

My oldest daughter got married! At least I think she did. She was married on April 1st so maybe it was just an elaborate and expensive April fool's joke on me. It was a wonderful, exhausting, emotional day. Well, it was emotional for everyone one else. But I was stoic - like a rock. A weeping rock.

During my welcome speech at the reception I reframed it as "Father of the Bride Day". I thanked the crowd for standing when I walked down the aisle, which was very kind of them. I also thanked my daughter, Abrielle, who escorted me. I believe she was even wearing a fancy new dress for the occasion which was a nice touch on her part. At least I don't remember seeing that dress before.

Let's face it. It's not awesome to be the Father of the Bride. First, you move down a notch on the list of "The Most Important Men in Your Daughter's Life." I mean, her mom stays at #1 for the Most Important Woman, but you're now second place in your category. And in America, second place is First Loser.

Next, she legally changes her last name, officially erasing your very legacy. It's like the 22+ years of love and encouragement you gave her are gone, and now she's in a witness relocation program or something. She's part of some random guy's family that you just met a year or two ago. (OK, to be fair we love Josh, he's a wonderful man. But still, that name change thing hurts a bit.)

To add insult to injury, you get the honor of paying for the public ceremony where all of that is made official. You even have to dance with her in front of everyone, which signifies your last dance. It's like you've fallen down on the dance floor and each of the guests at the wedding get one free kick.

Ok, maybe it's not that bad. In fact, it was kind of magical. The day pretty much went off without a complication. The bride was beautiful, the weather was perfect, the vendors did an excellent job, the ceremony was wonderful, the food was great, and I didn't trip on the dress as I walked her down the aisle. I did forget to put tissues in my pocket, but they weren't needed because, as I mentioned before, I was a rock. Side Note: Suit coat sleeves are remarkably absorbent.

But that kind of magic doesn't happen on its own. She began planning this event in earnest eleven months earlier. (Ok, she started planning this day when she was seven years old, but you know what I mean.) The wedding dominated nearly every phone call and visit over that time, as each aspect of the ceremony and reception was planned, scheduled, purchased, and/or made. Those of you who have been through it, know exactly what I'm talking about. It's a lot of preparation and a lot of work to pull off such an event and have everything go right.

Every year at the college we do our very best to make sure that the student's experience with us is as good as it can be. "Magical" may be a bit too far to describe it, but we certainly want our students to be as satisfied as they can be with their education and all of our services. Like the wedding, it takes a tremendous amount of planning and work to give them the best experience we can.

We measure our students' satisfaction through a national survey known as the Ruffalo Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey. This instrument asks students to rate the college on 40 questions in areas like student services, instructional effectiveness, campus climate and others. We have been doing this survey for years because it allows you not only to measure our students' satisfaction but also compare the results to other colleges across the country that use the same instrument. That provides context to the scores (and sometimes bragging rights).

I'm happy to report that we have had our highest scores! In fact, we were above the national average score on 35 of the 40 questions on the survey! We have always done well on this instrument, but this was a huge jump in the results. Our students reported fantastic satisfaction levels across the board, such as academic advising, student centeredness, campus services, and on and on. It was kind of magical.

Our employees put a huge amount of effort into the student experience and according to the survey that work has paid off in a big way! I can't thank them all enough for all they do for our students, and it really shows!

Maybe above I complained a bit too much about being the father of the bride. What you want more than anything is for your children to be happy (maybe the second thing is for them to get off your payroll). The beautiful bride was beaming from ear to ear the whole day. The pictures from the wedding show a girl (ok, a woman) truly happy and excited. That's all a parent really wants.

It was a lot of work to put on that wedding, but I would not have changed a thing about it. It will be a wonderful memory I will cherish forever. I just wish I remembered my tissues.

If you have any questions about this article or anything else please contact me at binbody@neosho.edu.