I have a daughter of two—just reaching out to people. What should I tell her about relationships? About how to be with people? What might she tell me as an adult? I needed to know, so being an experienced astroelectrician, I designed and built a time machine (in my basement, near the pool table.)

One quiet Sunday afternoon, while my wife was in the park with our daughter, I travelled eighteen years into the future. I would speak to my daughter as an adult, hear what she thought I should know. I found her in the living room, reading a thick textbook. She looked at me when I strode in. “Still the beard?”

“Honey, I’ve come from the past,” I explained, ignoring her strange comment. “I want to find out what I should tell you about relating to people. When I leave, you won’t remember any of this.”

She put the book down and sighed. “I remember all the other times.”

My speech was forgotten. “Other times?”

“The first time, you said it was because I was thirteen and asking about sex. Then, eight and there were bullies. At four, playing with Barbies. How old was I this time?”

“Two,” I told her, embarrassed. “When was the last time I visited you?”

“This morning. You keep inventing time machines. You keep popping up, a few years younger, after you invent another time machine. You don’t remember but I do. Dad, I have to study.”

I slumped into a nearby chair. “This is not what I expected.”

“You want to be a great parent? First,” she told me, “buy me a phone when I’m five. Second, stop visiting when you get freaked out about something.”

“That’s it?”

“You’re a great dad when you stop worrying about being a great dad.”

I thanked my daughter and travelled back eighteen years. I tried to talk to my daughter honestly about sex, bullies and other issues. She got a phone when she was eight. One year before this story begins, I look at my baby and wonder what I

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could do to be a better parent. I decide to build a time machine to visit her in the future and ask her.

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