

10 THINGS

ALL DADS NEED TO DO TO
HELP THEIR CHILD BE

successful



introduction

We live in a society that often downplays and minimizes the role that fathers play in the lives of their children. (Just try to find a competent, involved dad in a cartoon family or sitcom these days.) In the first few years of a child's life and even into the elementary school years, mothers are often viewed as a child's "primary caregiver" and dads are relegated to the sidelines. Sadly, many mothers reinforce this idea in a number of ways, and sadder still, many fathers go right along with it. **Not good.** Dad is expected to work and be an ATM who puts food on the table and protects, while mom takes care of the kids and raises them.

This idea flies in the face of what all the current science and research says about the importance of fathers from a child's birth onward. **Dads matter.** In fact, they often provide things that mom can't provide. Caring for a baby or child is not rocket science. (Mom had to learn it somewhere. She wasn't born with a built-in guidebook.) In fact...

MORE AND MORE RESEARCH IS SHOWING THAT A DAD'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE LIFE OF THEIR CHILD IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL TO THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE SUCCESS.

Positive outcomes for a child like higher IQs, better grades, character development like confidence, problem-solving skills, empathy, leadership, and courage, higher self-esteem, and experiencing success in the future can depend on a dad's involvement in their child's life. **It's that simple.**

A child avoiding negative outcomes in life like getting in trouble in school, poor grades, dropping out of school, teenage pregnancy, "risky" behaviors like drug or alcohol use, experiencing anxiety or depression, and even incarceration are all shown by research to be affected by the involvement of dads. **The evidence is overwhelming - kids need their dads.**



HERE ARE 10 THINGS YOU SHOULD BE DOING TO HELP GUIDE YOUR CHILD TO SUCCESS...

number one

BE PART OF YOUR CHILD'S CARETAKING FROM THIS DAY FORWARD.

Whether your child hasn't been born yet or is four years old, care for them. Read, sing, and talk to your baby even before they are born. After they are born, change diapers while talking, singing, and making silly faces at them. Feed and bathe them, hold and rock them. **Meeting your child's needs builds a bond - your child instinctively knows they can trust and count on you.** Research shows that these activities begin to build the bond between father and baby - an attachment that is incredibly important and establishes dad as a safe, trustworthy person.

number two

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, YOUR CHILD'S MOM, & YOUR CHILD'S HOME ENVIRONMENT.

Fathers also indirectly influence child development. For example, they can improve the home environment. They can support their child's mother, because that relationship influences the children and directly impacts their ability to be involved with their children. **Conflict and stress in your child's environment can harm their development.** But on the other hand, healthy team parenting (or "co-parenting") is connected with greater social and emotional skills in children. Even babies can pick up on your stress and conflict in the home.



number three

PHYSICAL TOUCH IS A CHILD'S LOVE LANGUAGE.

Don't be afraid of holding your baby. Make sure you are getting time to hold, rock, and let your baby nap on you. **Science has shown that even as a baby, your child recognizes your face, your voice, your smell, and your touch.** Even though your baby doesn't understand the words, "I love you," holding your baby forms an attachment that builds a bond with you. As your child grows, continue to be a "hands-on" dad. They still need hugs, to sit on your lap, or lay on your back while you do push ups.

number four

TALK TO YOUR CHILD.

Current research shows that the more interactions a child has with their father in the first six months result in higher mental competence. By first grade, boys and girls raised in families with fathers present had significantly higher IQ scores than those with absent or uninvolved fathers. **New research shows that fathers may have a greater impact on language development than mothers.** As they get older, make sure your child knows they can talk to you about anything, anytime. Ask them questions about their thoughts, feelings, and interests. Just talking and interacting with your child makes them smarter. Fathers who talk more to their children have children with higher vocabularies. These children have more complex language skills.



number five

READ TO YOUR CHILD.

If a father reads to his child from age 6 months on, that child tests higher on IQ tests when he or she is 3 years old. 80% of your child's brain growth takes place in the first three years of life. Hold them in your lap and read to them at bedtime. No matter how old your child is, read to them and emphasize the importance of reading at least 20 minutes (or more) a day. Toddlers often like to hear the same book again and again. **Don't worry if they are playing or moving around while you're reading. This is part of creating a lifelong reader.** Strong reading skills are one of the biggest predictors in your child's future academic success.

number six

PLAY WITH THEM ON THEIR LEVEL. (ON THE FLOOR.)

Have fun! Play with your kids using what they want to play with. When engaged fathers join their kids in a variety of activities like puzzles, drawing, and good old-fashioned playing around, children are more likely to be socially successful. Your child is more likely to have more positive friendships and be able to control their emotions better, too. As your child gets older, you are teaching them about taking turns, sharing, and how to handle winning and losing. For an infant, play might just be bouncing them on your knee and making them smile.



number seven

STIMULATE YOUR CHILD'S IMAGINATION. BE SILLY AND LET THEM LAUGH AT YOU.

Colors, shapes, sizes, textures, designs, patterns, and lights can all provide stimulation for your little one, spark curiosity and help their brain as it develops. **Being a dad isn't all serious - don't be afraid to be silly, get your child laughing, and laugh with them.** Just like stimulation, imaginative and pretend play, and cultivating curiosity helps their intellectual development, silliness, play, and laughing helps their emotional development. As your child gets older, encourage them to draw, paint, tell silly stories, and use their imagination. Research shows that opportunities to have fun and use their imagination help your child process emotions, develop empathy, and problem-solving skills.

number eight

TAKE YOUR CHILD AROUND TOWN TO SEE THE WORLD.

Research shows that toddlers whose dads encouraged exploring (while setting limits) had better social and emotional skills 12-18 months later. **Celebrate their curiosity about the world.** Take them to parks and on hikes. Take your child around the block in their stroller or walk with them. Give them time to stop and discover bugs and leaves and rocks. Point to things along the way and tell them what they are.



number nine

BE PRESENT WITH YOUR CHILD.

There is no substitute for spending time with your child. Kids spell “love,” T-I-M-E. Being under the same roof isn’t the same as being present in your child’s life. As your child gets older, take them with you on errands, let them sit with you when you work around the house, or work on the car. **Show them that you like them and enjoy their company.** This directly impacts their social skills, keeps you connected, and develops the confidence they will need all through their life.



number ten

YOUR CHILD IS WATCHING YOU.

At every age, your child is watching you. More is caught than taught. Your child is observing how you talk, act, handle responsibilities, respond to challenges, deal with conflict, and treat other people. Your example is defining roles like “man” and “father.” How you treat their mother, and women in general, will make an impression that they will carry into adulthood. **This doesn’t mean you have to be perfect. One of the most important things you can model for your child is how to respond to mistakes and failure.**

now what?

BEING A FATHER CAN FEEL OVERWHELMING.

Don't worry - nobody gets it perfect, **but you can parent with purpose.** It really comes down to spending time together and being involved. Your words alone are so powerful - they validate your child's value, empower your child to achieve greatness, and form your child's identity. Your words define your child's reality.

Every father passes down some type of legacy to their children, whether they intend to or not. **So, be intentional with what you want to pass down. You can be the hero of your child's story.** That can start today - just pick one of these ten things to work on today and add more as you go. Be their hero! You got this. First Things First is always here to help.

RESOURCES

Click a link below to access more tools created just for dads!

THE SCIENCE OF DAD AND THE 'FATHER EFFECT'

DADS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

TODDLER READING TIME

THE BOY CRISIS: WHY OUR BOYS ARE STRUGGLING AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

HOW CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AFFECTS HEALTH ACROSS A LIFETIME

HOW PARENTS AND CARING ADULTS CAN SUPPORT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

7 CRIPPLING PARENTING BEHAVIORS THAT KEEP CHILDREN FROM GROWING INTO LEADERS

HOW LONG SHOULD YOU READ WITH YOUR KIDS EVERY DAY?

FATHERS INFLUENCE CHILD DEVELOPMENT BUT THIS IS PERSISTENTLY IGNORED: WHY?

THE IMPORTANCE OF FATHERS IN THE HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

VIDEO: DAD HAS A FULL CONVO WITH HIS BABY

FIRST THINGS FIRST: PARENTING RESOURCES

MEET THE DADS OF FIRST THINGS FIRST



REGGIE MADISON
FATHER OF 7



MITCHELL QUALLS
FATHER OF 2



CHRIS GREGORY
FATHER OF 3



JOHN DAUM
FATHER OF 4



CHRIS OWNBY
FATHER OF 2

Have questions about dad life?

WE'RE MORE THAN RELATIONSHIP EXPERTS, WE'RE REAL LIFE DADS!
SEND US AN EMAIL AND WE'LL GET BACK WITH YOU SHORTLY.

[SEND AN EMAIL](#)