



Example of a two page contemporary ethical will

My loves [three teenage children],

It is you who have been at the heart of my adult life. Choosing to be Dad's partner in your *becoming*, from conception to young adulthood, has been fundamental to most of my decisions and has been at the root of a very fulfilling life.

I expect that I will be around for a long time and that I will continue to do what I have always done with you, which is to keep the appropriate balance of holding you close and letting you go. What I have tried to do, together with Dad, is to give you the most solid base we could – of family, of home, of summer places, of schooling. Layered on top of that we have tried to give you freedom to try out life on your own terms. It has been an elastic, evolving balance of giving roots and wings, of providing freedom within a structure. Sometimes you and we have differed on the degree and nature of the structure necessary! And I suspect there still will be differences well into the future – but such is the give/take, push/pull of the whole business and of the nature of love itself.

Whether I am present or not, I hope that as you live out your own lives you can maintain the balance of the familiar and the unfamiliar by creating a solid base from which you can securely approach your options and enjoy what you have created. The most important thing that I can bequeath to you is something that I hope I have already given you: a deep conviction of your own worth that translates into personal standards and instincts that will steer you in your relationships, inspire you to believe yourself to be a fully contributing citizen of the world, and enable you to create your own version of "home."

Along these lines, I hope you each will:

Stay connected to Dad and me and with each other. You are securely part of a family, but don't take the relationships for granted. Know what is going on each other's lives, in Dad's and my lives. Your ties to each other will be the longest ties you have – keep them well nourished; purposefully keep track of each other's emotional well being; provide support for each other in good times and difficult times.

Connect with your grandparents while they are alive – seek them out, write them, visit them, read what they have written. You will always be glad you did.

Maintain a sense of being part of an extended family of many branches. Nurture your relationships with your cousins and aunts and uncles. Tell the family stories to each other and to the next generations. Make sure the family records and writings are kept intact and passed down.

- Build a web of friendships and try to keep them alive over time and distance. Old friends are wonderful.
- Commit to being financially secure – don't be held hostage by debt; money = choice, debt = prison; start early because time is your ally; get professional help when you need it.
- Build a base of skills and interests so you can be adaptable in the workplace.
- Develop an area in which you can invest yourself with passion and go into deeply – and make money and find satisfaction.
- Read a lot – continue to educate yourself; nurture your curiosity; travel.
- Value the spiritual. Where do you meet the spirit? Seek it out; nurture your creativity; cultivate optimism and faithfulness.
- Commit yourself to things – it is where all the rewards are: commitment to interests, people, marriage, children, work, places. Trying to keep all your options open all the time leads nowhere.
- Get in the habit of good communication in all areas of your life - to keep tormenting thoughts to a minimum, to operate from light openness and not be burdened by anger, and irritation. Repair wounds quickly, with professional help if needed.
- Be a citizen of the world: try to make the world a better place; one person, a small group of people can make a huge difference.
- Be respectful of everyone you meet – most everyone can do something better, or knows something more than you – what is it?
- Seek out those who are older and more experienced; do not be intimidated by anyone, regardless of their age or status; be respectful, interested, look them in the eye and know that you are of interest to them, also. You will better yourself through their influence; they will benefit from your interest and point of view.

My loves, I want you to have this now, to keep it with you always and if you choose to have children, to give it to them sometime, too. I may choose to add to it as the years go by.

Remember always that my love lives inside you.

Mom