

Ms. Leah,

You mean the world to me because I never knew what it was like to love unconditionally until you came into my life. You changed everything. You made me responsible. You gave a purpose. You drove me to become more to give more and do things I didn't know were possible. Many times in your life as I was saying goodnight I would remind you that you are raising me as much as I am raising you. That wasn't just talk. I meant it. You and your sister have been my greatest teachers, biggest challenge, and the best gifts I've ever been given.

You taught me that the world doesn't revolve around me. Every person I meet has someone who loves them and I should give everyone the same love and respect I want everyone to give you. Everyone is someone's child. You taught me how to let go. The world is different when there is a part of you walking around in it that is outside of you. Life is one big mystery of uncertainty with no guarantees of a tomorrow. This is equally terrifying and exciting. You taught me how to dance with uncertainty rather than fighting with it. You were a constant reminder to be present.

I want you to know forever that I love you. Early in your life I noticed I was leading you through fear. Fear of what you might face or fear I might screw you up. Fear that you would develop bad habits or hang with the wrong kids. Once I noticed it I changed. I stopped talking to you in "don'ts." I stopped sweating the small things. I started existing in the energy I wanted you to exist in. I started showing up as a model instead of a warning. This wasn't only with you but also with your mom. I'll never forget when you were three or four years old you said "one day I'm going to marry you dad." After I stopped laughing I realized that you were probably right.

For most of your life especially in the early days I was your example of a man and a husband. Honestly Leah I am most proud of how I showed up with your mom. Your mom and I were partners. We treated each other well. I was faithful to her and she was to me. In all of my years of coaching people I came to understand that a happy partnership is something that must be earned. It can't be bought. Your mom and I earned our relationship everyday and I promise you it remains my single greatest accomplishment. The rule we held for you and your sister to have a boyfriend was simple. They have to be as nice to you as dad is to mom. That was a standard I chose to live by. I hope you will live it forever.

My favorite memories of you are a little bit of a blur. The first one that came to mind outside of meeting you was the first time we took you to the beach. We couldn't take our eyes off of you because you would instantly start crawling to the water. You have always always loved the water and the beach. I also cherish all the nights of holding you, rocking you, singing to you, and reading to you before bed. Writing this now gives me a new perspective that I will focus more on being intentional with you and your sister in the evenings we have. The funniest memory of you was the time we were at the movie theater and you asked in a public bathroom full of people why I was peeing like a girl. Everyone started to laugh.

The greatest lessons life gave me were...

1. Courage is the gatekeeper to all other virtues. No one is born without fear and doubt. Those who build their freed lives are those who know how to access the wells of courage that exist in all of us.
2. The opinion you have of yourself matters. The story you tell to yourself, about yourself, when you are by yourself is the quality of your life. Start there baby. Noone has the right to define you but you and once you understand ego there is no downside to having a high opinion of yourself. It will always serve you well.
3. Two skills I wish everyone would develop and were hard as hell for me to follow.
 - a. Learn to keep your own promises. Confidence is a result of kept promises. I wasted decades negotiating with myself. Make a decision and follow through. If you aren't going to follow through, don't make the promise.
 - b. Best Advice, Best Life. You can always find your way home when you find yourself at a fork in the road by following this principle.

Love you,

Dad