

## Honoring Fathers

Rona Renner, RN

On the third Sunday in June we celebrate Father's Day in the US, giving extra attention and gifts to the dads in our lives. To all fathers, stepfathers, foster dads, grandfathers, mentors, and father figures, we honor you and the vital role you play in the life of children.

Fathers are important to children's well being, but sometimes fathers are absent or not available due to life circumstances, emotional limitations, or obstacles that are in their way. Many dads work long hours or more than one job, while loving their children and wanting to stay connected. In divorced families, often dads feel that they can't see their children as often as they desire, and have to struggle to continue to be present in their children's lives.

Being a father brings great joy and responsibility. More and more fathers are participating in school events, doctor's appointments, helping with homework, and reading to their children. Here are ten tips for keeping dads connected with their children:

1. Have dinner with your family as often as possible, and turn the TV off so you can talk about the day.
2. Take your children out for breakfast, especially if you haven't been home for dinner for many nights.
3. Cook with your children, it's good for them to see that men are often great cooks.
4. Garden or build something with your children. Let them help you.
5. Bring your children to your workplace so they can see where you go and what you do at work.
6. Look at photo albums with your children and tell them stories about your family and what you did when you were younger.
7. Ask your older children to teach you how to do something, like a computer game.
8. Go for a walk in nature or go camping with your children.
9. Play with each child one-on-one and let them lead the play with what they want to do. If you're far away, talk on the phone, send letters, and know that your children value all communication from you.
10. Be aware of your feelings and your children's ups and downs. Listen to them so they know that they can come to you with their hurts and fears.

If you had a father who was there for you, you are very lucky. If not, you can learn to be close with your children, and give them the greatest gifts... your time and your love.

### Resources for Fathers:

- *The Collected Wisdom of Fathers: Creating a Loving Bond that Lasts a Lifetime* (Will Glennon)
- *Divorced Dads: 101 Ways to Stay Connected with Your Kids* (Nancy Wasson and Lee Hefner)
- California has paid family leave for fathers. See if you can take leave when your baby is born: [www.paidfamilyleave.org](http://www.paidfamilyleave.org)
- For fathers who have daughters: [www.dadsanddaughters.org](http://www.dadsanddaughters.org)

