



U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
Administration for Children
and Families
Office of Family Assistance

www.fatherhood.gov

NRFC Take Time Tips for Dads

April 2010



BE A GET-UP-AND-GO DAD

Whether you share a home with your children or see them only occasionally, both you and your kids benefit when you are *actively* involved in their lives. Don't wait for your children to ask you to read them a story, play a game, or go for a hike – take the lead. Being enthusiastic about spending time with your children can energize your relationship with them and put in motion a stronger connection.

- **Create small moments that bring big rewards** – Being active together doesn't have to cost a lot or require special skills. Going for a walk, reading a story, cooking dinner, playing a video game or board game, coloring a picture, or doing a crossword puzzle are everyday activities that can spark conversation, laughter, and wonderful memories for you and your child.
- **Get off to a good start** – Research indicates that dads who play and interact with their infants, beginning at birth, give their children an advantage in developing mental and physical abilities as they grow and managing stress better during their school years.
- **Come and get it** – Research also shows that children and teenagers gain many benefits from sitting down to meals with their families. Every breakfast, lunch, and dinner is an opportunity to share news about your lives, have discussions and plan, and give your children your full attention.
- **Dare to care** – Take your children along when you stop by to see an ill relative or friend in the hospital or visit a shut-in neighbor. By demonstrating compassion for others, you will earn your children's respect and help them appreciate the importance of community.
- **Make a difference** – Ask your children if they know an individual or group in the neighborhood that could use a helping hand. Work with your children to identify the need – home repairs for an elderly neighbor, fundraising car wash for a community organization, cleaning up a neighborhood park – then pitch in with them to make it happen.
- **Win in new ways** – When you play games with your children, remember that being the best at the game is not the only way to win. Through play, children learn how to regulate their emotions and recognize the emotional cues of others, which builds important socialization skills for adulthood.
- **Become Mr. Fix-it** – When the car breaks down or the refrigerator starts making a strange noise, show your children how to handle the problem in a positive manner. The problem-solving experience they gain with you will be valuable to them as they grow.
- **Take the teen challenge** – Parenting a teenager effectively requires tremendous communication, understanding, and patience. But the investment you make by being involved in the life of your teenager is worth it. Teens who have a solid relationship with their father often have a less troublesome transition to adulthood.
- **Be a digital dad** – Send your child a text message for no reason at all, other than to say, "I love you," or "Great job on the test."
- **Walk the talk** – Make sure your own behavior is a model for how you want your children to act. Set a good example.

Take Time to Be a Dad Today