

Being a Dad

By Mike Larson, Former Wisconsin Chapter President and father of Alex

I remember the day my son was born. Driving home from the hospital late that evening, I was immersed in the miracle of life that unfolded before me that day. So many things raced through my mind that evening, but there was one driving feeling that has never diminished since that first day—the feeling that there was a great gift deep within my son. He had a potential to do just about anything in this world. There were no limitations. He would have all the advantages to fully develop his talents and make a difference in this world. I felt he had the potential to surpass any dreams I could imagine.

Seven weeks later, shortly after leaving the hospital, we received his diagnosis of Prader-Willi syndrome. I'm sure I don't need to tell the other parents of children with PWS how devastated we were. All of the dreams that I had formulated for years, ever since I was a small boy thinking of when I would be a dad, were dashed before my eyes. The following several months were to be one of the lowest periods in my life. There was a lot of self pity, concern for the immediate medical issues of caring for our son, and the unknown of what life was going to deal each one of us down the road. Grieving over the lost dreams was very painful. It still is. I'm not sure if I will ever be over the pain. But I love my son more than life itself. Through it all, I had to try to be the best dad I could be. I did not want to miss an opportunity that could benefit him.

After a while I realized that new dreams could be made. They were different than the first dreams I had made, but it was important to me that they be there. Through the past months I felt I had been broken down into the most basic of elements. At times it was difficult to see myself like I was. However, throughout this process there was one thought that never died. From that first day, I never lost the feeling that my son would have a purpose in this life and he would make a difference in this world.

I believe that there is only one who knows what our true purpose is on this earth. I may never know what my son's or my own purpose is, but I see many things most every day that astound me about how much insight my son has for living. My son is 3 now, and I can't explain how someone who has lived for three short years can teach me what life is about. He has shown me what my life's priorities should be, what the rewards for perseverance and personal accomplishments are, giving unconditional love, and having fun. He can warm the coldest of souls and brighten the day of all he meets. Already he has touched and altered the course of many lives. He is teaching others as he has taught me. Maybe this is his purpose; I don't know. What I do know is that he has made a difference in my life and others who know him. But still deep down I feel there are much greater lessons to come.

I still cycle through periods when I am afraid of what the future will hold for him. Most parents probably feel this. I want the best for him. And, most of all, I wish for him to have and live out dreams of his own.

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