

Holes

My kids have holes in their bodies. Sure, they have the same ones you and I do. The ones that they used to deny that they've done anything wrong, the other ones used to listen to loud music. My kids go well beyond the holes in their bodies that they have had since birth. They have professionally placed holes that were put there with a sharp needle by someone called a piercing artist. My kids go to a studio, sign a form, the artist puts a needle through a body part and inserts a piece of stainless steel. They come home with care instructions and a hunk of metal in a hole that wasn't put in their body through evolution.

"What's that in your ear?" I ask, spotting something shiny.

"It's a rook." Is the reply.

"A rook?" To me, a rook is a piece on a chess board that I always seem to lose first.

"Yes, a rook. Isn't it cool?"

"Mmm, sure. Did it hurt?" I ask, looking at a part of her ear that seems swollen around the shiny metal.

"Why does everyone always ask that?" Is the indignant reply.

"Seems to me like it would hurt." I say, shuddering at the thought of a needle going through the cartilage in my ear.

"It only hurts for a nano-second, and then it's fine. If you don't like it, why don't you just say so?"

"I never said I didn't like it, I just said it seems like it hurts."

"I'm thinking of getting a tragus next." She says proudly. "But I have to wait for this one to heal."

"Tragus?" I ask. These words and their meanings are new to me.

"Or a snug, those are so cool. This girl in one of my classes just got one. Or I might just stretch my lobes, I'm thinking of going to a two." She's enthusiastic now, grabbing her ear lobes and pulling on them.

"Two? You mean two earrings in each ear?" I ask. My wife has that, I like the way it looks.

"No, two gauge. That's the size of the jewelry that goes through it." She rolls her eyes at me. I'm too old to understand all this stuff. She's probably right; I just learned that "bad" was good. I think back thirty plus years to metal shop and Mr. House lecturing about the size of wires.

"You mean two gauge, like the way that electricians measure copper wiring?" I ask, showing that I'm not totally ignorant on this subject.

"Copper wiring? No, I'm talking about the size of piercing jewelry, you know like the one in my rook is an eighteen, the ones in my lobes now are twelves and I'm thinking of stretching to a two."

In my mind I picture the size of a two gauge electrical wire in my little girl's ears. "Does stretching hurt?" I can't get over the pain of this body modification.

"Not if you do it right. Just take it slow and it's no problem. Of course I could get them scalped, then I could wear a two right away."

“Whoa, scalpelled?” I ask. Unless this is a word that has other meanings as well, a scalpel is something used by a surgeon to cut open your body.

“Yes, scalpelled.” She says proudly. “You know the knife that doctors use when they do surgery?”

“Of course I know what a scalpel is.” Now I’m the one that’s indignant, I didn’t dissect a frog in high school without learning something. “They use a scalpel on your ear?”

“Yeah, they just slice it open, put in the jewelry and there’s no stretching required.” She looks at me; I think she is hoping that my stomach is doing flip-flops by now.

“This is done by the piercing artist in the studio?” I ask, not letting on what the state of my stomach is.

“Well, not all of them, but the real experienced ones do it that way. It’s a little bloody, but the pain is over real quick.” I can tell that she’s a little disappointed that I’m not retching yet, though I am inching my way closer to the bathroom as we talk.

“How do they numb your ear?” I ask, still very cognizant of the pain issue.

“Numb? You mean like Novocain? They don’t use anything, the pain is part of the process, when the endorphins kick in, you feel kinda high, you know.”

“Right!” I say, looking towards the bathroom door to make sure it’s open. At least I know about endorphins, those are the chemicals that give someone runner’s high. Not from personal experience mind you, I read it in a health magazine when I was looking up an article about adding fiber to my diet. “Wouldn’t it be easier to run around the block?” I ask.

“What?”

“Never mind. If you’re going to do it, I think you should stretch, not scalpel.” I tell her looking at the delicate little ear lobes that she inherited from her mother.

“So you’re ok with it then?”

“I didn’t say that, I just think stretching slowly sounds safer than a sharp knife without numbing.” I suggest.

“Yeah, I guess stretching is easier. You know, you’d look good with an earring.”

“Me?” Instinctively my hand reaches for my ear.

“I think it would be really cool, and I’ll bet Mom would really like that look.”

“You think?” I’m holding both ears now. “Which one do you think? Doesn’t one ear mean you like boys and the other ear means...? I’m not sure about this.” My wife would be fine, but suddenly I’m thinking what my daughter’s grandmother would think of her son with a hole in his ear.

“Oh Dad, that is so ancient. It doesn’t matter which ear. I think you should do the left one, it would look really awesome. I’ll take you, I’ll even hold your hand if you want.”

“Awesome?” I let go of my right ear, but continue to hold my virginal left lobe.

“Radical, Dad, really.”

Usually before making a decision I like to do a lot of research, but right now I'm feeling like I want to be awesome and radical. "Ok, let's go before I change my mind. Your mom will be surprised when she gets home."

"All right, awesome, let's go." She turns on her heels and grabs her car keys off the table. I feel a special bond with my little girl; we have the same piercing artist.

I hesitate one moment before following her out the door. "You're coming aren't you?" She asks anxiously.

I follow her out and close the door behind me. "Yeah, I'm coming. Are you sure this isn't going to hurt?"