

InfoSheet 5: Father's Day—Everyday

For one day each year, the nation collectively pauses to honor the fathers and father figures in their lives and in their communities. A quick search in the Sunday newspaper or on the Internet will reveal the wide array of suggestions of “gifts for dad” and “how to make his day special”.

However, it is much more difficult to find resources for **men who want to take the initiative to be active, involved fathers** on Father's Day as well as the other 364 days of the year.

The Myth of Quality Time

Not so long ago, many parents believed that good fathers simply needed to spend some “quality time” with their kids, based on the premise that busy fathers didn't have much time to interact with their children. Quality was emphasized over quantity. “Now, some experts believe, quality time is overrated and quantity—all the daily contact, even if it's just cooing to your baby as you type away at your computer or stand at the grocery store checkout—is critical.”¹

Perhaps due in part to their own distant and uninvolved fathers, **many fathers now seek to develop stronger relationships with their own children.**

According to one family educator, “the primary focus of most fathers [in parent education classes] is to create a close relationship with the child.”² *Good fathering*

requires a long-term commitment of regular, positive interactions; a balancing of the needs of work and family; an exploration of values and morals; and the development of healthy relationship skills.

Activities for Dads and Kids³

The following activities are just a few ideas about how to be involved in your child's life—whether he or she is a baby or a young adult. The key to each of these activities is finding mutually enjoyable activities that you can do all year—not just as a special event on Father's Day.

Infants

- Talk to your infant in a pleasant soothing voice, using simple language.
- Listen to and respond to sounds your child makes and imitate them. Take turns babbling.
- Allow your child to actively explore his or her environment. Encourage them to grasp, chew, and manipulate safe objects to help them understand the nature of their environment.

The History of Father's Day

The nation's first Father's Day celebration, recognized by the Spokane mayor and Washington State governor, took place in Spokane, Washington, on June 19, 1910. The celebration was organized by Sonora Smart Dodd to honor her own father's birthday. Dodd's father, a farmer and Civil War veteran, had been a single father to six children after the death of his wife.

In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge publicly supported plans for a national Father's Day. Finally, in 1972, President Richard Nixon signed Father's Day into law. In the United States and Canada, Father's Day falls on the third Sunday in June.

Hartman, Holly. “Timeline of Father's Day History: Ninety years of celebrating dads,” www.infoplease.com.

Toddlers

- Label or name objects, describe events and reflect the feelings of your child to help them learn new words.
- Use firm, rational communication reflecting logical consequences of your child's actions when disciplining. Allow your child choices that are acceptable to you.
- Routine tasks of eating, toileting, dressing, etc, are important opportunities to help children learn new words, about their world, and how to regulate own behavior.
- Make bath time fun by playing with simple toys like boats, ducks or containers for floating and filling with water.

Pre-Schoolers

- Provide many experiences to extend language and literacy abilities: reading books, telling stories, singing songs, writing down stories that children dictate, and illustrating the stories with crayons or water colors.
- Give your child opportunities to problem solve by asking open ended questions like "How do you think this works?" or "Why do you think the water does that?"
- Be available to share time with your child and share child care tasks like feeding, bathing, and going to the doctor.
- Spend time teaching your child how to tie shoes, undo buckles, button and use zippers, as you help them dress.

Elementary School Students

- Encourage your child's literacy development: read with your child, go to the library together, provide reading and writing materials.
- Develop a shared interest with your child and spend time working on learning more about that interest: sports, animals, stars, nature, weather, cooking, etc.
- Give your child chores that are developmentally appropriate: making their own bed, setting the table, picking up their own toys, hanging up their coat, etc.
- Be aware of homework assignments and other topics of study your child has. Monitor the completion of homework and be available for help.

Pre-Teens

- Make a scrapbook together of some of the special activities you have shared. Write stories to supplement the pictures.
- Show genuine interest in your child's friends, interests, thoughts, feelings, and activities.
- Monitor your child's peer interactions by encouraging them to play in your house or in other supervised areas. Be aware of possible times when your intervention may be beneficial in teaching a social skill.
- Teach your child family values and specific ways to deal with difficult situations involving drugs, alcohol, sex, social encounters, etc.

Teens

- Learn and have fun together. Not only can the adolescent learn a new skill or hobby with you, but you can also develop new skills related to their interests.
- Set aside some time with your child to discuss future plans and goals: career, college, marriage, etc.
- Tell your child stories of when you were their age: use photos to share fun memories and major events, share embarrassing or funny experiences, what you did after school, your struggles, etc.
- Encourage and support activities outside the house: sports, extra-curricular activities, volunteer work, or part-time jobs.

Resources:

¹ Bitoun Blecher, Michele. "What Dad's Expect When Mom is Expecting," WebMD Feature Archive, www.webmd.com.

² Palm, Glen, "Promoting Generative Fathering Through Parent and Family Education," in *Generative Fathering: Beyond Deficit Perspectives*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 1997.

³ Brigham Young University offers a comprehensive list of activities for every child: birth to 18 years old. Visit the university's website: <http://fatherwork.byu.edu>. The activities listed here are a partial listing from BYU.