

Parenting Matters

Quarterly Newsletter

March 2007

For Colorado Parents

How Any Family Can be Happy



Raising a family is the toughest and potentially most rewarding job you'll ever have. I'm convinced it's much better to have a successful family today, though, than it was 30 or 40 years ago. The "traditional" family of the past -- a breadwinner father and a stay-at-home mother whose primary role is raising the children -- is now the exception.

Today, non-traditional families -- single parents, blended families, baby boomers caring for aging parents -- are the norm, and they face even greater challenges. A single mother may be trying to keep her family together and work two jobs at the same time. A couple trying to merge two different family cultures into a blended family may be facing resistance from some of the children. For dual-earner couples with children, there never seems to be enough time.

If we strengthen families, we go a long way toward overcoming our problems, and anyone can become an agent of change in the family. Here are guidelines to help you create a beautiful family culture, no matter what shape your family fits:

Excerpt: *7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*

1. BE PROACTIVE: Create your own goals - don't fall victim to the past

You are not destined to pass on dysfunctional behavior to the next generation. You can decide to act on the basis of your principles and values, not simply react on the basis of emotion or circumstances. How? Be aware of your own life, your behavior, thoughts, feelings and moods, and observe. Step in and make improvements. Fight against embedded tendencies and change your interaction with family members.

Keep an "emotional bank account" which represents your relationship with another person. Make "deposits" to build trust (being kind, apologizing, keeping promises, forgiving) and "withdrawals" when you do things that destroy trust (criticizing, nagging, blaming). The amount of trust in the account determines how well you can communicate and solve problems with that person. And it affects every relationship in the family.

2. BEGIN WITH THE END: Write a mission statement

Ask "what kind of family do we want to be?" Condense everyone's input into a written statement. "How do we want to solve problems? By yelling and slamming doors? Or by communicating?"

3. FIRST THINGS FIRST: Schedule family time

Adults who complain about being too busy spend 10 hours a week watching TV. Schedule a weekly family meeting where you can plan for activities, teach values and reserve a little time for fun.- such as playing a game together or reading a book.

Secondly, find a way to spend quality one-on-one time with each member of your family. You will find you have the time in the week for your family, if you check your priorities.

4. THINK WIN/WIN: Find ways for everyone to come out ahead

Search for ways to solve problems that involve a win for all concerned. If both parties listen to each other's concern, another solution might present itself that would be a win for all.

5. SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND: Listen first, then judge

To truly influence someone, you must put yourself in his or her shoes. Listen with empathy, not judging, not jumping in to solve the problem or give advice. Simply listen.

6. SYNERGIZE: Tackle problems together

Come up with a solution that is more than the sum of its parts - better than any individual could have created. Team work!

7. SHARPEN THE SAW: Continually renew your family spirit

Nurture physically, socially, mentally and spiritually. Done as a family: exercising, vacationing, worshipping, reading, and being of service to others strengthens the family.

PARENTING MATTERS, PREVENTION WORKS

By Stephen Covey; 1997 Adapted to fit this publication.

Strengthening Father-Daughter Relationships

By Linda Nielsen, Ed.D.

SOURCE: WWW.PTA.ORG

Why should teachers, counselors, and parents pay more attention to father-daughter relationships? Because, throughout her lifetime, a daughter is profoundly affected by the kind of relationship she has with her father—often more so than by her relationship with her mother. The girl who grows up having a comfortable, communicative, supportive relationship with her father generally has advantages over other girls when it comes to;

- Academic achievement and future jobs and incomes—especially in areas related to science, math, and technology;
- Avoiding teenage pregnancy and early marriage;
- Being self-confident and self-reliant;
- Setting long-term goals;
- Avoiding emotionally or physically abusive relationships;
- Resisting peer pressure to have premature sex, smoke, drink alcohol, or take drugs;
- Not being overly dependent on boys in order to feel good about herself;
- Asserting her opinions and standing up for her beliefs;
- Dealing well with people in authority (teachers, employers, etc.);
- A willingness to try new things and accept challenging tasks; and
- Having less chance of becoming depressed or developing an eating disorder.

So what can parents, teachers, and counselors do to help fathers and daughters create more meaningful, more personal, more communicative relationships?



1. Spread the word: Stop demeaning or dismissing dads

Our first step is to get the message across to everyone in the school and in the family that the father-daughter relationship is vital and needs to be appreciated and strengthened. We need to help others recognize the many demeaning, demoralizing beliefs they hold about fathers—beliefs that hurt father-daughter relationships.

2. Encourage more father-daughter time

We can also help daughters and fathers strengthen their relationships by seeing to it that they spend more time alone with each other—time without other family members around. As fathers and daughters spend more private time with one another, they have more opportunities to communicate honestly and comfortably about meaningful, personal matters. Not only mothers and stepmothers must be helped to feel more comfortable with this idea; teachers and counselors must also realize that it's not weird or strange or inappropriate for a father and daughter to spend time alone with each other, even during the daughter's teenage years.

Here is one way fathers and daughters can become more comfortable spending time alone with each other and get to know one another on a more personal level. As a daughter, ask your father to choose 10 pictures of himself from different times in his life—especially his childhood and teenage years. Be sure to ask him to include a picture of his father. Then ask him to spend an hour telling you stories about the pictures—in a quiet place where the two of you can talk privately.

3. Help daughters develop positive relationships with their fathers

As a parent, teacher, or counselor, you are in a position to help daughters understand how important their relationships with their fathers are and to help them recognize the ways in which they may be pushing their fathers away. Suggest that daughters encourage more open and communicative relationships with their fathers.



Parents in particular- both mom and dad- can strengthen father-daughter relationships in the following ways:

- Be sure dad spends at least two hours a week alone with his daughter.
- Watch movies together about positive father-daughter relationships: *Fly Away Home*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries*, etc.
- Read books that show fathers being just as competent as mothers in parenting their daughters. Books may include *I Live with Daddy*, by Judith Vigna; *Night Shift Daddy*, by Eileen Spinelli; and *Two Old Potatoes and Me*, by John Coy.
- Watch commercials together with your daughter and talk about the ones that make the father look stupid or incompetent.

Visit the following fatherhood websites for more ideas:

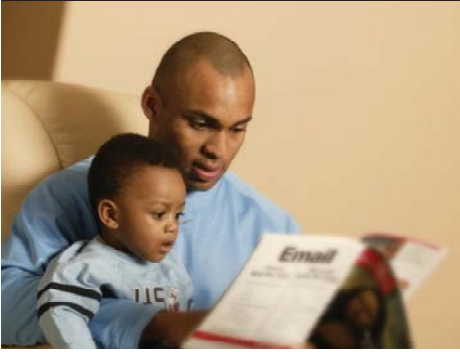
- Center for Successful Fathering
- Dads and Daughters
- Divorced Fathers Network
- National Center for Fathering
- National Fathers' Resource Center
- National PTA

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Make the Most of Reading Aloud With Your Child

STUDIES STILL SHOW THAT CHILDREN WHO ARE READ TO ARE BETTER READERS THAN THOSE WHO AREN'T. Be sure reading aloud together is a happy time for both you and your child. If you feel like it's a chore, then neither one of you will be motivated to read more in the future.

Here are some tips on bringing the books you read aloud to life:

- **See the story.** Try to see the story as you read it. If you're reading *Charlotte's Web*, imagine exactly how the words look when they're spelled out in *Charlotte's Web*. Your voice can't help but convey the magic in the spider web.
- **Accentuate the first line.** The first line of any good story will grab the reader's attention. Your reading should make your child want to sit up and listen.
- **Use facial expressions.** Widen your eyes to show surprise. Squint a bit to show you're thinking.
- **End slowly.** If you read the last line very slowly, you'll give your child a great sense of satisfaction.

Source: Mem Fox, *Reading Magic*, 2001 Harcourt, Inc., 525 B St., San Diego, CA 92101

Kids In Need of Basic Support for Healthy Development

Only 31 percent of America's children have all or most of the basic supports they need for healthy development, according to a Gallup survey released in November 2006 and developed by Child Trends and the Search Institute for America's Promise. America's Promise developed five categories of resources and supports every child needs to develop fully and well. These categories are called *The Five Promises*.

The Gallup survey results indicate that only 31 percent of America's children aged 6-17 have fully experienced four or five promises, while 48 percent have fully experienced only two or three promises, and 21 percent have fully experienced only one or none of the five promises. Children with more promises were consistently found to have better outcomes. *The Five Promises* identified by America's Promise are:

1. Caring adults
2. Safe places and constructive use of time
3. A healthy start and development
4. An effective education
5. Opportunities to make a difference helping others



THE
FIVE
PROMISES!

See the full report at:
<http://www.americaspromise.org>



"PRAISE THE
YOUNG AND THEY
SHALL FLOURISH"

AN IRISH
PROVERB





THE BENEFITS OF A GOOD BREAKFAST FOR YOUR FAMILY

FROM *HEALTHY FOODS, HEALTHY KIDS*
 BY ELIZABETH M. WARD
 PUBLISHED ON WWW.FAMILYEDUCATION.COM
 (ADAPTED TO FIT THIS PUBLICATION)

Breakfast has been called the most important meal of the day, and with good reason. While every meal counts toward good nutrition, the facts are on the table: Eating in the morning has positive effects on health and on kids' ability to learn.

What's a nutritious breakfast? A meal consisting of foods from at least two of the five food groups is healthiest, but the truth is that noshing on nearly any food in the morning is better than none, especially when it comes to kids.



It's a good idea to get your child into the habit of eating breakfast before he begins kindergarten. That's because youngsters who eat breakfast tend to fare better in school and have a healthier overall diet. Hunger makes it harder to keep your mind focused on learning, no matter what your age. In fact, studies show breakfast skippers are often more irritable and have shorter attention spans. Without the morning meal, kids are hard-pressed to meet daily nutrient needs, too.

Navigate the Morning Rush

With all the promise of the morning meal, why don't more kids eat breakfast? You're probably pressed for time in the morning, and so are your children. Simplify your morning routine with these tips:

- Get up ten minutes earlier.
- Give up morning television and computer games in favor of concentrating on the task at hand: eating breakfast.
- Stock the kitchen with healthy, quick-to-fix breakfast foods, including cereal, waffles, pancakes, milk, juice, cottage cheese, bread, fruit, and peanut butter.

Here's How to Jazz up the Morning

- Split a bagel. Spread each half with peanut butter and sprinkle with raisins. Serve with milk.
- Warm up leftover pizza or serve it cold. Have kids sip juice to go with it.
- Combine a soft pretzel, string cheese, and fresh fruit for breakfast.
- Serve 8 ounces of yogurt, a piece of toast, and juice.
- Heat a freshly made or frozen pancake, spread with peanut butter, top with sliced banana, and roll up.
- Mix cottage cheese with chopped peaches, pears or apples. Spread on whole wheat crackers or toast.
- Swirl applesauce and raisins into warm oatmeal. Serve with milk.

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Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

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