



#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

What fathers left unsaid: The emotional distance between fathers and sons

A father is such an important figure in a person's life that it can shape and outline the personality and psyche of a person. But even fathers make mistakes, whether unconsciously or on purpose. They are human after all. It is imperative that a father has the right conversations with his child. But for countless reasons, our fathers have skipped a whole lot of those and missed many lessons — lessons that could have made life easier for us or conversations that could have altered the course of our lives.

THE MISSED LESSONS

"My father is a superhero in my eyes. I have seen him carry a business, nurture a family, and meet all the demands of society, all with a smile on his face. To this day, I cannot figure out how he did it. And he never taught me how either. It is a marvel to me but I regret that we have never had that conversation," said one middle-aged Musfiq Fuad, who grew emotional recalling the memories of his late father.

"This is true, especially when it comes to family. My father used to balance and meet the demands and needs of each and every family member. He knew how to prioritise and still keep everyone satisfied. Yet here I am, trying to do the same thing, but I cannot balance it.

"I try to keep everyone satisfied within my limits, but it never works. My father could have taught me how to balance it all," he added.

Fuad added, emphasising that he was not blaming his father, but rather expressing his regret of not spending more time with him while he was still alive.

"He also never discussed his finances with me. Or any of the commitments he had made. When he passed away, I got in a conundrum with his commitments and it got to a point where it grew difficult for me to meet them all. And the worst part is that I had no idea if these were real commitments or people were just making them up to take advantage," Fuad recalled the difficult years following his father's death.

Mohammad Shameem, a young banker, shared similar views.

"My father never had 'any' conversations with me," he said in a melancholic tone. "We never discussed anything because he did not have the time. He was always so busy that there was no time to spare for a conversation."

THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If you achieve something, it sure feels nice to be acknowledged. It feels especially good to be appreciated by your family. But what if your family just does not communicate that way?

"After my father passed away, I learned much later that he was really proud of me and had high hopes for me. Even grand plans. But he never said any of that to me," Shameem recounted, observing that our father's generation preferred to maintain a hardened exterior even though they had no shortage of love.

This trait is the trademark characteristic of our father's generation. But think how their acknowledgements could have boosted us. They will boast of your good results, praise your talents in a tea stall, but when it comes to saying: 'good job, son', suddenly it becomes a Herculean task.

Our fathers raised us well, but they also made mistakes. But like their lack of acknowledgement, the lack of apology was also consistent.

"I wish my father had said sorry. Just once," said one Raihan Alam, a young businessman.

"It's not that I am blaming him for something specific or that I have a disdain, none of that. I know he did the best that he could with what he had and, in his shoes, I would probably do much worse. But I just wanted him to acknowledge that he has made some mistakes and he could have done many things differently," he elaborated.

It's true that our fathers did their best within their limitations and with every passing year, as you take on more and more responsibilities, you learn to appreciate their sacrifices and actions a little bit more. But that doesn't alleviate the lack of communication that we feel. And while it is justified to want that one conversation or acknowledgement from your father, it is also important to attempt to understand their actions.

Perhaps, as we become parents, we will learn from the mistakes of our parents. We will try our best, but how well we did will be judged by the next generation. For now, let's acknowledge our fathers' sacrifices despite their limitations.

By Ashif Ahmed Rudro