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*This information is not intended as therapy or counseling,  
nor is it intended to replace professional consultation/guidance.*

### **WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAD MAKES!**

- I. When a dad is involved...
  - A. Children
    1. have advantages over children with less involved fathers
    2. develop better language skills
    3. exhibit fewer behavioral problems
    4. perform better academically
    5. display greater academic motivation
    6. maintain better parent-child relationships in adolescence
  - B. Girls
    1. enter puberty later after a positive father-daughter relationship in ages 1-5
    2. are more independent and confident
    3. exhibit insulation against adult psychological distress
  - C. Boys
    1. display a better awareness of feelings and emotions
    2. have healthier gender identity rather than a stereotype
    3. get in trouble less frequently
- II. What can you do?
  - A. Maximize time with your child
    1. Keep your child's needs uppermost in your mind
    2. Avoid "I must make this the most exciting 10 minutes of her day"
    3. Assess his needs to determine how you step into your child's day
    4. Schedule distraction-free times with your child
    5. Use errand/project time to allow child to watch you as you interact with others, complete a goal, handle frustration
    6. Use discipline consistently

7. Remember that ALL father roles are important!

B. Know your child's schedule, at home and at school

1. Bring up specifics with your child, letting him/her know you are aware of what he/she is doing even when you are not present
2. Use specific names of peers, teachers, etc.
3. Use comments rather than questions
4. "Show me..."

C. Respond to your child's concerns with empathy...**avoid problem solving**

1. Respond to your child with "You must have felt..." or "You didn't like it when..."
2. Stop what you are doing to listen
3. Listen to your child's response
4. **Avoid problem solving**
5. Focus on what he/she is asking of you

D. BE with your child

1. Unplug!! Have times with your child where your electronics are out of sight...avoid "just checking" them
2. Prepare and eat meals with your child
3. Acknowledge with full sentences when they are talking with you

E. Use natural consequences

1. If consequences are needed, connect them with the behavior
2. When your five year old resists bath time, let him see that you get to read only one book rather than the normal three books
3. Avoid lectures regarding the behavior
4. Remain as flat as possible so that child sees that consequences are about him/her, not about Daddy being mad
5. Avoid using guilt or anger to motivate child. "I have worked all day, and all I want to do is enjoy my time at home. Can't you stop fighting with your sister?"

6. Avoid physical punishment. So many more effective strategies exist...using physical punishment is like using an old, less effective anti-biotic. The medicine may work, but it has significantly more side effects.
7. Time out—if you are going to use it, know that it is not intended as a punishment. Time out is used to give a child (and sometimes a parent) a break so that he/she can return to the situation and respond more appropriately.

F. Be consistent and firm **without anger**

1. Imagine what your anger feels like to your child
2. What effect does your anger have on your child?

G. Share the role of disciplinarian

1. Children benefit when they know both parents can and will impose consequences
2. Children feel more secure when both parents know the rules of the family and maintain similar consequences

H. Ask for what you need in order to be the parent you want to be

1. Identify what you need to make the transition from office to home
2. Clarify those needs with your spouse—information about the day, 15 minutes to change clothes and “shift gears,” some greeting, etc.
3. Manage your stress throughout the day so that you do not bring it home with you
  - a. Take “mini” breaks throughout your day. These can involve stepping away from your desk/office, walking outside, stretching, even deep breathing.
  - b. Include physical activity in your day.
  - c. Have a ritual that transitions you from work mode to home.
  - d. As you turn into your drive, begin to visualize the scene at home.
  - e. Ask your spouse for 5-15 minutes when you get home. Honor that time by then moving into FAMILY mode.
  - f. Talk with your spouse about what you can do that will be helpful. Offer ideas and be open to direction.

- g. When all kiddos are in bed, take 2-3 minutes to reflect on what your children just gained from your time with them.

I. Play!!!

- 1. Play is the single most important way in which a child interacts with his/her world
- 2. When you play with your child, you send a message that he/she is important
- 3. Play allows you to connect with your child
- 4. Play increases the likelihood that you will be able to see situations from your child's perspective
- 5. Participate in both structured (games with rules) and unstructured (imaginary) play

J. Listen

- 1. Really listen
- 2. Listen some more

**NAME THREE GOALS YOU HAVE AS A DAD**

1.

2.

3.

**LIST ONE CHANGE YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE IN YOUR PARENTING**

I will \_\_\_\_\_