

# On Mortality and Children

The office is near a very large, very old graveyard. It's a lovely place for my daily walk, odd as that may sound. I like graveyards, especially here in the South, and especially since reading Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*.

Today, I didn't listen to any podcasts or audiobooks or music. I just walked in silence. The cemetery air was a little heavier than usual, and I got to thinking about mortality. It only took me a few minutes of initial discomfort to come to terms with my own mortality. It took me a little more time and discomfort to come to terms with the mortality of my wife and peers. Then an awful thought popped into my head. My children will die someday. I can't begin to explain how dreadfully this hit me.

It wasn't only the thought of my kids dying young. That is a special kind of horrible that needs little elaboration. It's just so deeply wrong and gut-wrenching. But even the thought of my kids dying peacefully at a ripe old age after a full life made me feel weird and a little desperate. Imagining the world without them seemed so empty and tragic. I felt a special kind of helplessness thinking about it.

I don't know why this is. Maybe I can stomach my own death because some part of me lives on through my kids, but when they pass that's it? Maybe if I have grandchildren, it won't seem quite as sad knowing my kids won't live forever, because another generation carrying a part of me remains? This is plausible, but it would have to be some kind of subconscious hard-wiring. I've never consciously felt the need for some kind of lasting legacy.

Maybe it's because so much of my current identity has to do with ensuring the health, survival, and thriving of my kids. The thought of their mortal life ending even in the far future may be too dissonant for my current self to be comfortable with.

I don't know, but I know it's something I'm not prepared to think about. It's too overwhelming. Coming to grips with my own mortality and reminding myself to make peace with it daily is enough of a task for now. Sorrow is a heavy thing, even hypothetically.