

Ten Ways to Be a Better Dad



What's Happening

Children need *both* parents. Involved fathers can help children lead lives that are happier, healthier, and more successful than children whose fathers are absent or uninvolved. Fathers who spend time with their children increase the chances that their children will succeed in school, have fewer behavior problems, and experience better self-esteem and well-being.

What You Can Do

1 Respect your children's mother. When children see their parents respecting each other, they are more likely to feel that they are also accepted and respected.

2 Spend time with your children. If you always seem too busy for your children, they will feel neglected no matter what you say. Set aside time to spend with your children.

3 Earn the right to be heard. Begin talking with your kids when they are very young, and talk to them about all kinds of things. Listen to their ideas and problems.

4 Discipline with love. All children need guidance and discipline, not as punishment, but to set reasonable limits and help children learn from natural or logical consequences. Fathers who discipline in a calm, fair, and nonviolent manner show their love.

5 Be a role model. Fathers are role models whether they realize it or not. A girl with a loving father grows up knowing she deserves to be treated with respect. Fathers can teach sons what is important in life by demonstrating honesty, humility, and responsibility.

6 Be a teacher. A father who teaches his children about right and wrong and encourages them to do their best will see his children make good choices. Involved fathers use everyday examples to teach the basic lessons of life.

7 Eat together as a family. Sharing a meal together can be an important part of healthy family life. It gives children the chance to talk about what they are doing, and it is a good time for fathers to listen and give advice.

8 Read to your children. Begin reading to your children when they are very young. Instilling a love for reading is one of the best ways to ensure they will have a lifetime of personal and career growth.

9 Show affection. Children need the security that comes from knowing they are wanted, accepted, and loved by their family. Showing affection every day is the best way to let your children know that you love them.

10 Realize that a father's job is never done. Even after children are grown and leave home, they will still look to their fathers for wisdom and advice. Fatherhood lasts a lifetime.

Adapted from the National Fatherhood Initiative (<http://www.fatherhood.org/>).