

TIPS FOR DADS

IT'S A MATTER OF PRIDE: BEING A GOOD ROLE MODEL

Fathers are models to their children. Through your example, you provide a model of what fatherhood and manhood are all about, and teach many lessons about life, relationships and responsibility. It's about how you treat other people, spend your time and money, and handle the joys and stresses of life. Even when children seem to be ignoring you, they are aware of how you conduct yourself. Here are some key points to keep in mind:

- **You never stop being a role model.** You may think that being a role model doesn't matter if you are absent. Research shows that when dads are not in the picture, kids wonder about them and may think that they did not measure up in some way. A small positive contribution may make a huge difference. You don't have to be a "super dad".
- **Actions speak more loudly than words.** If you say one thing, but do another, your child will remember what you do. For example, if you can remain calm, listen, and work on solutions when there's conflict, you teach your child that one can master one's emotions and work out disagreements.
- **Most mistakes are not forever.** Most of the time, if you acknowledge mistakes and, above all, change your behavior, you can regain trust and respect. You can also show your child that they matter to you.

WHAT ARE SOME ESSENTIALS FOR A GOOD ROLE MODEL?

- **Relationship with the children's mother.** If you can be positive, respectful and work out conflicts and disagreements in good ways, you model positive manhood and respect for adults in general. Harsh criticism, showing contempt, stonewalling, and defensiveness, can hurt children emotionally. Using force with the children's mother can cause fear and lasting hurt to your child. If this has happened, get help. You and your children can bounce back.
- **Father, husband or stepfather.** If you want to have your rules respected, you must follow them yourself. For example, if you want your teens to come home at a decent time, your own habits in this regard are very important. If you hold back your temper when you're mad, it shows that you value self-control and teaches responsible behavior.
- **Character.** If you are polite (to people in stores, when you are driving and when someone is rude to you) you show what being a man is about and highlight the importance of self-control. For a son, it illustrates an example of responsible behavior for men: for a daughter, it helps her have healthy expectations of men.
- **Work and income.** Men have traditionally been expected to be models as providers and wage earners, and that still carries weight despite the fact that most women work. But, it's not about being a "big wallet" guy: having a big job or an expensive car. Consistently providing what you can is

important. Also, doing chores in the house or outdoors, and making other contributions, either alone or with the kids, teaches responsibility.

- **Time.** How you spend your time shows your real commitment. Spending time with your family and doing things with them illustrates what being a father is about. Are you managing work hours responsibly? Are you balancing time spent with your buddies with time at home with your family? Remember that you never stop being a role model.

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.