**Tell Stories About Work**

**Ken Canfield, Ph.D.**

*April 27, 2007*

Sure, your kids may know the company or organization your work for. They may even know your title. But, what does Daddy do at work? He drives around talking on his cell phone, or he goes to a factory, or he messes around on the computer. Some weeks, he flies to faraway cities to meet with people. Some afternoons, he plays golf.

Sue Shellenbarger, who is the work-family columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*, overheard her 9-year-old son tell a friend, "My mom types for a living."

Historically, dads have been the ones who teach their kids about the world of work. And that's still the most common scenario.

We need to give our children a better picture of what the world of work is like. One study from the University of Chicago shows that many teens don't understand the career paths that are open to them, and if they pick one, they don't know how to get started.

So how can we as dads do a better job preparing our kids for the workforce?

Shellenbarger suggests we tell stories-and offers these helpful insights:

First, **remember kids are less interested in your successes, and more interested in the struggles you face and how you deal with them**.

Second, when talking about your work, **throw in some dramatic touches**. This is not to suggest that you should exaggerate, but your kids will tune in more if they understand the daily fight you face. Who are the people or groups opposing you? Who in the cast of characters is on your side? Flavor the stories with dialogue and details that illustrate human character qualities-good and not-so-good-without criticizing or gossiping about the people involved.

And third, remember that **your children will learn from how you think about your work**. Is it a passion, or primarily a way of providing for your family's needs? Tell your kids about situations that you really care about, the values that guide you to success, and what you're learning through the challenges.

Dad, there are many ways we can prepare our children to be entrepreneurs, musicians, social workers, contractors, managers, technicians, teachers, or whatever God calls them to be-by relaying truths and attitudes they can't get from a book, from school counselors or advisors.