

Advice to My Son

Brian Doyle

Don't eat that. Do ask questions. Do not use that tone of voice with me, young man. Do pick up the wet towel from the floor and hang it either on the closet door or on the back of your bedroom door or in the bathroom as you have been asked to do since the beginning of recorded history. Do not play my old records at 78 revolutions per minute and sing along like you are a squirrel on major recreational medicine. Do ask the girl out even if you are absolutely sure she will say no and your friends will berate you and her friends will point you out in the hallway and whisper the words *doofus* and *geek*. Do not do your math homework on the bus early in the morning when you know and I know that you have a history test first period and a science test second period and you have technically actually studied for neither of these rigorous intellectual challenges. Do pick up your own plate after dinner and rinse it in the sink and contemplate the remote possibility of actually picking up any other single dish or plate on the table and bringing it all the way in from the dining room to the kitchen which is as you know a yawning chasm of about seven feet. Do not keep answering a question with a question in a clear and deliberate effort to drive your mother into a frenzy awesome in its implications because if your mother loses her quick and supple mind we will all be in the poorhouse peeling mice for a living. Do write your thank-you notes to aunts uncles grandparents and friends of the family who have showered you with more cash for your birthday than your father has ever in his whole life had on his person or indeed except in miraculous moments in the bank. Do not bump, strike, or hammer your brother or your sister at any time whatsoever no matter who started what or who looked at whom in a manner that clearly and inarguably was a proposal to pummel. Do answer me in a clear and reasonable tone when I ask such forthright questions as: Did you pick up the wet towel from the floor or Have you studied for your history and science tests or Did you or did you not commit an egregious foul upon the corporal person of your brother? Do not leap upon, roll upon, do somersaults upon, do jumping-jacks upon, conduct wrestling matches upon, eat, or use any type of writing or coloring implement upon any bed, chair, couch, table, or counter in the house. Do learn to dribble and shoot the basketball with your left hand because being able to dribble and shoot with both hands is a rare and precious skill and may lead to a professional career that will keep us from the aforementioned peeling of mice in the poorhouse. Do not cut a guy at the knees while playing football because in my experience that leads to bruises in colors even your mother the painter has not imagined in the most feverish of her brilliant dreams. Do get a haircut once a decade on general principle because I say so and I am the dad. Do not think that I have any serious and final answers to any of the serious and pressing questions of life but do know that I love you with a love ferocious and inarticulate and thorough and mysterious and tidal and always will love you even when you have not as yet picked up the wet towel on the floor which if you do not pick that up soon I am going to roar in such a manner that birds in faraway countries will startle and wonder what has shivered the air beneath their holy and extraordinary wings.

Any questions?