



## ASK DR. DANA

**Q. It seems like most parenting information I read is geared toward moms' role in development. How about us dads?**

A. Dads are more involved in raising their children than ever before. This is good for kids. During my adolescence, I was raised primarily by my dad. He taught me that I was loveable, that I was smart, and that I deserved respect.

Research confirms just how important dads are in the development and well-being of kids.

Whether the outcome is intellectual development, sex-role development, or psychological development, most kids do better when their relationship with their dad is close and warm, whether dad lives with them or not. Sons of nurturing fathers are more likely to model and internalize their modes of thinking and problem-solving. A close relationship with dad fosters a daughter's sense of competence—especially in math skills, and a secure sense of her femininity. Children of involved, loving fathers show increased cognitive competence, increased empathy, above average school performance, and enhanced social development and self-esteem.

**Q. What exactly do dads do differently than moms?**

A. Although it is never a good idea to generalize or stereotype parental roles, there are some ways, in general, in which dads' parent differently.

Dads' tend to:

- Be seen as "more strict". Children seem to respond well to a firm but loving style of discipline
- Urge children to take calculated risks and challenge themselves, whether it be on the monkey bars, the soccer field, or academically
- Teach children to become more independent—to explore and try new things.
- Provide specific praise for achievements
- Teach children how to play and interact with peers through play

So what does it mean to be a loving, involved dad?

- Be accessible for homework help and advice
- Know how your child is doing in his/her classes
- Attend parent conferences
- Know who your child's friends are



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- Talk to your child about what he/she is interested in, cares about, and is stressed about?
- Spend quality time with your children—I used to go on “errands” with my dad and help him with chores

As a community, we need to celebrate dads, emphasize their importance in children’s development, and encourage them to make parenting a priority.

I know of at least two Scottsdale schools that have formed dads’ clubs. What a great way for dads to get more involved in their children’s school.

Personally, I see the way my girls’ look up to their soccer coaches (all volunteer dads) and how much it means to them to be praised for a job well done.