

Maine Voices: Imagining a different way of celebrating Father's Day

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By Jeremy Fischer

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Even before I became a dad, I was always a bit uncomfortable about how American culture treats Father's Day. Now, as the father of three, I find it carries a much more personal dissonance.

In American society, Father's Day is a "day for Dad." He gets a break. He should sleep in. Maybe make him breakfast in bed before he does something he loves with his buddies. He gets a pass on chores like mowing the lawn or making the weekly trip to the dump. You get him a gift or two; he gets to pick what's for dinner. And please don't bother him while he watches the last few holes of the U.S. Open on the couch.

In other words, Father's Day is a day for Dad to get away from both his family and ordinary responsibilities. But is that what it's supposed to be about? Is it intended as a break from the rigors of fatherhood, or a celebration of them? I appreciate that my answer to this question may be unpopular with some dads, but I emphatically take the latter view.

There's no doubt that being a father is wonderful. Making pancakes on the weekend. Tubby time and story time. Playing ball, going camping and being silly. Watching them grow and learn.

But being a father can also be hard. Often it's about the 2 a.m. tap on the shoulder that they peed the bed. Or packing lunches before rushing to school drop-off. Sometimes it's being there to coach their game, even when it means you have to go back to work after they're asleep. Having the difficult conversations or teaching an unwelcome lesson.

The good and the bad are an inextricable package. They typify the dichotomy that is modern fatherhood.



Rowan Kubbs, 6, gets a push from his father, Dmitri Kubbs, in April as Rowan hauls firewood on his customized bicycle in Auburn. Dmitri Kubbs found the bicycle on the side of the road and added the frame from a pressure washer cart to make the wood hauler. *Daryn Slover/Sun Journal* [Buy this Photo](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeremy Fischer is a father of three sons. Originally from Presque Isle, he is now a resident of Yarmouth.

Perhaps it has always been that way. Perhaps it has evolved. I – like any father – know only my own experience.

I didn't grow up with my dad. My parents divorced when I was 3. He lived abroad and I moved to northern Maine with my mom and two sisters. I spent summer vacations with him, but I never had a day-to-day experience throughout the year. I don't know how he spent his Father's Days. I know only that I sent him a gift each year and talked with him on the phone. And I don't know his opinion about the Father's Day question that I'm posing here – he passed away a few years ago and we never got to talk about it (or many other things).

So, turning back to our society's version of Father's Day, how does taking the day off comport with the meaning of fatherhood? The simple answer is that it doesn't.

To be clear, I'm not suggesting that having a few hours of personal time on Father's Day – or any other day – is bad. It's not. Personal time is both necessary and healthy. However, maybe there is a better day to do it than Father's Day.

When everyone's focus turns to Dad, why not use that special attention to teach a lesson? Like when it's about me, I choose to help others. Go clean up that park down the street where you take family walks after dinner. Or go to the homeless shelter and feed the hungry people you see only out the car window as you drive through town. Or organize a bottle drive to raise money for a cause of Dad's choice.

What if all of America's dads reimagined Father's Day this year as a day of service, rather than as a day off? Think about all the good we could do in our communities. Think about all the people we could help. Most of all, think about the immensely important lesson we could teach our kids through a few simple acts of service on this singularly important day for fatherhood.

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