfilled his dream of being a child of the 60's. It also fulfilled my dream of being a father. My personal commercial would go something like this:

The dream van:	\$ 500
A dream van that actually ran:	\$ 2500
A new engine:	\$ 1600
A new exhaust system:	\$ 600
Finally camping out in the van:	PRICELESS!

We must also realize that God answers our most fundamental dreams in a deeply satisfying way. Our greatest dream is realized in the love that He offers us. As William Barclay says, "One of the great things about Jesus Christ is that he is the interpreter of men's dreams. In him men find again and again the satisfaction of their highest longings, the fulfillment of their deepest desires, the meaning of their dreams." And Robert Schuller tells us to "let the size of your God set the size of your dream."

We will continue to dream as long as we live, for they are a valuable part of life. As Thoreau said, we can build castles in the air as long as we put foundation under them. My son's dream of a Volkswagen bus is certainly still alive. The problem is that now it needs another new engine! I think it's time for a different dream!

Great it is to believe the dream
As you stand in life by the starry stream;
But greater still to fight life through
And say at the end the dream was true.

Edwin Markham

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