

TIPS FOR DADS:

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR KNOWING YOUR CHILD—NONTRIVIAL QUESTIONS

It is amazing what things men commit to memory, for example, key statistics for the Patriots or Red Sox, the specs for last year's Corvette, or lyrics to songs from 20 years ago. However, how many dads can answer even simple questions about their children, who are as important as anyone or anything in their lives? **Here are some questions fathers can ask their children. Some may be easy, some are not, but this is not just trivia.**

These questions provide a marker for how aware a father is of his child and his or her world. A healthy awareness will help in so many areas of fathering. It can be as simple as going out for a soda and asking about his child's friends at school and what they like to do together. This should not turn this into an interrogation. A child can tell whether the questioner is genuinely interested or simply collecting data that may be used against him or her later. It is simply to get to know more about the various aspects of the child's life. Some examples of appropriate questions include:

- Who is your child's all-time hero?
- What is your child's most prized possession?
- Who is his or her best friend?
- What causes your child to lose sleep?
- What were your child's greatest achievements and disappointments in the last year?
- What is your child's favorite meal?
- What would your child like to do when he or she grows up?
- If your child had \$20 to spend, what would he or she buy?
- What does your child most like to do with you?
- What is the most important thing you need to discuss with your child in the next 6 months?

Even for the most aware fathers, these questions may serve as a wake-up call. After asking such questions, a father may decide he needs to sit down with his child and find out more about what makes him or her tick. It could lead to a great discussion about who he or she is and hopes to become. Fathers also should listen to their child's friends, teachers, coaches, and, especially, their mothers. All of these people see a different side of the child, and they will give dads insights they would have never noticed on their own. These questions can also be helpful:

- What do I regularly (daily, weekly) do with my children?
- What do we do for fun?
- How do I prepare myself for a difficult talk with him or her?

Canfield, K. (n.d.). *Practical tips for knowing your child* [On-line]. Available:

<http://www.fathers.com>

Adapted by K. Thompson from: Rosenberg, J. & Wilcox., W.B. (2006). The Importance Of Fathers In The Healthy Development Of Children. US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect