

Being a Father

Father's Day is just around the corner. This is a time of family gatherings to celebrate fathers. Family traditions of cookouts, picnics, sports, and dining out are fairly common. The role of father's has been diminished over time. There's been an evolution of his earlier role of going out and killing the beast for supper to being more involved emotionally. Numerous articles and books have been written about this. There is a tremendous amount of research about being a father. It has been dissected from every angle and from numerous counseling theories. Did you know that?

- Single dads and step-dads who get involved in the kids' school on average will **help their grades?**
- Children whose dads who share a meal with them **do significantly better academically** than children whose dads do not?
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Attachment theory says that Infants form attachments to any consistent caregiver who is sensitive and responsive in social interactions with them. The quality of the social engagement is more influential than the amount of time spent. You can find out more about attachment theory by going to [Attachment](#). I am writing to give father's practical insights to improve their relationship with their children. I will be blogging during the month of June with specific "how to's" on being a father. Follow my blogs at Ken Thom [BlogSpot](#).

One of the most important, if not the most important concept to keep in mind is that parenting is all about influence. Read my article ["The Power of Relationships"](#). It is easy to cross that thin boundary into control. Remember, control is a function of fear. Influence is a function of love. Each and every interaction with your child influences what they will do in the future: their relationships, their career decisions, and their spiritual focus. Continually ask yourself this question, "What am I doing right now to improve my relationship with my child?" Another question to ask your self is - "What am I doing to connect with my child in a mindful manner?" Read my article ["The Power of Presence – Being Mind"](#). Those are simple concepts. That doesn't mean it will be easy to do. There are many challenges in simple concepts, especially the emotional piece for fathers. Males are "wired differently emotionally" than females. Males have a tendency just "to do" things with their children and leave out the emotional connection piece.

Find out who your child really is. Find out what they are all about. We carry with us way too many stereo types of girls and boys, and of males and females. Many of the role models we experience in society are inaccurate. Some stereotypes may come from your own family background and traditions. It is unfair to place these roles or stereotypes on your children. If you don't value and honor your child for whom he or she is, then they will not be able to value and honor themselves. This may be a challenge because of your own past experiences in relationships. Males, depending g on their generation, may have only seen the Clint Eastwood, John Wayne version of being a male. Males are programmed to be protectors but there is also a nurturing side that is usually not tapped into. Boys are not taught to be nurturing because it is "sissy". Daughters may be smothered with emotions from the dads until they reach puberty. Then fear sets in when hormones cause changes and it "hands' off" their

daughters. Those fears and irrational beliefs about your son or daughter will only take you out of relationship with them.

It is important for fathers to help their children have a voice. Many girls grow up with a blueprint of always having to please. This interferes with them setting healthy boundaries. This can be achieved by allowing your daughter to be frustrated or angry. Be in that space with them. Let them know that those feelings are OK. Let them know that you can handle their feelings. There is a tendency to shut our children down if they express their feelings and it feels disrespectful. You may shut them down if their feelings are too intense for you to handle. The appropriateness of expression can be taught at a later time. The important thing is that they are expressing their feelings. When you validate their feelings, you are validating who they are. That is then another piece of them that becomes OK. Not validating their feelings tells them that their feelings are not OK. Therefore they are not OK. Boys may find their voice only through anger. Many times anger is the only feeling boys are allowed to have. They need help regulating their testosterone so they can express feelings of hurt and rejection that are under the anger. Our society tells men that it's not OK to cry or be vulnerable. When their anger is shut down, boys feel disrespected. Then the message is that anger is not OK. This means that they are not OK. The anger is suppressed even more. Suppressed anger builds into rage. Rage can then become out of control. It may go the other direction and contribute to depression. After validating your son's anger, you can then start to reach the hurt and fear that is under the anger.

Father's are the role model for their children for interaction with the opposite sex. Children learn through modeling. Your behavior teaches your son and your daughter what is acceptable or not acceptable in relationships. Open communication and expression of feelings with their mother let's your children know it is OK to feel. Setting healthy boundaries in your relationships will automatically help your child set healthy boundaries in their lives. Boys will learn what it is to respect females. Your son will be more likely to turn to you for matters of the heart when he sees you being able to listen to his mother's feelings. Girls will learn to expect respect from males. Girls will learn that they have a right to expect men to listen to them. This promotes positive self esteem with both boys and girls. Simply put, they become comfortable with being either male or female. Both masculinity and femininity are validated when they are demonstrated through healthy, regulated behaviors.

Let's not forget the oxytocin factor. Father's are usually less equipped neurologically to express and process feelings. However, with focus and work, males can learn the skills necessary to be more emotionally expressive. All children need this from their fathers. Boys and girls both need this to balance their testosterone levels that begin to rise in puberty. Boys need regulation from their fathers to help reduce and manage their aggressive tendencies; otherwise connection with other aggressive males will escalate their aggressive tendencies. When Father's do not help their daughters regulate their rise in testosterone levels, girls will seek out that regulation from male peers. More than likely they will develop a pattern of unhealthy relationships. Oxytocin helps maintain this emotional regulation. Emotional regulation allows us to connect in relationship with others. Emotional regulation keeps us out of a state of fear. Fear causes irrational and distorted thinking and short term memory loss. Equipping your child to have a strong oxytocin response as well as learning how to stimulate their own oxytocin is an invaluable gift to give to your child. It is most definitely the gift that keeps on giving.

Finally, be a Godly role model. Treat your child with mercy and grace in all situations. Just like your Heavenly Father treats you. Demonstrate forgiveness. Train up your child in the ways of the Lord, [Proverbs 22:6](#). Pray with them, not just for them. Actively engage them in praise and worship for God. Make God the center of your relationship with them. Make God the center of all family relationships. Read my article "[Godly Families](#)".

This is only the tip of the ice berg on "Being a Father". These concepts will get you pointed in the right direction. During the month of June, [my bi-weekly blogs](#) will provide specific hints to help you with being a father. If you find these suggestions difficult you may want to consider some professional services or support. Check out [my website](#) for products and services that will help you along your journey. Remember to parent in love because love never fails.

In Christ,

Ken Thom, LFC