

Tony - A dad's unconventional success story

Tony found himself making major work/life decisions at the end of his senior year in high school as the result of an unplanned pregnancy. After Tony learned his girlfriend, April, was pregnant, his priorities quickly changed from those of a typical high school senior, to providing for a family and learning how to be a good father. He forged an impressive path by using his desire to be a good father as a guide.

The couple moved in together and when their daughter, Kara, was born. Though Tony and April did not get married, they did share in the care of their daughter equally. With April in school to become a teacher and Tony in school for hair design, they flexed their work to fit their schooling and work, and used little to no outside help or care except for Tony's mother, who watched Kara from time-to-time as needed.

This schedule of work and care lasted until Kara was old enough for pre-school. At this point Tony and April enrolled Kara in day care part-time at a local college, which then allowed for even greater flexibility around school and work schedules. Although they separated when Kara was six, the couple continued to share the care of their daughter.

Kara is now 13, Tony is a Hair Designer in a high end salon, and April is a second grade teacher. Though Tony has the opportunity to work full time, he chooses to maintain a 4-day, 30-hour a week schedule. Kara is with Tony every Friday after school, Friday night and every other weekend. Both grandmothers are in the area and help if school is closed, on days that Kara is sick, or in other special circumstances.

There's also a lot of unscheduled time together such as sporting and school events. During the summer Kara stays with Tony on his days off in addition to the scheduled visitation days.

Tony can clearly see how his daughter has benefited from having him not just in her life, but taking an active and equal part in her care, including discipline, talks about responsibility, respect, and other life situations. For Tony, the quality of his relationship with his daughter is what is most important, and that has been best supported through his shared involvement in her life.

Tony has few regrets. He could make more money, but chooses not to. He lives in a way that supports this decision. In fact, Tony believes in many ways his daughter has been a salvation for him. She changed his life and has brought so much joy, even if it is just the simple pleasure of sitting next to Kara fishing; talking and just being.