Facts about Fatherhood Involvement

Studies show that children who have a loving relationship with both a mother and a father do better throughout life. Children with involved fathers—and other father figures—do better in school, have better behavior and greater self-confidence. Children of involved fathers do better on standard tests. They tend to like school more, and are less likely to fail a grade.

I Need a Man!

Fathers and mothers are different. They care for and play with their children in different ways at each stage of development. Fathers can have a lasting and positive impact on their children whether they live with their children or live separately. Babies whose fathers help in their physical care can handle new situations better. Babies have stronger bonds and are also more eager to explore the world all around.

Toddlers with highly involved fathers actually score higher on developmental assessments. Their active style of play helps toddlers become better problem solvers. Fathers ask toddlers more “what” and “where” questions. When toddlers use more words to answer, they build a larger vocabulary.

Preschoolers with actively involved fathers have stronger language skills and show more empathy. They even fight less with siblings. Teachers report they have fewer behavior problems and show greater self-control. In addition, they are more curious and better at facing challenges.

These positive benefits continue right throughout a child’s life. In the school years, children are more likely to get A’s if their fathers are highly involved. They also show more initiative, use self direction and control, and are less impulsive.

Teenage children with involved fathers have better school attendance, are happier, and engage in fewer risky behaviors. Father involvement—whether it is a biological father, a step father, grandfather, uncle or other father figure—improves a child’s sense of self worth at all ages.
Focus on Fathering

In the US about half of all children live away from one or both parents. Most often it is the child’s father who “lives-away.” Families that include both a man and woman in the same household teach children about healthy adult relationships. They learn about the different ways people work together to make a family. Children with “live away” fathers can also learn these important skills if they get to spend quality time together.

Quality time together doesn’t have to be elaborate or expensive—just deliberate. Be mindful when you spend with your child. If possible turn off distractions such as your phone and the TV. Focus on building memories and a loving relationship. Sometimes the best “quality time” just happens without planning—and that’s the best reason for spending time together regularly.

Great dads, stepdads, and other father figures take the time to nurture & love children. They offer encouragement, pay attention, make memories and play & laugh. Try these five tips to make all time you spend with your children into quality times.

- **Nurture & Love Your Children.**
  Cuddle and touch them gently. Show affection. Speak softly, kiss their cheek or forehead. A father’s touch has the power to make a child feel safe and secure and worthy of love. Show them how to be gently strong.

- **Offer Encouragement to Your Children.**
  Praise their efforts to do their best. Let them know when they make good choices. Congratulate them when you see them try something new even if they are not successful.

- **Pay Attention and Listen to Your Children.**
  Ask questions and really listen to what children say about their day, their fears, and their wishes. Pay close attention to what they are not saying. Listening teaches your child that he or she is important.

- **Make Memories with Your Children.**
  Start simple traditions that your children can always remember. Make up a special handshake, choose a favorite story, or adopt a hello & goodbye routine. Have a favorite meal once a week. Do these regularly and take photos to record these special times.

- **Play & Laugh with Your Children.**
  Take joy in their innocence. Laugh at life’s silly moments and approach problems playfully. Relax and dress up, or play along with their make-believe.
Ideas for Fathers & Sons

A father teaches his sons what to look for in a relationship with a woman, and how to be a good man and father.

- **Play together.** Play wrestle, tumble around or practice sport skills. Teach him some of the finer points of your favorite game.
- **Cuddle and read a book.** Visit the library and get a library card together!
- **Include him in simple fix-it chores.** Change a tire, oil a squeaky door hinge, or organize tools together.
- **Cook together.** Grill the perfect burger together. Shop and make your favorite meal together.
- **Build memories.** Look through old photo albums and add new photos. Tell stories about your past family celebrations and traditions.
- **Visit relatives and do something nice!** Take a snack and make a short visit to an older relative. Teach about caring for others. Take an old aunt on a “date” together.
- **Go to a new place.** Try fishing, visit a museum, or even take a nature walk.
- **Try these ideas for Fathers & Daughters too!**

Ideas for Fathers & Daughters

A father shows his daughters what they should look for in a relationship with a man and how a good father cares for children.

- **Choose a hobby together.** Learn to make jewelry or build birdhouses. Use these as gifts for loved ones.
- **Play outdoors.** Learn a new sport or go on a butterfly hunt. Plant a flower box together.
- **Sing and play music together.** Break out your guitar or favorite music and give a concert. Practice drum beats and dance together.
- **Learn to cook together.** Shop, chop and share a meal with the whole family. Everyone loves food and food is love for many families.
- **Plan a nice surprise for someone.** Bake cookies for an elderly neighbor. Draw a get well card and mail it to a sick relative.
- **Go on a Date.** Show her how a woman should expect to be treated by men.
- **Teach her to speak up for herself.** Introduce her to other grownups so she learns to feel confident talking to adults. Listen when she says “no” to rough play.
- **Try these ideas for Fathers & Sons too!”

Created By PreschoolFirst

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Golden Rules of Co-Parenting

Parenting is a joint venture. In many cases mothers are “gate keepers” to a father’s involvement. It can be hard to set aside personal feelings and struggles for control.

A child has two families if parents are not married and do not live together. Children need to know and share time with members of both families. If parents and their families can commit to working together for the child they love, the child can have a strong relationship with everyone.

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<tr>
<th>DO This:</th>
<th>AVOID Doing This:</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Keep the focus on what is good for the child. Ask yourself “What does my child need?”</td>
<td>▪ Avoid thinking about what is easiest or best for YOU.</td>
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<td>▪ Try to contribute to the child’s care and financial well-being. Spend visits doing quality, low cost activities.</td>
<td>▪ Avoid fancy gifts or making expensive trips part of regular visits. Save these for birthdays, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Only say good things about the child’s other parent or family members in front of the child.</td>
<td>▪ Avoid arguing in front of the child. Save these discussions for private phone calls or times when the child is not present.</td>
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<td>▪ Keep conversations calm and friendly.</td>
<td>▪ If you cannot talk calmly, step away. Get outside help from a clergy member or family counselor.</td>
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Ready to Get Involved In Our Program?

Teachers see children are excited when fathers visit early childhood programs. Men bring a fresh energy to Early Head Start and Head Start classrooms. Fathers bring complementary parenting skills and attitudes that can enrich the learning experiences of children. In the classroom highly involved fathers read stories with their young children. They hold conversations and play with their children. These experiences contribute to children’s language and literacy development. It also builds their knowledge about people, places and things.

Fathers can join any indoor classroom activities, but they might also enjoy joining outdoor time! Even babies roll balls, toddlers dig in the sand, and preschoolers love to run around and ride bikes. Fathers can teach one of their special skills to children. A father’s energy and presence will boost children’s interest in trying new physical activities and build their confidence. Ask teachers about fun games that focus on children’s efforts instead of winning or losing.

**Got more ideas?** Share them with us to start a new type of father involvement activity in our program.