

TIPS FOR DADS: PLAYING WITH CHILDREN

Many fathers are not aware of it, but playing with kids is very important. It teaches kids many things and has a vital impact on their development. According to research, children who have healthy, fun play with their dads strengthen the following traits:

- They are more independent and more willing to explore the world
- They have more self-control and more self-discipline.
- They have better self-esteem and emotional well-being.
- They have better educational outcomes.
- They socialize better with peers and tend to get in trouble less often.
- They learn to follow reasonable rules.

Above all, gentle, attentive, play that responds to your child's interests and moods shows that you can tune in as a dad. Making play a habit—spending time regularly with your kids—shows caring and love better than a thousand words.

- ✓ **Engage in stimulating and playful activity with infants and toddlers as often as possible.** Physical play enhances motor skills and teaches emotional self-control. If you respond quickly when your child cries or gives other signals, you boost your child's sense of security and build the capacity to accept comfort more rapidly.
- ✓ **Roughhousing in a playful, controlled, way with older toddlers and children** is a way of helping them learn how to handle their strength and how to control aggressiveness. The key is letting children climb over and try to overcome you, with occasional gentle reminders when they become too rough.
- ✓ **Keep up active physical play as children get older.** Passive activities like watching TV or playing video games are not enough. Playing ball, tossing footballs, playing basketball, hiking or biking are all good activities that maintain the father-child bond, improve physical fitness, and support emotional well-being.
- ✓ **Participate in hobbies and games.** Making models, drawing, crafts, playing cards or board games teach patience and self-control. Praise them when they do well.
- ✓ **Engage in productive activities with your children** such as household chores, washing dishes after dinner, or cleaning up the backyard. Research consistently shows that these shared activities promote a sense of responsibility and a sense of being useful and important in children. It also models positive masculinity.
- ✓ **Read books to your children.** You can read at bedtime or just bring a book when you take them to appointments at doctors' offices. Help out with homework and make sure they get their work done. Activities like this, as well as going to the school to meet with teachers, let your children know that their father cares about their education. That's an important message. Research shows that children benefit strongly from this. It gives them an educational boost.