



FocusFamilyINSIGHT

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Re: *Five Things You Didn't Know Fathers Did*

Five Things You Didn't Know Fathers Do

As we celebrate Father's Day, we should recognize that fatherhood is not merely a sentimental role, but a profoundly practical one as well. Fathers do far more than put food on the table, teach us to ride a bike or take us to our first baseball game. Fathers are critical to healthy child and human development. Put another way, our fathers help make us the smart, compassionate, confident, well-adjusted people we are today.

Below are five underappreciated things essential to living a well-rounded life that the social and psychological sciences tell us we are more likely to gain from our fathers than our mothers:

1) Fathers Teach Empathy – A 26-year study published by the American Psychological Association found that children with very involved fathers in their lives are more likely to be sensitive to the needs of others in adulthood compared to those who do not have involved fathers. In fact, the researchers found that high father involvement was a substantially greater influence upon the development of generosity and thoughtfulness in adulthood than the three strongest maternal predictors combined.

2) Fathers Give Confidence – Humans gain confidence not from simply being told we are good, but by actually trying something difficult and discovering we can do it. Fathers are more likely to challenge their children to try difficult things by taking safe and measured risks. Research even shows that infants with involved fathers are more confident and likely to explore the world around them with enthusiasm. Fathers' more physical and active play style and slower response to help their children through frustrating situations creates greater problem-solving capacity and confidence in both boys and girls.

3) Fathers Increase Vocabulary – Yes, we all know that children are more likely to pick up new words from dad, especially when he skins his knuckles while changing the oil or when his football team fumbles on a key play. That is not what we mean. Children who spend much time with dad over their childhood are more likely to have larger and more complex vocabularies. A mother, being more attentive to the needs of her children, tends to talk more on the level of the child. This is good and makes for immediate communication. Fathers however, speak to their children more like they speak to other adults, thus often initiating the need for a vocabulary lesson. Dad's directions to their children tend to be longer than mom's, providing the child with the opportunity to hear more words and then learn how they fit together to convey a thought. And we know that a strong vocabulary is foundational to developing strong reading skills.





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4) Fathers Protect Against Crime and Violence – You are not likely to find well-fathered boys in gangs. This is not only because fathers are more likely to keep their sons out of gangs, but more importantly, fathers give boys the things that can make gang life attractive. At one time, insecure boys used loud, fast cars and motorcycles to show the neighborhood they mattered and weren't to be messed with. Now those boys use guns and aggression. Boys with good fathers don't have this need. They learn from their dads that they matter, and don't feel they have to force their way into manhood. Likewise, girls with good fathers are not as likely to fall to the pressure of sexually enterprising young boys, because well-fathered girls are more confident, having already gained the love of a good man.

5) Fathers Promote Better Treatment of Women – Find a young woman who is confident, bright, capable and unlikely to be victimized sexually, emotionally or financially and I will show you a woman who most likely has a good dad in her life. A good father demonstrates to both sons and daughters how a good man should treat women. This is shown by a father's role-modeling, but also by his less-than-good behavior. When a good dad is inconsiderate and Mom calls him on it and he responds like a gentleman, both boys and girls take note. Research from the University of California looked at ninety different cultures to study how men's participation in child care related to the status of women in these cultures. They found a very close connection, explaining, "Societies with significant paternal involvement in routine child care are more likely than father-absent societies to include women in public decisions and to allow women access to positions of authority."

Perhaps the best news of all, these five statements are true not only of "Father of the Year" dads, but also "Good Enough" dads who show up every day to the task of being a *male* parent. In fathering, quantity makes up for many of the typical shortcomings in quality. So instead of simply handing Dad another tie this Father's Day, thank him for making a difference in your life – in ways you may not have known until now.

Sources

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