

Strengthening Father-Daughter Relationships

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The girl who grows up having a communicative, supportive relationship with her father generally has advantages over other girls when it comes to

- Academic achievement and future jobs and incomes;
- Avoiding teenage pregnancy;
- Being self-confident and self-reliant;
- Avoiding emotionally or physically abusive relationships;
- Resisting peer pressure to have premature sex or engage in substance abuse;
- Not being overly dependent on boys in order to feel good about themselves; 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, communicative relationships?

Stop dismissing dads

Promote the message to everyone in the school and in the family that the father-daughter relationship is vital and needs to be appreciated and strengthened.

Encourage more father-daughter time

As fathers and daughters spend more private time with one another, they have more opportunities to communicate honestly and comfortably about meaningful, personal matters.

Help daughters by focusing on activities that strengthen the father-daughter bond

As a parent, here are some things you can do:

- 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.

Throughout her lifetime, a daughter is profoundly affected by the kind of relationship she has with her father – often more so than is her relationship with her mother. That's plenty of reason why teachers, counselors, and parents should pay more attention to father-daughter relationships.

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