

Parenting Matters

PARTNERS IN PARENTING

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For Colorado Parents

Colorado State University

The Father Factor: How Fathering is Different From Mothering

By Dr. Kyle Pruett, contributor to *The Family Education Network*

Fathers do not mother, any more than mothers can ever father. Think for a moment about what you do differently as fathers and mothers about limit setting, being affectionate, teaching, playing with your kids, or when you are upset or disappointed with them. Before you catalogue a few of the differences, let's remember that the things you men and women have in common in your behavior with children hugely outnumber the things that are different. A few distinguishing characteristics do seem to matter, however, in positive ways to your kids.

1. Fathers tend to play with children more physically and less predictably than mothers. You enjoy doing the unexpected, stimulating, sometimes teasing things to activate your kids as you play. Unlike moms, you use your bodies more in play; like "Dad as jungle gym."

We all note that kids do seem to enjoy this tendency too, although they may

not always know when enough is enough. You and your kids might want to practice this one a little.

2. Dads will hang back a little further and a little longer when kids are exploring something they might not have encountered before.

Kids recognize this as a longer tether with mom than with dad. Dads tend to offer support or help a little more slowly than mom.

3. Dads tend to discipline a bit differently than moms, emphasizing the outside world consequences of acting inappropriately, while moms tend to point out how misbehavior is a source of disappointment in a relationship based on trust.

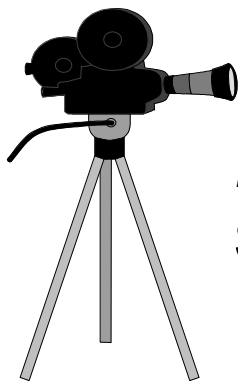


Serious About Drugs

Steroids are synthetic compounds derived from the male sex hormone, testosterone. Unlike other drugs that alter the function of the user's mind or personality, steroids alter the user's body. Although some steroids can be obtained with a doctor's prescription, the vast majority are sold illegally. With an estimated three million users or more, steroid use is the fastest growing drug epidemic today. Research shows that about 10% of senior high school males and 2% of senior high school females have used steroids. Steroids mimic the effects of testosterone, the hormone responsible for development of secondary sexual characteristics in males such as the growth of facial hair.

Steroids cause an immediate increase in muscle strength and size, but these effects are only temporary. As soon as their use is discontinued, muscle size and strength return to normal levels. In addition, muscle mass produced by steroids is more prone to injury. Immediate

effects are acne, aggressive behavior, elevated body temperature, headaches, irregular heartbeat, and nosebleeds. Long-term effects include bad breath, high blood pressure, baldness or unnatural hair growth, coronary heart disease, mental disorders, female and male reproductive disorders, stunted growth of bones, increase in cholesterol levels, insomnia, liver cancer, tumors, and other liver diseases, and kidney disease and gallstones.



Focus on Steroids

Kids Say The Funniest Things...

Kids' letters to God...

Dear GOD,

In school they told us what you do. Who does it when you're on vacation? --Jane

Dear GOD,

Is it true that my father won't get into Heaven if he uses his bowling words in the house? --Anita

Dear GOD,

Did you mean for the giraffe to look like that or was it an accident? --Norma

Dear GOD,

Who draws the lines around the countries? --Nan

Dear GOD,

I went to this wedding and they kissed right in the church. Is that okay? --Neil

Dear GOD,

My brother is a rat. You should give him a tail. --Danny

Dear GOD,

Please send me a pony. I never asked for anything before--you can look it up.

--Bruce

Dear GOD,

Did you really mean "do unto others as they do unto you?" Because if you did then I'm going to fix my brother. --Darla

Dear GOD,

I bet it is very hard for you to love all of everybody in the whole world.

There are only four people in my family and I can never do it. --Nan

Dear GOD,

You don't have to worry about me. I always look both ways. --Dean

Dear GOD,

Maybe Cain and Abel wouldn't kill each other so much if they had their own rooms. It works with my brother. --Larry.

Dear GOD,

I think the stapler is one of your greatest inventions. --Ruth M.

*Quotes taken from
caringparents.com.*

"Seek First to Understand..."

By Chris Whaley, Partners in Parenting Coordinator

In Stephen Covey's new book "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families," he writes of the importance of "seek first to understand, then be understood," implying that you become more interested in understanding others and less interested in having people understand you. This strategy is most especially helpful when approaching adolescents.

The transition from child to teenager is not easy. Adolescent years are marked by extreme physical growth and emotional upheavals that are challenging and demanding for parents. For pre-adolescents from 9 to 10 years old, many skills have been mastered. They have accepted parental values, family activities and responsibilities, and fit in at home and school. They are usually friendly and cooperative. And then suddenly at age 11 or 12, parents are faced

with pre-teens exhibiting new behaviors.

While most preteens are comfortable with social and cultural values, some manifested behaviors include restlessness and disorganization, irritability and distrust, concern and dissatisfaction



with their bodies, a heightened need for privacy, and turning to peers for advice.

Parents can keep their perspective by understanding the two basic tasks of their pre-adolescent; loosening up the childhood personality as the body gets ready for changes, and identification with peers and withdrawal from par-

ents. Experts who work with teens call age 12 a turning point because it is the best chance for parents to establish a relationship with their children that will positively impact the rest of the child's life. It is tremendously important we understand physical, mental, emotional and social development to ensure youths' healthy growth.

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Believe it or not: Parents have an influence on kids

When the news broke early this month that teenage motherhood had dropped by nearly 12 percent in the last five years, I had a bit of trouble putting on my party face.

One side said that abstinence education was working. The other side said that contraception was working.

Researchers, meanwhile, said that what's driving the drop in birthrates is not one or the other but both: better use of contraceptives and less sexual activity.

Parents are a remarkably effective anti-pregnancy program.

I don't believe in looking a gift statistic in the

mouth. But nearly lost in the news cycle was a second piece of research released the same day by the nonpartisan National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. This one deserves a rare moment of news recycle.

The study portrayed the shadowy figures who may in the end make a much bigger difference in lowering teenage pregnancy than condoms or pledges: parents. For a long time, parents of teenagers have been cast as the beleaguered, hapless characters whose voices are barely heard and rarely respected in a cacophony of peers, pop culture and body piercers. Parents, we are told, are road kill on the way to

adulthood.

But the study went through all the research on the role parents play in the teenagers' lives and what impact they have on their children's sexual activity. It turns out that parents are a remarkably effective anti-pregnancy program. The greater the closeness of parent and child, the lower the pregnancy rate.

As Isabel Sawhill, the president of the National Campaign puts it succinctly, "When teens have a reasonably close relationship to their parents and when the parents communicate their own values to the children, rates of sexual activity and pregnancy are lower." This does not mean that a sweaty-palmed 45 minute lecture is better than a thousand condoms. Rather, says Campaign director Sarah Brown, "Parents who communicate values...firmly over a long time in the context of a close relationship can reduce sexual risk. What isn't helpful is no opinion, and no conversation."

In the wake of this report, the Campaign has put together, "Ten Tips for Parents to Help Their Children Avoid Teen Pregnancy." This sounds sort of cutely simplistic until you encounter Tip One: "Be clear about your own sexual



values."

This has in fact been the sticking point for a whole lot of parents who may still find themselves tongue-tied, or even panicked, about the first question on their kids agenda: What did you do, dad? But in reviewing polls and studies, it turns out that parents really have arrived at a consensus about that they want for their kids. They want their teens to postpone sex at least through high school--an age that mysteriously coincides with when they'll be leaving home. And they think birth control needs to be there as a backup. In other words, parents want to communicate precisely the ideas that seem to be--slowly--working.

The other "tips" run from discouraging dating before 16 to helping teens have options "for a future that are more attractive than early pregnancy and parenthood." Sometimes easier said than done. But saying is a kind of doing. "We are trying to break through the notion that parents have no role. It's not true. Parents matter and teens want to hear from them," says Brown.

Indeed the argument about teen pregnancy has been stuck for years in a pinched battle over contraceptives or abstinence-only programs. It's been a battle waged in schools and legislatures.

But if any public issue has a private face, it's this one. The most effective "program" may be right on the tip--or the 10 tips--of your tongue.

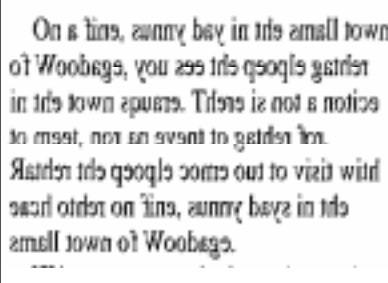
Ellen Goodman writes for the Washington Post Writers group.

How would you know if your child has a learning disorder?

By Bethann K. McGaffigan

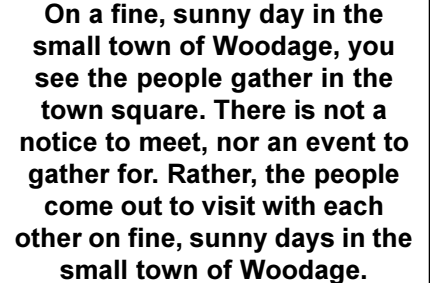
Although my son walked at the appropriate age and reached other milestones at the right time I felt that something was not quite right," says Yvette Moran, parent. "His social skills were lacking around other kids. We observed him carefully for a period of time and at age two and a half he was diagnosed with a learning disorder." No one knows your child like you do. Trust your instincts and observations. If something "just seems wrong" and your child displays several of the following problems consistently, you might want to consider the existence of a learning disability.

- √ Problems with following routines or directions
- √ Fine motor skills slow to develop



This is an example of what you would see if you had a reading disorder.

- √ Difficulty rhyming words
- √ Speaks later than peers
- √ Problems with pronunciation
- √ Problems with vocabulary, trouble finding the right word
- √ Extremely restless and distracted easily
- √ Trouble with social skills
- √ Trouble learning colors, shapes,



This is what it really says.

days of the week, numbers
A full evaluation by trained professionals is the next step in helping your child. Your pediatrician can refer you to a number of specialists trained in the area of difficulty. Working with a team of professionals and joining with other parents can provide your family with a valuable support system.

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