



Being a Good Dad

The Facts

Researchers have found that fathers have a profound impact on the social, emotional and intellectual development of their children; yet, nearly 40% of all America children sleep in homes where the biological dad is absent. Consider these statistics published by the Virginia Fatherhood Initiative:

- 71%** of high school dropouts come from fatherless homes
- 71%** of teen pregnancies come out of fatherless homes
- 63%** of youth suicides are from fatherless homes
- 75%** of adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers are fatherless
- 90%** of homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes

Fathers and mothers make different but equally important contributions to the emotional well-being and adjustment of their children. But fathers, especially influence self-esteem, scholastic achievement and healthy sex role development in both their daughters and sons.

Making a Difference

Respect your children's mother

One of the best things a father can do for his children is respect their mother. If you are married, keep your marriage strong and vital. If you're not, it is still important to respect the mother of your children. A father and mother who respect each other, and let their children know it, provide a secure environment for them. When children see their parents getting along, they are also more likely to feel loved and accepted.

Spend time with your children

How a father spends time, tells his children what's important to him. 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 quickly. 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. That's why so many



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children cringe when they hear mother say, “Your father wants to talk to you.” Begin talking to your children when they are very young so that the difficult subjects will be easier as they are older. Take time to listen to their ideas and problems.

Discipline with love

All children need guidance and discipline. Provide meaningful rewards for desirable behaviors. Fathers who discipline in a calm and fair manner communicate love.

Be a role model

Fathers are models to their children, whether they realize it or not. A girl who spends time with a loving father grows up knowing she deserves to be treated with respect by boys, and what to look for in a husband. Fathers can teach sons what is important in life by demonstrating honesty, humility, and responsibility.

Be a teacher

Many fathers believe that teaching is something that others do. But 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 help their children learn the basic lessons of life.

Eat together as a family

Sharing meals together is an important part of family life. It provides some structure to a busy day and gives children a chance to talk about what they are doing and want to do. It is also a good time for fathers to listen and give advice. Most importantly it provides an opportunity for families to be together everyday.

Read to your children

In a world where television dominates our lives, it is important that fathers make an effort to read to their children. Children learn best by doing and reading. Begin reading to them when they are young. When they are older, encourage them to read on their own. Nurturing a love for reading can help ensure a lifetime of personal and career growth.

Show affection

Children need the security that comes from knowing they are wanted, accepted, and loved by their family. Parents, especially fathers, need to feel both comfortable and willing to hug their kids.

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