Deb's Page

What If . . . ?

Deb Gauldin, RN, PMS

DEB GAULDIN is a childbirth educator who performs songs and humorous tales ("Hormone Affirming Music and Humor for Women") about pregnancy, childbirth, and the adjustments to parenthood. She lives outside Chicago, Illinois.

Abstract

In this column, a childbirth educator wonders how to impress upon parents the importance of accepting their children for who they are, just as they are.

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In the last issue of this journal (*Journal of Perinatal Education*, Vol. 11, No. 1), I lamented about my lack of athletic ability and my irrational fear of birthing balls. Some of you responded by reminding me that there are psychotropic drugs that help with these sorts of conditions. Others presumed I was already on medication and merely suggested increasing the dosage! Very funny.

I just presumed that my husband and I would give birth to little marching-band geeks. The only physical prowess our offspring were likely to require would be the ability to tote clunky musical instrument cases back and forth from school.

But like the best-laid plans and scripted futures our couples carry to childbirth classes, life had other intentions. Instead of folding chairs and band concerts, we found ourselves perched precariously on bleachers, cheering freestyle swimmers and offensive linemen. (And believe me, some of them were downright offensive!)

Who would have guessed I would be dealing with gym shoes and smelly warm-up jackets instead of ornate, wool band jackets? Or that I would ever choose watching a Bears game with my son over a trip to the mall on a Sunday afternoon?

That was the case today, as my daughter rolled her eyes, tossed her hair, and headed out for some shopping, convinced that anyone waiting to watch an opening kick-off rated right up there with Neanderthals. The swish of her hair took me back to a time that I introduced her to a group of colleagues from work. She was about 3 years old, with curly eyelashes and long tresses of auburn hair.

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” asked one of them.

“A Dream Glow Barbie,” Katy replied in the sweetest little voice.

Being the feminist, campfire girl, “woods woman” that I am, I was, of course, mortified, and leaned down hoping to clarify.

“Katy,” I pressed. “The ladies are asking what you want to do for your work, honey.”

There was a pause and, with all sincerity, she looked up, batted her eyes, swished her hair, and said, “Well, if I am a Dream Glow Barbie, . . . I guess all I have to do is glow.”

Gulp!

What if she grows up to be shallow? She isn’t. What if he is passionate about sports . . . ones involved in

throwing balls? He is. How do we even begin to prepare expectant parents for the beauty and the challenge of watching our children evolve into who they are—not whom we think they will become? Are there even words to convey how much richer our lives are for raising children who are not simply clones of us? What if life is even better for our differences? It is.

Note: Deb travels nationally, presenting keynote speeches for perinatal practitioners. For booking information, call Deb at 800-682-2347 or visit her web site (www.debgauldin.com). Deb’s CDs and tapes contain songs about pregnancy, childbirth, and the adjustment to parenthood. They are available through Lamaze International (800-368-4404 or www.lamaze.org).

San Francisco, CA. (Photo by E. Scaringi)