

# Letter: A father's letter to his daughter



Rosie and John Friedrich

***Author's note: This submission, formatted as a letter to Rosie, is prompted by a "letter to the future" project by the organization Dear Tomorrow. They are soliciting letters from parents to their children about climate change, to be archived and delivered to them in the years 2030 and 2050.***

Dear Rosie,

Two days ago you turned 10. Where does the time go?

I remember vividly the feeling of looking at you for the first time the night you were born at Barton, on the eve of Father's Day. I sang you a song ("Danny Boy") that I'd sung many times into your mommy's belly. You stopped crying and gazed into my eyes, with a look of recognition. Like the Grinch, my heart grew three times that day, and nothing has been the same since.

I tell you all the time how much I love you – more than all the stars, all the grains of sand, all the drops of water in the ocean, to infinity. But words can never quite capture the feeling. Elizabeth Stone said that "making the decision to

have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body." That's how it is.

When I see other dads and moms with their kids, I know that they are feeling something similar. From South Lake Tahoe to Syria, Indianapolis to Iraq, the love that we parents have for our kids is universal. I've imagined from your first moments about how the collective power of love in the hearts of parents (and grandparents) everywhere could be harnessed to change the world. If we the parents demanded decisions be made with the best interests of all kids in mind, there could be no war, or children dying needlessly of preventable diseases, or inaction on the biggest problem of all – climate change. Parents united against global warming and global warring.

And yet, when I look around in these last days of your single digit years, I see awful spasms of violence – a mad man with a gun mowing down dozens of uncles, aunts, sons, daughters in Orlando, while bombs are dropped on hospitals tending to injured children in Syria. And I see temperatures and oceans rising, ice sheets melting at an alarming rate, droughts intensifying, wildfires raging, while the presidential candidate Donald Trump says it's all a hoax invented by the Chinese. (He really said that, look it up).

Reading the news, a dad could sink into despair. But that would betray the pact I made with myself when we decided to have a child—to stay hopeful that a better world is possible, and that I'd do what I could to help bring such a world about. A world that is, in the words of Carl Sagan, "worthy of our children." Your birth, and the birth of each baby, is a vote for hope and determination regardless of appearances in the moment.

That's why I work with Climate Parents, a group of parents and grandparents around the country taking action to help prevent catastrophic climate change so that we leave you and all kids

everywhere a livable planet. And in doing that work every day, I see signs of hope emerging in so many places – the solar panels and wind turbines sprouting up like daffodils in springtime, the coal-fired power plants shutting down, the students suing governments for stronger climate action, the school boards voting to teach students the truth about climate change, the countries of the world agreeing in Paris to keep temperatures from rising to unbearable levels.

We may or may not do enough. Things could go either way. But when you are reading this years from now, by the light of a solar powered lamp, know that your dad, mom and millions of others who burned brightly with love for our kids did what we could, when we knew the stakes, as we watched our hearts running around–laughing, singing, playing and dreaming of the world to be.

Love forever,

**Daddy**

*John Friedrich works for the national organization Climate Parents. He lives in South Lake Tahoe with his wife, Kim Carr, and just-turned-10 year old daughter Rosie.*