

Dear XXX,

You have reached the end of a major phase in your life, and you are about to begin a new and even more challenging phase.

Very soon, possibly in a single moment, and with one giant silent but invisible step, you will leave what has become your comfort zone. Your entire childhood will fall into the past behind you, and you will be expected to perform, and to be responsible—as a fully independent and mature adult. And more than that, you will have the opportunity to become a man.

Choosing the precise moment when your transformation will occur, will be your choice. It could be on your 18th birthday, or the day you graduate from MBA, or you could postpone it as many do, until it is forced upon you by the consequences you create and bring to yourself in life, which still will be a choice of your own making. And yet, once you make this choice, but not until you do—the benefits, the privileges, and the immense satisfactions of manhood will become yours from that moment forward.

But beware, many “adult” males in their 20’s and 30’s deny this process. You will see that many “guys” lie to themselves, trying to delay or pretend they’ve not stepped across the line into full maturity. They usually admit it and may call themselves “guys”—but ask directly whether they’re a boy or a man—and most will tell you, “No, I’m just a guy.” Which is a good indicator of someone who is self-focused and avoiding responsibility, and who should not be trusted with your respect. They may well be fun, but they should be held at a distance, and avoided as candidates for true friendship.

So what is it... to become and to “be” a responsible man? Do you know? Has your dad modeled it clearly? Have others in your life, made the qualities of manhood obvious? Let’s look, and consider whether the descriptions that follow are useful for one who aspires to live and function as a responsible male member of the human race.

From your personal lineage, direct from both the xxxx and xxxx families, precedent and expectation sets a high bar for personal character, integrity, honor, principles, morality and faith. As you face challenges and difficulties, small or large, you’ll be expected to make the correct choices, day in and day out—for the rest of your life. And, sometimes you will fail, as all men do at times, then you will have the opportunity to learn the consequences of falling short, and the lessons that come from owning up, making amends or corrections, and becoming wiser and stronger as a result of responding responsibly to the circumstances you created through your

failure or missteps.

Most of the time though, I am certain, you will be successful, and your life will be filled with fun, excitement, deep passion and great joy. As a responsible man and human being, you will earn many great friendships, but do not be surprised if just a few stand out as your lifelong truest friends.

No doubt, girls who are becoming women will continue to be a meaningful focus throughout your life! Understand, they are not your opposite, but your complimentary gender, and I know you already appreciate the need to apply clear headed discipline to your selection process as you choose who you want to be with long term. And you will learn that mutual trust and commitment are the products and result of total openness, complete candor and full disclosure, and as you achieve that with someone you will recognize that it deserves to be honored and protected, especially by being true to your heart and your principles, every day in everything that you do. Not an easy or simple requirement, but that is what living a responsible life is about. Love, caring, and respect, first and foremost, should be allowed to define your path.

And realize, men need women more than men want women, and it takes a man who truly knows himself, through his failures and his successes, to humbly respect that a relationship is bigger than the sum of its parts.

My best advice as a father to my son, is that you recognize that a real man who truly knows and respects himself, does not require much. Does not need much (besides a wonderful woman), and there is nothing to prove, or to acquire that is worth more than what you have to give and share with others. Giving and being generous with who you are, is the greatest gift. Beats winning the lottery, running your own company, or completing a 50-mile triathlon. Although running your own company can be a great way to contribute who and what you are, and what moves you, to a larger world.

Allow generosity and gratitude to be your ultimate guide, and know that I will always be watching out for you, and will offer my time and focus whenever you want or need it. But like me, from this point forward (once you choose to take this step), you will be your own man, occupying your own independent place in the world, eventually having your own family and children to care for, and to discipline (!), as I have tried my best to do for you.

Loving you has been very easy. Thank you for that! Every family should have at least one relationship that remains always good and

relatively free of tough challenges or upsets. You have been fun to watch, and I look forward to seeing which choices you make in the coming years. Count on me whenever I can be useful, and I may give or say things on my own, unsolicited like this letter, if I think you will value or need them.

Pride in my view is officially a vice, or “deadly sin” and not really a virtue, so I will say instead that I LOVE you and LOVE all that I’ve seen you doing and being this far in your life. You care about people more than you care about things, and beyond that I don’t think much matters more in life. So all I can ask for is for you to stay true to the path you’ve been following. I do worry that sometimes you get soft with your clarity and confuse your values with desires, so when in doubt, take your time and be deliberate rather than pushing for a result that may hide unintended consequences. Taking extra time whenever you’re not clear, and exploring other options, is always acceptable and good advice, that usually leads to good judgement and ultimately the best choices.

I want to close with a quote that I’ve valued and kept prominently displayed since about the time I left college. I learned recently that the author did despicable things in his life, but I have not allowed that to tarnish the merit of this inspiring quote, which has helped me stay positive and strong through some rough times when I was feeling weak. Hope you find it inspiring too.

Love, Dad

*This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.*

*I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live it is my privilege, my privilege, to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no ‘brief candle’ to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have a hold up for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations. -George Bernard Shaw*