

Dads, Here Is How to Store Up Genius Points

As my beloved Cubs surprisingly chase a playoff spot, my mind drifts back to a summer day at Wrigley, circa 1967. I was 9 years old.

It was the annual Payleitner pilgrimage to the shrine at Clark and Addison. When I was growing up, my dad made sure we drove into the city for at least one Chicago Cubs doubleheader every season.

That was back when each spring held a bravado of hope only to be dashed sometime not long after the All-Star break.

One of the great Payleitner traditions was filling out my own scorecard with a fresh, pre-sharpened Cubs pencil purchased from a vendor just inside the Wrigley Field turnstiles. In the 1960s, scorecards were a quarter and pencils were a dime. I never asked for foam fingers, Cubs pennants or Billy Williams jerseys. That scorecard and pencil were my souvenirs. And that was enough.

About the second inning, tragedy struck: My pencil lead broke. Of course, I could sharpen it at home, but how was I going to complete my traditional duties, tracking Kessinger, Beckert, Williams, Banks, Santo, Hundley and company? I couldn't ask for another pencil, could I?

I showed the unusable writing utensil to my dad and he didn't miss a beat. He took it and within 20 seconds handed it back sharpened and ready for the next batter. Now, you may be able guess what he did. To an adult, it may seem obvious. But to a 9-year-old, scraping that pencil at just the right angle with just the right pressure against the concrete floor of the grandstand was nothing short of brilliant. My dad was a genius!

Dad, for a season of life, you too are a genius. It won't always be that way. There will come a time—hopefully—when each of your kids knows more than you. But for a while, you want to be the one man they look up to who can solve any crisis, large or small.

When your son panics because he needs to paint a green dragon but only has paint in primary colors, show him how to mix blue and yellow. He'll be astonished.

When the printer cartridge runs out as your daughter attempts to print a 12-page homework assignment, you know a gentle shake will loosen up enough toner to finish the job. She'll be ever so relieved.

As long as you can, dad, I urge you to store up “genius points.” Offer brilliant solutions to your children's urgent challenges before they realize that it's really just a matter of life experience.

Believing their dad is the smartest man in the world is a great gift for a young child. But don't get too cocky. There will soon come a time when their challenges require significantly more complicated solutions. Still, you want them to come to you. Because the solutions offered by the world (friends, media, the culture) are quite often the worst possible choices. Make sense?

Allow me to close this NCF blog with two more recommendations:

- Next time you're at a ballgame, teach your own son or daughter the proper technique for filling out a scorecard.
- Finally, as you sit down to watch the historic 2015 World Series featuring Chicago (NL) vs. Kansas City (AL), I urge you to send out your best mojo in support of the Cubs. (Even though most of the NCF staff are Royals' fans.)

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This blog post is an excerpt, in part, from The Dad Book. For the original article, visit .