

The Power of a Son's Kiss

By Stephen Wayne

From the book: **Chicken Soup for the Father & Son Soul**

He's well into his teenaged years, yet my son still kisses me good night. I'm sure going to miss it when he stops. In truth, he stopped once a few years ago when he announced he was 'a little too old for this,' but changed his mind after we had a father and son talk. I've always known



Michael and me sharing a kiss, not too many years ago

the spoken word can deliver a powerful message, but as I learned that night, sometimes the message needn't be voiced at all. And sometimes the greatest lessons learned are taught to us unknowingly by our children. One of the things we talked about that night was an old friend of mine.

We were going camping for the weekend. When I stopped to pick my friend up, he and his father were working together on a classic car restoration. Grabbing his gear and before leaving he said, 'See you on Sunday, Pop,' and without hesitation, gave his father a kiss. So many years have gone by since then, yet the memory of that moment remains with me—a lasting impression of the love my friend had for his father and demonstrated through the power of a kiss.

My son and I talked about my father too. I wish I could kiss Dad once more, but he passed away some years ago. We didn't kiss as grown men until well into my own adulthood. When I began to kiss him again it was on special occasions—holidays, family gatherings—times where I could do so with neither of us feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable. It was a wonderful feeling to express my love for him in such a way and I knew he felt so too. Not since my childhood had kissing served as a routine declaration of affection between us, but once resumed, we both had come to expect it. On the night he died and again one last time before he was laid to rest, I tenderly kissed him and whispered, "I love you." This is what I had told my son—not with intent to embarrass him into continuing our nightly ritual, but instead to share with him a small piece of the love I had for my father and how much he had meant to me. He listened, and when I was through, he kissed me. We haven't missed a night since.

Many times I have wondered if our nightly ritual was about to reach its untimely demise, the consequence of some offense committed by my firstborn. Having duly expressed my dissatisfaction with something my son has said or done, the ensuing verbal sparing commences. He unknowingly exposes his vulnerability when he says things in anger, part of his full-speed quest toward manhood. Despite any ill feelings that may remain between us as the day draws to a close, we never allow such emotions to interfere with our nightly kiss. When my son is ready for bed, he finds me. When I see him, any anger experienced earlier quietly disappears. He stands before me, not quite a man but for the moment, my little boy. He seeks my reassurance that we are okay and that I still love him. I give him a comforting hug, the nightly kiss, and the reaffirmation that regardless of his transgressions, my love remains unconditional, eternal. As he heads off to bed I bask in the glow of fatherly love and the reassurance that he still needs me. Once again our private world has been made right, if but for one more night.

I hope my son never feels uncomfortable kissing me, but if he ever does, I'll understand. Perhaps one day he'll be blessed with children of his own and then he, too, will come to know the wonder and glory of fatherhood and the power of his child's kiss.

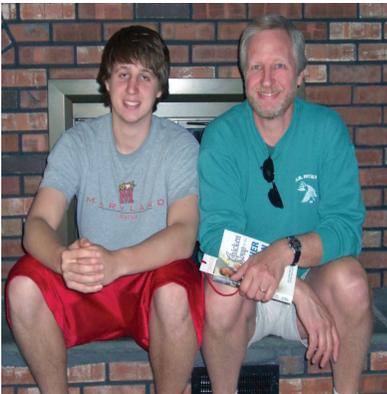
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(Note: Photo not published in book)

the backstory:

Since he was a little boy, my son Michael always gave me a goodnight kiss. And then one day, when he was about fourteen, he shared with me his reluctance to continue doing so. I, of course, understood. We talked about it for a few minutes, and then that was that—well almost. Some of the things we'd discussed went on to become the basis for what became my first published piece, *The power of a son's kiss*.

Once completed (and a couple of rewrites later) I thought the piece was pretty good, but admittedly I was just a little prejudiced! But I was convinced it was worthy of publication and to this end I decided to forward my new piece to some publications for their consideration.

A couple responses came back rather quickly and they were far from what I'd been hoping for.



“Doesn't work for us,” was what one *good news* magazine thought of my work. Another said that they “like the style but not the substance.”

These initial reactions caused me to immediately question whether I was wrong in believing that anyone, besides me, thought my *Kiss* piece was anything but a *nice little story*—that is until one afternoon I received an email from a local parenting magazine asking if they could use my submission for their Father's Day edition. I was thrilled—and relieved because now I knew that I wasn't the only one who liked stories about mundane things like a son kissing his dad goodnight.

But as it turned out, there were others too.

A few days later the folks at Chicken Soup contacted me, and eventually *The power of a son's kiss* became my first piece to appear in a book: **Chicken Soup for the Father & Son Soul**.

Besides the book and the parenting magazine, my story appeared in a few more publications.

The above photo of Michael and me was used in a publicity shot for a local newspaper concerning a newly published writer—me!. Look closely and note that I'm holding a copy of the (then) just released book containing the *Kiss* piece. Was it a shameless plug? Absolutely!

by the way:

If you're wondering about that previously mentioned *good news* magazine—they ceased publication not long after rejecting my submission. Was it karma? Yeah, I'd like to think so.

And lastly, did you happen to notice the name of the person who wrote this piece? For more on the fictitious writer **Stephen Wayne** please visit my “**home**” & “**about me**” page.