

Ten Tips to Help Dads Thrive – Ask an Expert

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In the past, research focused primarily on a mother's influence in children's lives. The importance of father involvement has only been significantly studied in the past 30 to 40 years. However, research has shown that fathers have a crucial role in parenting. According to an article on [fatherhood.gov](https://www.fatherhood.gov), children with affectionate, involved fathers are more likely to grow up being tolerant, empathetic, and understanding and exhibit positive internal moral judgment, moral values and conformity to rules.

Fatherhood.gov shares [10 tips to help dads](https://www.fatherhood.gov/10-tips-to-help-dads-fulfill-their-essential-role) fulfill their essential role. Below are excerpts.

1. Be present and engaged. Take kids on a quick trip to the store, throw a ball in the backyard, or read a bedtime story. Stay connected through phone calls, texts, emails, and video chats if you can't see them in person. Send morning and bedtime text messages with a meme, selfie, or dad joke to strengthen your bond.
2. Be supportive. Contribute financially, and work with your co-parent to maintain a financially sound household. Nurture and comfort your children when they are upset. Be a hands-on dad by doing household chores and being an example of how kids can pitch in, too.
3. Listen and empathize. Make eye contact and show you are listening. Demonstrate empathy and make sure you understand what they're saying. This will help them feel seen, heard, and valued. Don't spend time on your phone when they need your attention.
4. Be patient and gentle. Stay calm when your kids make mistakes or misbehave. Avoid spanking,

- as it can teach it's okay to hit if you are angry. Use [age-appropriate consequences](#) to encourage better choices. Praise and reward good behavior.
5. Be a positive role model. Your kids are watching you! Treat others with kindness, respect, and compassion. Follow your own rules. For example, don't tell your kids to be kind, then shout at the driver who cuts you off. We all make mistakes. Teach your children humility by admitting when you make a mistake.
6. Foster autonomy. Give children room to grow and be independent. Give structured, age-appropriate choices. Show love, respect, and confidence in their abilities. Provide guidance, then encourage them to explore the world beyond your safety net.
7. Be a teacher and a playmate. Help children with homework, attend teacher-parent meetings, and guide them as they explore their world. Remember that play is an integral part of child development, and encourage them to choose activities they enjoy. Engage with them in fun rough-and-tumble play, and help them learn to regulate, understand, and manage their emotions.
8. Be loving and affectionate. Help your children feel safe and loved. Hold and kiss your newborn to promote attachment, trust, and overall health. Continue to give lots of love and affection as they grow older to help them feel secure and connected to you. Encourage your teenager to confide in you. If you are nonjudgmental and loving, they will be more likely to share information.
9. Work with your co-parent cooperatively. Share decision-making, be willing to compromise, and never undermine your co-parent. If you and your co-parent are in a romantic relationship, nurture it; for example, set a regular date night. If you are no longer with your child's mother, maintain a respectful relationship and avoid exposing your children to conflict or drama.
10. Prioritize self-care. Your children need your love and support for years to come. Eat a healthy diet, exercise, and get 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night. Schedule annual well-doctor visits, and address physical and mental health challenges as they arise. Participate in activities that help you recharge when you feel stressed, overwhelmed, or burned out.

Dads matter. An involved, respectful, and affectionate father plays a crucial role in shaping his child's life. Show up, try your best, and you will be doing the most important things possible for your child!

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