

## ***Parenting Pointers***

### ***Parenting Tips on: Dads DO Make a Difference!***

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During June we have a wonderful tradition of celebrating our dads with Father's Day picnics, cards and special gifts. And well we should celebrate - because the role of "DAD" in the lives of children is invaluable. Research shows that fathers have a profound impact on the social, emotional, and intellectual development of their children. However, almost 40% of America's children live in homes where the biological father is absent. Studies show that children from fatherless homes experience substantially higher risks for high school drop-out, teen pregnancy, youth suicide, substance abuse, and homelessness. Fathers *and* mothers make different, but equally important, contributions to the emotional well-being and adjustment of their children. Dads especially influence self-esteem, academic achievement and healthy sexuality development in both sons and daughters.

Here are some pointers for how dad's can make a difference:

**Respect your children's mother** ~ If you are married, keep your marriage strong and healthy. If you're not, show respect to your children's mother and let your children know it. When children see their parents getting along they feel more secure, loved and accepted.

**Spend time with your children** ~ How a father spends his time tells his children what is important to him. Actions speak louder than words. If you always seem too busy for your kids, they will feel neglected no matter what you say. Being a good father means sacrificing other things. Kids grow up fast and missed opportunities are lost forever.

**Earn the right to be heard** ~ Often the only time a father speaks to his children is when they have done something wrong. Getting in the habit of talking to your children when they are very young will make the difficult subjects easier as they get older. Take the time to listen to their ideas and problems.

**Discipline with love** ~ Children need positive guidance and discipline, communicated in a calm and loving manner. Providing meaningful rewards for desirable behaviors will eliminate the need to "punish".

**Be a positive role model** ~ Good or bad, all dads are role models. Children do what is modeled for them. A loving dad demonstrates respect, honesty, humility and responsibility.

**Eat together as a family** ~ Sharing meals together as a family provides structure to a busy day and gives children a chance to talk, and parents a chance to listen and offer counsel and support.

**Read to your children** ~ Dads who begin reading to children when they are very young nurture a love of reading that can help ensure a lifetime of personal and career growth.

**Show affection** ~ Children need the security of knowing they are loved, wanted and accepted by their family. Hug your kids everyday and tell them you love them!

Being a dad is a gift and a responsibility. Kids are resilient and forgiving. The point is not to be the *perfect* dad – but the *present* dad! Happy Father's Day everyday!

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