



ENGAGE

A Guide to Being
a Great Father

Father365



Responsible Fatherhood

Being a dad is a big job. It's an important one. When dads are involved, kids have brighter futures. A responsible dad does whatever it takes to meet the needs of his children - the emotional needs as well as the financial ones.

Unfortunately, the job doesn't come with an instruction manual. And the truth is, all dads experience self-doubt about parenting at some point. Being a father can be frustrating, even scary at times.

Every man's experience is different, so writing that instruction manual might be next to impossible. But, we've created this guide of tips and things to try for dads looking to be the best father they can be. We hope you will find it helpful.



Start With You

Taking care of children and others starts with taking care of yourself.

It's not selfish. It's about doing the things you need to do to be a better man and a better father.

Keep these things in mind:

- You can't take care of your kids if you're sick.
- Your actions show your children how to take a healthy approach to life.
- You want to be around to enjoy grandkids someday.

Maintaining your physical and mental health is step one in mastering the challenges and joys of fatherhood.



to
Try

for a Healthier Mind & Body

1. Make time for recreation.
2. Spend time with supportive friends.
3. Find downtime to relax.
4. Get enough sleep.
5. Eat well.
6. Get regular exercise.
7. Get the medical care you need.
8. Address emotional and mental health issues, including alcohol and drug abuse.
9. Find a good job you like.
10. Develop and nurture your spirituality.



Communication

Being able to listen to others and to say what you need to say are important keys to good relationships.

When we speak in anger or don't listen to what others say, we create unnecessary stress.

Good communication skills help you build trust and understanding, not just between yourself and your children but with all the people in your life.



to Try for Better Communication

1. Focus on the person and shut out distractions like texts or other people.
2. Make and keep eye contact.
3. Show you're listening by rephrasing what you hear and saying it back.
4. Don't accuse or put down the other person.
5. Don't be afraid to say "I'm sorry."
6. Try to hear the feeling behind the words and not just what's being said.
7. Look for ways both people can "win" or get what they want through compromise.
8. Avoid saying "always" and "never." Instead, talk about the situation, what's happening now.
9. Try to listen first, rather than jump to problem solving.
10. Be aware of timing. Don't start an important conversation when one of you is distracted.



Use the Power of Play

Children learn when they have fun. When they play board games, do arts and crafts projects, look at picture books or play sports, they're also learning words, using math, solving problems and building life skills.

So instead of making it a chore to learn something, look for ways to turn it into play.



to Try *for Learning Through Play*

For younger children

1. Play I Spy to teach letters, numbers or colors.
2. Play Simon Says or Mother May I to practice rules, manners and following directions.
3. Play with blocks to teach shapes and sorting.
4. Play restaurant or grocery store to teach simple math or communication skills.
5. Roll a ball back and forth to teach motor skills or counting.

For older children

6. Cook with your kids to teach measuring or fractions.
7. Have your child teach you to play a card game to build communication skills.
8. Use your phones to go on a selfie scavenger hunt.
9. Learn a new sport together.
10. Build something together, like a bird house.



Show & Coach

Children learn best by doing. They watch us and copy our actions, so you can use that to teach many things.

Have your child watch you do something. Then break down the steps. Coach them as they move through the process and cheer them on.

As you show and coach, it's important to remember that getting it right the first time is not the objective. Making mistakes and learning how to react to failure is a valuable lesson for children. If the block tower collapses, use it as an opportunity to laugh or talk about the force of gravity. How you react when things don't go well is a teachable moment. Take advantage of it.



to Try *for Showing and Coaching*

1. Dribbling a basketball.
2. Making a sandwich.
3. Introducing yourself to a new person.
4. Doing a dance step.
5. Writing their name.
6. Solving a puzzle.
7. Using a knife and fork.
8. Tying shoes.
9. Folding laundry.
10. Doing a simple magic trick.



Love with Laughter

Children learn to laugh at their silly mistakes by seeing you laugh at yours. When you do something silly - or make a mistake and laugh about it - children see that it's easy to be with you. When you laugh together, you feel closer as a family.

Don't make fun of children. But do let them see your sense of humor.



10 to Try *for Laughing Together*

1. See who can make the most silly faces.
2. Read out loud from a joke book together.
3. Tell something funny that happened to you.
4. If you spill something, laugh extra long and loud.
5. Mix things up on purpose. Wear your t-shirt backwards, for example, until they notice.
6. Do a wild dance.
7. See who can come up with the strangest bird call.
8. Talk in a made-up language or baby talk.
9. Have a staring game and see who can go the longest without laughing.
10. Look at a funny picture book together.



Really Pay Attention

With so many things going on around us, it's easy to get distracted. One way to be closer to your children is to give them all of your attention.

When you put the phone down, turn the TV off and pay attention, you will notice what makes them happy. You'll begin to see how they learn best.

You can use the things you notice to make yourself a better dad, one who really understands his kids. And you'll gain their trust when kids see that you are truly there for them.



10 to Try for Paying Closer Attention

1. Draw pictures of each other.
2. Have your child teach you to do something.
3. Help children clean up their room.
4. Play catch.
5. Play peek-a-boo.
6. Attend a school event.
7. Write your child a note to wish them luck with something they're doing.
8. Praise your child for something good they've done.
9. Show interest in their friends and what's going on at school.
10. Work on an arts and crafts project together.



It's Worth the Effort

The most important things you need to be a great father are the desire to be a positive part of your kids' lives and the willingness to keep trying – through good times and not so good times.

Research shows that when dads play a positive role, children grow up healthier and happier. So it's worth the effort, because you make such a difference for them.



to
Try

When You're Trying to Do Your Best

1. It gets easier. As children grow up, they learn to do more for themselves and you learn to be a better dad by being there.
2. Kids like making decisions. Give kids two healthy options and they'll be happier with the one they choose.
3. Be a good role model and model the behavior you want to see.
4. Always keep your promises - your word is your bond and your integrity.
5. Encourage independence - even when it would be faster if you did it for them.
6. A sense of humor and a little patience go a long way.
7. Love is often the best answer. When they make you angry, try showing love. When they least expect it, show love.
8. Reading together is always time well spent.
9. Treat the other important adults in their lives with respect, even when you don't agree with them.
10. Treasure time with your children. You may find it hard to believe now, but they do grow up fast.



We're Here For You

The South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families works every day to help fathers become the positive role models their children want them to be. We do this through a statewide network of fatherhood programs designed to provide the resources, education and support fathers need to become great dads.

Our programs are provided free of charge. All you need is the commitment.

Visit Father365.com to find a program near you.

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BE YOUR BEST.
EVERY DAY.

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