What this country needs is more dads. I’m not talking about fathers, we have more than enough males fertilizing eggs in this country, and at ever younger ages. Those would be sperm donors. I am talking about dads. The man who respects himself enough to not settle for anything less than a total commitment to and from the woman he loves before making a child. Men who think ahead, plan, and dream of the life they will make for their wife and child. I’m not just talking about showing up at the delivery room, but around the dinner table every night. Embarrass their kids with out of date slang and curfews.

There was a study in an African game preserve that specializes in orphaned animals. They noted that, while they had very little trouble out of the female elephants moving through puberty, adolescent male elephants were a destructive force of unparalleled level. They uprooted trees, ran up to hippos and gored them for no apparent reason, and fought constantly. Sounds like the kids in my classes. After studying adolescent males in their normal environment, they noted that adolescent male elephants go off with an older, more experienced male for a year or so to kind of learn the ropes of what it means to be a male elephant. When they tried this approach at the preserve, the violent behavior ended.

Considering the crime level we are experiencing among our young (human)males in this country and the record number of young men growing up without a man in the house, much less a dad, it seems that the elephants have a thing or two to tell us primates.

Another study, I believe this one from Harvard, looked at the impact of parents on the developing personality of children. I was not surprised to read evidence linking the level of adventurousness in children to the influence of the father. What I was fascinated to discover was that the level of compassion in the developing child was also linked to the active presence of the father in the child’s life during development. Again, when I look at the high school students I teach, I see evidence of this study being lived out. There is definitely a lack of what my grandpa called gumption in my students, along with pride in doing a job well not because people knew you did it, because you knew you did it. Not because you got paid, but because it was yours. But most of all, I see a lack of concern for anyone, or anything beyond themselves.