

My mother used to tell me that no matter how much bigger I was than her or how old I got, I needed to remember that she was still my mother. Recently I found out right she was. My daughter Emily is now 27 years old and happily married to Pete. But I still worry about her; it comes with the job of being a parent. She recently had a job opportunity and was seeking fatherly advice from me.

Emily is a lawyer by training and landed her first job with the Attorney General's office in Topeka, Kansas several years ago. It was not necessarily a glamorous job, but it utilized some of her training and talents. After a while the job was not what it used to be and Emily started looking for a different, better lawyer job. She had several opportunities but none of them seemed like the right fit. She finally found a good opening for a job that helped complete her skill set as an attorney.

The problem was that she still wasn't one hundred percent sure that was the right job. The pay was about the same, so she wasn't sure that it was worth the risk to take the new job. She asked me for help. I am afraid that I didn't give her a solid direction, instead a friend directed me to a model that she used to make a decision, which I in turn forwarded on to Emily.

She agonized over the decision for two weeks. To add to the uncertainty, Pete was not very happy with his teaching job, and was contemplating quitting in order to focus more full time on their growing wedding photography business. I have had good role models to follow being a parent and in-law of an adult child, so I tried to be available to help, without offering my opinions. After all this is Emily and Pete's ultimate decision.

Emily finally made the decision to take the new job and both employers were very gracious in making the transition. When I asked Emily what tipped the scales toward taking the new job, she said something I think was very profound, especially considering her gene pool. She said that her decision was made "not just for me, but for we", meaning that decision was going to affect both her and Pete and the final analysis had to include the consequences for both of them together.

On a related note, I had the pleasure of spending a little time with Don Lamberti, founder of Casey's General Stores. We got on the subject of management styles and one of the reasons Casey's has been so successful is because of the people that Don has been blessed to work with. He said management at the company succeeded because their ultimate decision making models were not based on what was best for the managers, but what was best for the employees and customers. Eventually that turned into what was best for everyone.

Don criticized those CEO's who more often than not made corporate decisions that filled their own pockets with money, and I whole heartedly agreed with him. So as owners and managers of small businesses, how do you make decisions? Are they based on what will turn a quick buck, or best for "we, not just me"? My personal belief is that if we take that attitude into everything we do, whether in our business or personal lives we will be far more successful in both.

Mom was right in telling me that we never stop being parents. We never stop worrying about our children. On the other hand there is some comfort in knowing that mom's values and ideals have been appropriately passed on to another generation.

*Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, market president of First National Bank, Ames-Ankeny.*