

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

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Dads

REMEMBER:

- *Fathers provide an important and powerful influence on their children*
- *Try to be physically and emotionally involved in your children's lives as much as possible*
- *Be calm and thoughtful when you discipline*
- *Support your partner in the challenge of raising children.*
- *Remember that laughter and play can build relationships*
- *Show your children that there are many different sides to men*

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Dads can tend to underestimate the importance of their parenting role. They may think that their partner is the 'expert' and that their role in parenting is not important.

But dads provide an influence that children are unlikely to find anywhere else in their lives and that complements the role of their partner.

Dads Are Different

Dads often encourage risk taking and exploration, whereas mums can sometimes emphasise caution and safety.

Mums tend to simplify their language when speaking to children, but dads tend to speak in a more adult style that can stretch a child's understanding to new levels.

When disciplining, dads may focus more on justice and fairness, while mums may draw more attention to feelings and empathy.

Dads Are Role Models

Most importantly fathers provide a powerful example to their children about how to relate to women. If men treat their partners and the women in their lives respectfully and with consideration, it sends a message to girls that this is the standard that they should expect in their relationships with males. For boys, fathers show how men can act in ways that demonstrate love, respect and care.

Being aware of this influence can inspire dads to bring out the best in themselves. Dads can have a profoundly positive effect not only on their children, but on the world in which we all live.

IDEAS

Here are some things that dad's can do the help develop a better relationship with their children:

Get Involved

Be active in your child's life, all the way from caring for them when they are babies to getting to know them again in their late teens.

In simple terms that means be around, interested and available. Make time for your children, start special father/son/daughter events (e.g. football matches, days at the beach, movie nights etc.)

Play Around and Have Fun

Play with your children and be silly. For example, the traditional father/child wrestling is an important kind of play with dads and children.

Children learn about power and containing their strength through this kind of play (when the father controls the wrestling so that he doesn't hurt the child or doesn't allow the child to hurt others).

Another important thing that children learn through rough and tumble play with fathers is about winding themselves up and then winding down. This turns out to be an important skill for children to have to help them self-regulate when their emotions become overwhelming.

Be Positive

Nurture your children. Look for positive qualities in them and tell them that you have noticed them. Praise them for their efforts not just when they have achieved something.

Tell them that you enjoyed talking to them, or that they have a good sense of humour. Notice little things and make comments. This doesn't come naturally to most people. You have to train yourself to do it.

Be a firm but safe disciplinarian. Respond to behaviours - don't react.

Work as a Team

Back up your partner in managing behaviour issues with your children. Parenting is more effective when the adults work together as a team.

Speak Out

Be willing to make a stand about what is right. Discuss values such as non-violence, respect, love and caring.

Talk to children about inappropriate male role models. This is particularly important for boys. Dads who talk about violent or pseudo tough behaviours as being unacceptable are teaching their sons some important lessons about being a man.

Show Your Versatility

Demonstrate versatility in your role as a dad. Mow the lawns but make sure that you cook a meal for the family from time to time. Teach children about the importance of doing practical things for the family.

Adapted from S Biddulph "Manhood", 1995, Finch Publishing, Lane Cove, pg 105 - 139