

# Being a dad means adapting to change

It takes time to grow into role as father, husband; don't let mistakes faze you

ARMANDO CARRILLO  
AZ | SEE IT

Father's Day is a day to celebrate all the dads. For me, this holiday is particularly special because I never much considered being a father and never thought I would have kids celebrating me. But when I met my wife while we were both ministry students, things began to change.

After becoming youth pastors, we got married, but children were still off the table for a time for me.

That was until I held a little girl who truly touched me. I saw it as God telling me to honor my wife and to not be afraid to have children.

I was scared when I found out my wife was pregnant, but I dug in and supported her. Our lives began to change as our children became part of our team; the many laughs, trips, bruises, scrapes and falls all began to change me as a father.

As a new father, I began to really think about my role and responsibilities and knew I had to keep an eye on my relationship with my wife. I felt pulled in so many directions and began to realize this was going to take a lot of love. I knew I would have to keep myself filled with love, joy, peace, patience and happiness to maintain a solid balance with my children. This took me time to really realize what my children needed of me!

I've seen some fathers make diaper-changing look super easy, but I knew for me, fatherhood was going to be a true learning experience.

The love of being a father kept me on the right track, it pressed me hard, and it challenged my very soul to commit myself fully to their growth and care.

I made some mistakes down this now 10-year road, and that's OK. Every father has to take it one day at a time, keeping a vision for his family and enjoying the many blessings that come with being a dad, a provider and husband.

When my two boys came along, I took a very manly father approach — we would play rough, go to martial arts, play ball and more. My boys made me



Clockwise from top: Gabriel Carrillo, 10; Abrianna Carrillo, 6; Jacob Carrillo, 8; and Armando Carrillo.

feel like I needed to teach them how to be strong.

But my parenting style changed when my daughter was born. She brought me down to earth and filled me with the most love I have ever felt in my life. It was like she was the piece missing from our clan! My fatherly whistles began to shoot off; I began to dig deeper and think deeper about my role in a different way.

As a father, I have learned to change, to adapt, to think about my responsibilities and to enjoy life one day at a time. I feel so blessed to have had this chance at life and I am very grateful to be a father and husband!

I am also grateful for the resources that DrugFreeAZKids.org, a program of Southwest Behavioral & Health Services, has on its website. To all fathers: Live, love and build a strong foundation for your children, but take life for what it should be and make it the best you can every day with your children and loved ones!

*Armando Carrillo is the program coordinator of the HOPWA Transitional, Permanent Independent and Permanent Supportive Housing Program for Southwest Behavioral & Health Services. He and his wife of 12 years have three children and live in Laveen.*

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