

The Wisdom of Fathers

Rona Renner, RN

During June we celebrate Father's Day. If you're a dad, chances are you're grateful to be able to love and guide your children as you watch them grow up.

Many men tell us that they wished their dads had been around more to teach them how to be responsible, courageous, and smart, and they wanted to hear their fathers say "I love you" or "I'm proud of you" more often. When children grow up without spending much time with their fathers, they may experience a longing for that closeness into adulthood.

Fathers are important to a child's well being... but all too often, dads don't spend enough time with their children due to life circumstances, financial burdens, or emotional limitations. When that's the case, some children are lucky to have good stepfathers, or a man in their life that cares for them, like an uncle, a teacher, big brother, mentor, or father figure.

Take a moment to think about what you like or liked about your dad, or a person who was there for you. What did he teach you that you value? If there were things that you didn't like, what will you do differently with your children? We can all learn from our fathers' successes and struggles.

Being a good father starts with a feeling of love, but also takes skill, practice, and patience. Here are some things fathers can do to stay connected to their children throughout the year:

- Tell your children you love them. It's never too late, no matter how old they are, Give them specific feedback such as, "I love your sense of humor."
- Write a letter or poem to your child about what it means to you to be a father.
- Tell you children stories, and show them pictures of your childhood.
- Have fun with your children. Play ball, ride a bike, or play at the park. Yell less and laugh more.
- Read books with your children. Take them to the library and discover what they're interested in.
- Make time for one-on-one outings with each child as often as you can.
- Take your kids to visit your work. They'll like seeing what you do and the people you work with.
- Participate in your children's school. They'll be so proud to have you help out in the classroom or go on a field trip. If you can't take off from work, see if there are other ways you can help.

The time and attention you spend with your children will influence them for a lifetime. Even if you're busy, some undivided positive attention will mean the world to them. Your loving words and actions will help your children grow into confident, caring, and compassionate adults.

And fathers, take good care of your selves. Your family needs you!

