

[June 13, 2011](#)

THE HUFFINGTON POST

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For Midlife Dads: Five Reasons Why Midlife is a Great Time for Fatherhood, according to Len Filppu

In anticipation of the celebration of Father's Day, here is an optimistic and funny view of the benefits of midlife fatherhood by Palo Alto writer Len Filppu. It is for all the men (and the women who love them) who wonder what it might be like to be a mid-life father.

His website called [PrimeTimeDads](#) is now up and ready just in time for Father's Day next Sunday.

Here is his column!

When faced with first-time fatherhood at the age of 49, I didn't know whether to celebrate with champagne or hemlock. Would my back survive baby-proofing all the cabinets? How could I trade my leisurely latte freedom for dirty diapers? Would I live long enough to make a proper go of it? I envisioned myself dozing off at Little League games, drooling and dreaming of Woodstock. Or worst of all, would younger parents mistake me for grandpa?

But much to my surprise and life-enhancing pleasure, I've discovered that my middle years are actually my best time, in fact my prime time, to appreciate, excel at, and find authentic happiness in my role as a dad.

And I'm not the only one. A recent study, "A Global Perspective on Happiness and Fertility" by Rachel Margolis and Mikko Myrskylä, published in *Population and Development Review*, March 2011, found that parents aged 40 and above are happier than are their childless peers. Interestingly, parents aged 30 are less happy than people the same age without kids. It seems maturity may be a key factor in appreciating parenthood.

The issue of midlife parenthood is trending hotter as health consciousness, nutrition, and medical care increasingly morph today's 50 into yesterday's 40 or even younger, as women continue to postpone motherhood, and as many men face the prospect of fatherhood within a second marriage or a blended family.

I was truly intimidated by the prospect of midlife fatherhood, yet discovered it was the best thing I ever did. Most midlife men have an enormous reservoir of tested skills, life experiences, and plain old know-how that can be tapped to help them succeed as dads.

My wife and I have a healthy and thriving 11-year-old son and eight-year-old daughter. They are my joie de vivre, my kick start on sluggish mornings, my jet power through the day, and my inspiration to keep life interesting, fresh, and meaningful. To me, being a midlife father is not an issue of being better-late-than-never. It's an issue of actually being better later.

Here then, for all you men in your middle years, you prime time men --and especially you women who love them-- are my top five reasons to embrace midlife fatherhood.

1) You Already Got Your Ya-Yas Out!

If I'd been a father in my 20s or 30s, those turbulent, defining decades when I thirstily explored life and career adventures, I would have felt imprisoned. I would've paced the baby's room as though it were a jail cell, blaming my wife and kids for my confinement, growing resentful, longing for what I was missing, and planning my escapes.

But since I'd already traveled, played, dabbled, and wandered around the block a few times when I became a dad, the gnawing sense that I might be missing "something" out there was diminished. I'd already lived free, been to the rodeo a few times, and was now ready for family's binding ties.

Kids thrive in a stable, predictable, safe world of order, love and boundaries. As a more mature midlife man, I was infinitely more capable of providing such a healthy environment.

2) You Have More Money

Please do not misunderstand me. You need not be rich to raise children. But the midlife dad, who probably has a fatter wallet to match his expanding waistline, can apply those resources in a positive way that enhances the child rearing process for all concerned.

I'm not picking up the tab for lunch with Warren Buffet and Carlos Slim. But over the years, I've learned not to buy any bridges or play three-card Monte, how to shop around for low interest rates and index funds, and how to tighten a budget when necessary.

In short, I sit on a slightly thicker cash cushion than I had in my 20s. And that's as good as gold, because lack of money is one of the single greatest causes of familial stress and divorce, toxic conditions for parents and children alike.

3) You Can Spend More Time with Your Children

The most formative years for children are in their first four to six years of life. This is the time when they gain confidence for living and learning primarily through a close relationship with their parents. Both parents.

Midlife men are more likely to have achieved some degree of success, skill, and trusted longevity in their careers. With that success comes more freedom of choice and time, more loosening of the job tether.

Midlife dads are more likely to have the job seniority and security to be able to take some dedicated time off, initiate flex time, work remotely or job share in order to participate at pre-school or the zoo or t-ball games. I decided to write and consult in order to spend more time with my children. I'm convinced this choice has helped my children. I know it's rewarded me.

4) You Can Better Laugh At Yourself

Being locked in the restrictive strait jacket of image is for younger folk who have the energy to worry about their hair styles, what nightclub is hot, and the latest new greatest.

We midlife men have traveled through this superficial terrain, and arrived at the right-sized perspective to laugh at ourselves a bit more easily (probably because there's a longer record of bewildering personal behavior to inspire us).

Are we fools, then? Au contraire, we've lived, learned, been burned, and we're wiser. And this willingness to shed decorum is manna from heaven for our children.

Want to make your kids laugh hysterically? Act like you slipped on a banana peel. Sneeze a tissue high into the air. That's right. We're not talking about sophisticated humor. We're talking about funny faces, prat falls, and playing down to the audience... way down, where kids really live and from where they look up to you.

While diapering my son once, he peed a perfect arc into my ear. You gotta laugh or you'll go nuts. Because I became a father in midlife, I have a longer and richer perspective that allows me to perform the mental tricks that turn minor tragedy into grand comedy.

5) Fulfill Your Need for More Meaning in Life

Plato is credited with saying, "The spiritual eyesight improves as the physical eyesight declines."

As we mature, many of us increasingly require more meaning in life. We seek it in unhealthy ways such as flings, substance abuse, and out-of-control consumerism, and we seek it in healthy ways such as charitable endeavors, mending fences, and spiritual growth.

Most midlife men have experienced the death of relatives, parents or friends. We know we are mortal. We've lived long enough to know that life dedicated to the office cubicle may not provide the depth of meaning for which we increasingly yearn.

Becoming a parent is arguably one of the most meaningful things you can do. Nurturing, teaching, and guiding my children through the passage of time is truly an adventure. It may not be Homeric, but it's certainly my personal home odyssey. Minor triumphs and tragedies hit me with a power I could not have imagined. Why? Because these real life moments really mean something. And that's exactly how I prefer life nowadays.

Len Filppu is a professional writer and consultant from Palo Alto, CA whose background includes non-fiction book and magazine writing, feature and documentary film screenwriting, national politics, high technology business, advertising and business communications.

*Len's latest non-fiction book, **PRIME TIME DADS: 45 Reasons to Embrace Midlife Fatherhood**, (www.primetimedads.com) explores the life-enhancing revelations he learned by becoming a midlife dad.*

Follow Len Filppu on Twitter: www.twitter.com/MidlifeDad