

60 Tips For Fathers

**(To Create Happy, Connected,
and Responsible Kids)**



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Tip #1: Avoid Blaming Others

You've got to admit it; blaming your kids or your wife is really an easy thing to do. There is a perverse kind of pleasure we gain from seeing others in our family as blameworthy.

Any time they act badly towards you, you can justify blaming them.

When you blame them, they blame you back and justify their own blaming. An amazing vicious circle perpetuates itself.

Want better relationships?

STOP BLAMING PEOPLE!

Give them unconditional love instead.

Tip #2: Respond to Family Members

One of the most difficult things for dads can be to hear negativity and complaining from their wife or kids.

Our reaction? It's often to try to get them to be "more positive".

The problem is that this doesn't work. Just because you're positive doesn't mean that your family will always be so.

The answer may be to continue to be positive to your heart's content but to acknowledge when someone else is having trouble. "Say more about that," or "that sounds really hard," can be excellent responses to a family member who is complaining or struggling.

Afraid you'll get more complaining if you say these things?

You'll actually get less.

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Tip #3: Question Your Virtue

Do you really want to be a more effective father?

Then be someone who questions their virtue all the time.

Am I really a loving father? Am I really providing what my kids want right now? Do I change as my kids' change? Do I compromise enough or do I want to be right all the time?

These are the kinds of questions that an effective father asks of himself all of the time.

If you think you're a perfect father who does it right and you don't need to improve, it's very possible that you're falling short.

Question yourself often.

It's painful to do but allows you more chances to better yourself, and we could all use some of that.

Tip #4: Leave When Your Angry

A lot of rotten things are said and a lot of damage is done when we speak to our kids when we are in a highly agitated state. They will tend to say a lot of damaging things when they're in this state as well.

The trick is to avoid having conversations with your kids when you're very angry and to have a plan to use when this occurs.

One plan may be to leave the area and to cool down; taking a walk or run may be helpful. Whatever you do, make sure that you are cooling down for at least 30 minutes (most people underestimate the time it takes). Then you'll be able to approach your child more thoughtfully.

Angry words spoken during times of intense anger can stay with a child for a long time. Don't make the mistake of not planning for these times. Have a plan and make it work.

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Tip #5: Say You're Sorry

I've noticed one thing about my parenting that's pretty consistent: I will eventually screw something up with one of my kids.

Whether it's getting angry, forgetting something, etc, I seem to make more than my share of mistakes with my kids. So what can be done?

Say you're sorry (and mean it) and don't beat yourself up over it.

If you tell your child you're sorry and you're really not, they'll know it. If you beat yourself up for a long time after screwing something up, you're liable to lose the learning along the way.

It's not an easy thing to do, saying you're sorry to your child. Part of you wants to say, "Why should I say sorry to you after all I've done for you?" Say it anyway. After all, kids don't need perfect fathers.

They just need fathers that are trying to get better.

Tip #6: Talk About Values

Many fathers today are worried about the effects of mass media and materialism on their children.

The amount of and intensity of media messages that bombard our kids today is greater than it has ever been. What can you do to lessen its' impact?

Teach values to your kids. Live those values yourself. If you consistently talk about values to your children and you live them in your daily life the impact of today's media landslide can be lessened considerably.

Do you talk about values to your kids?

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Tip #7: Use “If-Thens”

Your job as a father is to warn about the consequence of an action to your child, not to threaten it.

If you warn and give consequences in an angry manner, your child will then focus on an angry father rather than the consequence.

When you talk to your child about consequences, you can calmly give them some "if-thens." "If you take a long time getting ready for bed, then you won't have time for stories." Or, "If you don't drive safely, then you won't be able to drive the car."

Stay calm concerning consequences and you will allow your children to learn from them. Get angry and you teach them that you're an angry person.

What works better for you?

Tip #8: Have a Family Meeting

Does the pace of modern life have you feeling scattered and not feeling connected to your kids? Is it hard to have family dinners because of everyone's schedule?

A solution might be a regular family meeting. Some rules are... 1) No canceling these, it's a major priority. 2) Not a bitch session, no criticizing allowed, but you may state your desires. 3) This is an opportunity to schedule your week. 4) Appreciating others and thanking them is allowed and encouraged (These should begin every meeting). 5) Everyone participates and the facilitation role is rotated.

This may be one of the only ways that you can connect with and organize your family. If you're saying, "We don't possibly have time for that," you're probably a great candidate for it.

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Tip #9: Don't Try and Fix It

Fathers are often very effective handymen. They can have an answer for just about any problem.

When you deal with your kids, however, this doesn't work too well and can invalidate your kids' feelings. You can say things like:

- "It's no big deal"
- "Just deal with it"
- "That's not hard at all"

If you say things like this to your kids you run the risk of not validating their feelings and of driving them further from you.

Make an effort to take off your handyman outfit and to listen to and affirm what your child is going through.

When you've done this you may still get an opportunity to help them because they'll trust you enough to ask you for help.

Tip #10: Just Sit There

When your child does something that REALLY upsets you, consider an old Zen koan: "Don't just do something, sit there!"

Take some time before you act and allow yourself to see clearly what is lost in the heat of the moment; that your child just screwed up and that it's a big part of how they learn things (It's a good thing we never made any mistakes when we were young!).

Your child won't learn much from it if you get angry; their focus will be on you and not on learning.

Later on you'll be able to act on the situation and have a better perspective.

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Tip #11: See Opportunities in Everything

We all have kids that challenge us more than others.

There always seems to be one child that "pushes our buttons."

You have choices about how to view this situation. You can just see this child as a pain in the butt or you can view this as the "big opportunity."

The child that is difficult for you can also serve as your greatest teacher. He or she can open you up for change like nobody else.

The universe is created perfectly that way. Are you up for the challenge?

What can you learn about yourself?

Tip #12: Shift From Work to Home

When many of you go home after work you may find yourself unprepared for the world you're walking into when you arrive at home.

The world you're entering often isn't about "bottom lines" or a narrow focus on problem solving like it may be at work. Preparing for life at home means being willing to look at things through a wide- angle lens and to look at what your family needs at any moment.

This shift is a difficult one for many dads. It's also possible that with some preparation fathers can come home "really" ready for life at home.

If you're stressed from work, try a breathing technique when you're driving home; with each breathe you become more relaxed and more ready to open up your heart to your family.

Don't be "in your head" when you arrive at home! Come home with an open heart. That way everyone in your family gets to experience the "real" you!

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Tip #13: Encourage Your Kids

Do you have a child that is misbehaving?

This isn't a child that wants to misbehave, it's a child that is discouraged.

Give him or her encouragement and allow them a chance to contribute in meaningful ways to the family.

Do you want more misbehavior?

Then punish him or her and see what you get.

Tip #14: Stay Close Through the Tough Times

If you let modern culture strongly influence your sons and daughters, you would likely end up with distinctive problems for each.

Boys learn to be "tough" and to completely disregard their nurturing side. They learn to lose touch with their feelings and to be strong at all costs.

Girls learn that they are valued for the way they look and that what is important is to be popular, thin, and to wear the current styles. It is quite common for girls to be doing fine until around age twelve. At that time there often is a drop in self-esteem if they don't feel they're as good-looking or popular as they should be.

Be aware of these "traps" for both boys and girls. They are out there in a big way and have affected millions of kids.

Nothing, however, will be as effective a deterrent as a close relationship with parents and the ability to talk in a frank way.

This is even true with teenagers. They need it just as much, it's just hard to tell!

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Tip #15: Go Easy With Your Strong-Willed Child

So you have a strong-willed child?

Be thankful that you do.

While it's easy to focus on all of the problems a strong-willed child brings your way, it's a blessing as well.

Some day your child will need that strong will to say no to people or influences that could harm him/her.

In the meantime become a very good negotiator who knows how to pick the important battles and leave the rest alone.

And thank your child for helping you to be a more patient person.

Tip #16: Use Forgiveness

Are you having trouble in your relationship with a family member?

You do have choices.

You could either continue to harbor ill feeling towards that person and to blame them or.... Do the only thing that has ever worked, which is to forgive them.

Ask yourself how your own ego is contributing to the problem (it is!) and ask yourself how you have made things more difficult for this person.

When you forgive them from your heart you've taken the first step towards improving the relationship.

If you can't see yourself forgiving that person because it's all their fault, it may be time to consider getting some help.

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Tip #17: Walk the Talk

As you navigate the ups and downs of parenting, try seeing your life backwards; you're ninety years old on your death bed and looking back at your life as a father.

Any regrets?

Didn't spend enough time with your kids? Didn't learn to control your anger?

You are living in choice right now. Exercise that choice and define the kind of father you want to be.

Now walk the talk.

Tip #18: Train Your Kids

Do you sometimes have trouble with your kids misbehaving? Train them! Many parents don't train their kids and then wonder why they are misbehaving.

Whether it's going into a store or restaurant or driving while they're fighting, you can role-play the proper behavior with your kids so that they know what is expected of them.

It's always very useful to let them know what you will do if they misbehave. You won't drive the car while they're fighting, for instance.

Make the behavior you expect of them very clear to your kids and keep your standards high.

Then make sure you follow through--you'll see improvement soon.

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Tip #19: Who Owns the Problem?

In dealing with problems with your kids, it is important to know who “owns” a particular problem.

If your child is engaged in unsafe activities like drinking alcohol and driving your car, this is clearly your problem as well as theirs.

If your teen-age child doesn't keep their room clean (according to your standards) and you are having a large power struggle about it, you may want to look at whose problem it is.

Is it worth damaging your relationship with your child over how clean their room is?

This is most likely your own ego getting in the way. It doesn't have to be your problem. It's a preference to have his/her room clean, it's not a need or a “have-to.”

Pick your battles with your kids and don't let your ego allow you to own problems you don't have to own.

Tip #20: See Through Your Kids Eyes

It's so easy to see your kids from your perspective.

When there are problems with your kids, spend some time thinking from their perspective. For instance, can you imagine what it's like to be told what to do all day?

Perhaps that's why your kids are having a hard time listening. Maybe more open-ended questions are in order instead of telling them what to do.

The world of your kids is every bit as important to them as yours is to you.

Effective fathers can see the world through their kids' eyes as well as their own.

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Tip #21: Don't Need to be Right

There is a great debate being raged in households across the country between husbands and wives and between parents and kids.

It involves who is right. We invest a lot in being right; it's incredibly important to us.

If in our relationships we invested a lot in being kind rather than being right, we'd be a lot better off.

How about you?

Tip #22: Monitor TV Watching

Studies show that the average 12 year-old child in this country has watched 14,000 murders on TV.

Does this have an impact?

While it's hard to prove, it's hard to believe that this doesn't have an adverse impact on children. What is known is that the producers of shows have little interest in your children beyond their own ratings and that the threshold for violence has raised considerably in the past ten years. What can you do?

1. Watch for your own level of TV watching--you are still the "main model" for your kids.
2. When possible, watch shows with them and ask them questions about what you have seen together.
3. Make hard and fast rules about watching TV (No TV during the school week, etc.). Then hold to them!
4. Make your house a place where your kids can create a number of other fun activities that have nothing to do with TV.

Don't buy into the idea that excessive TV watching is O.K. for kids; You owe it to them to give them your best.

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Tip #23: Use Curious Questions

When you want your kids to do something or to get into action, how do you do it? Do you just ask them to or tell them?

There is a growing consensus that telling people what to do is not only an exercise in power and control but that it is ineffective as well. (We also realize as parents that sometimes it is unavoidable).

What if you could ask curious questions in order to get your kids into action? "What will it take to finish your homework this week? " isn't a perfect way to get your child to do their homework, but it probably beats "you better get on your homework this week."

There are plenty of opportunities for you to use curious questions that are more effective and respectful to your children. See if you can start thinking of some.

Tip #24: Treat Mistakes in a Learning Way

How are mistakes viewed in your family?

One thing to be sure: if your kids' mistakes are seen as screw-ups that attract criticism and blame, you're going to have kids that are defensive and easily shamed.

To help create kids who learn from their errors and who aren't as self-critical, see their errors as what they are; simply the way that kids learn about the world.

Discipline yourself as a father to react to their errors in a way that shows love, patience, and understanding.

Show them that you love them even when they're not at their best. Then you'll get their best!

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Tip #25: Get Outside Opinions

Have you ever been "stuck" in a relationship with one of your kids and finding it hard to get out?

Do you notice yourself blaming it on your child and that it doesn't get any better?

The first step out of this trap is to get an outside opinion on what is happening. When you're "too close" to a relationship you're rarely able to see the solution in front of you. It might be your wife or another person who knows you, but ask their opinion on what's really happening.

Then be willing to take responsibility. Remember the rule: if you want someone else to change, you first must change yourself!

Tip #26: Really Know Your Child

Just how aware of your child's world are you? Do you know their best friend? What their greatest fear is? Their favorite color? Their greatest accomplishment so far? What sort of learning style they have?

We live in an unbelievable time of information at our fingertips. The truth is, it's easy for dads to know a lot about their jobs and the world "out there" and not as much about their own children.

Get to know the most intimate details about their life. Keep asking questions with an authentic curiosity.

Try not to ask yes and no questions or questions that begin with why, because they tend not to give much of an opportunity for a response. Your child will be able to tell when you are genuinely interested in their lives and they'll respond to it.

They're worth it, aren't they?

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Tip #27: Help Your Kids Reduce Fighting

Do your kids fight more than you like? One of the best ways to reduce fighting between your kids is to have faith that they'll be able to work it out if you allow them to.

If you keep intervening in their fights they'll never learn to figure it out on their own, and you'll never learn to deal with a bit of conflict.

If one of them has a knife or a hammer in hand, intervention is preferred. If they don't, let them go and watch the number of conflicts decrease over time.

Tip #28: "Really" Listen to Your Kids

The truth is that we have filters when we listen to our kids that sometimes distort the intended message.

While they're talking to us we form judgements and opinions about what we're hearing that cloud the "pure" meaning of the message. What a gift it is to truly listen to your child without distorting the information!

Challenge of the week: When you listen to your child this week, listen completely and reflect back to them what you heard. Saying, "So it sounds like you were pretty frustrated when you lost that game," will let them know that you were really listening.

You may find that they open up to you much more and that you get a lot more information than you previously did. It's a law of the universe: If you want others to listen to you, listen to them first.

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Tip #29: Do Special Things for Your Kids

The busier we get, the easier it is to forget about doing the "special" things for our kids that are so important.

Every now and then your kids deserve something that shows you're thinking about them and that they really are incredibly important to you. Whether it's a note you write to them or a surprise visit to their school, or a "secret" card trick that only you two know about, make it a habit to provide them with a dose of "special" things that show that you care.

Commitment can be a difficult thing to measure, but doing these kinds of things on a consistent basis is a pretty good sign that you're committed and know the importance of your family.

What will you do in the coming weeks?

Tip # 30: Take an Occasional Time Out

Have you lost it with your kids at times and screamed or mistreated them?

What about trying a time out?

Announcing to your kids that you're taking a time out is a great way to show them that it's OK to take some time to get under control again.

It also shows them that you are acknowledging your part in the problem and that it's not only "them".

Too proud to do it?

Your kids will probably then be blessed with the same stubborn pride that you have.

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Tip #31: Increase Your Positive Interaction Ratio

Are you having trouble with your kids' behavior or in disciplining your kids?

What is your positive to negative "interaction" ratio with them? In other words, how often do you praise, encourage, or hug them as opposed to telling them to stop doing something, raising your voice at them, etc.

Are you close to five positive interactions for every negative interaction? If not, realize that you have a great deal to do with your child's behavior and start increasing the positive ratio in your interactions.

When you change your behavior your children will do it as well.

Tip #32: Don't Fight Whining

Dads often have a tough time with hearing their kids whining and complaining. It's easy for us to tell them to toughen up and to just stop it.

The irony of this is that it just creates more of the very behavior that we don't like.

The reason is that when we do this our kids don't feel heard; this creates an even stronger desire in them to be heard.

The next time you hear your kids complaining try something new. Say to them warmly, "Boy, that sounds hard."

You might even get more complaining at first, but in the long run you'll get kids who feel heard and who won't need to complain as much.

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Tip #33: Use Natural Consequences

Want to have kids that do what you'd like them to do? It's an investment and it takes some practice. Positive discipline and natural consequences seem to work pretty well; punishment seems to backfire with today's kids.

When your kids misbehave, first remember it's completely normal and natural for them to test you. Accept the notion that punishment doesn't work well in the long run. (With my kids it turns into revenge!)

Instead, try natural consequences: If your kids don't pick up their room in a timely fashion at night, then there isn't time for their story that's read to them before bed. If your teenager doesn't get the car home on time, then they don't drive for a while.

The point is to connect the misbehavior with the consequence, the closer the better. If your son keeps forgetting his glove to go to baseball practice but you keep retrieving it for him, he'll keep forgetting it.

If as a natural consequence you let him deal with it on his own, he'll probably learn pretty fast to remember it. You'll create kids who learn from their own misbehavior and who take more responsibility for themselves. Isn't that what we really want for them?

Tip #34: Tell Your Kids Your Stories

One of the best things you can do for your kids is to "connect" them to the past and show them the connections and the community that they are associated with.

Do you tell your kids stories from when you were young? They love to hear them and it is a great way to show them how we are all connected.

Stories about your parents or grandparents are especially fun for them to hear.

Keep a busload of stories handy for them, they'll feel more connected and they'll develop a sense of the "community" that they're from.

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Tip #35: Help Your Kids to Manage Anger

Anger is something that your kids will be very familiar with. They have seen it from you and they have experienced it themselves.

How can you help your kids to control their anger better?

One way is to help train them to notice the warning signs of anger coming on. Clenched fists, quicker heart and breathing rate, and racing thoughts can all be signs.

You can then teach them some calming skills to use when they feel the warning signs: Deep breathing, counting to 10, etc.

This is best done when your kids are in a calm and happy state and not in the middle of a tantrum.

It also works better if you have shown them that you use these skills yourself!

Tip #36: Let your Kids Delay Gratification

It's O.K. for your kids to want more than you can give them, right?

When they can't get what they want they'll be unhappy. Then what do you do? One thing not to do:

Don't always try to cheer up your child or to fix their problem. To learn to delay gratification is one of the keys to happiness in life.

This skill is developed every time your child gets upset when they can't have something. Allow them to experience the feeling and then to let it go.

You can acknowledge that it must be hard not to get what they want but then leave it alone as they recover from it. You'll end up with happier kids who have "practiced" the skill of delayed gratification.

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Tip #37: Foster the Emotional Intelligence of Your Kids

How's your emotional intelligence?

Do you share your emotions with your kids?

Many dads don't because they didn't learn it from their dads and don't have the skills.

Guess what? They can be learned!

Next time you're with your child/children, share how you were feeling at some time during your day. Show them it's O.K. to express your emotions and to feel them.

If you want to be close to your kids, you have to lead the way and to show them that since you're now willing to share, you're now able to receive from them as well.

Tip #38: Be a Great Servant

Max De Pree once said, "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality, the last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant."

It seems that much of being an effective father is about being a servant.

So don't fight it.

Be a great servant.

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Tip #39: Be a “Negative--Free Zone”

Teach your older children to say no to negativity.

What you think about and what you say will expand in your own consciousness. If you dwell on negativity you will help to create more of it in your life. Teach your children through your own actions the value in seeing the world as "half-full."

If you're blaming your kids and spending too much energy on what they did wrong, you're actually creating more negativity that will blossom in your family.

There's always a gentle way that you can respond to your kids' misbehavior, and by doing this you show them a healthy way to learn from their mistakes.

Tip #40: Be Careful With Rewards

Do rewards work for your kids? Sure they do, if you mean compliance for a short time.

Rewards can temporarily change behavior, but they won't change the kind of person your child is.

What happens when there are no more rewards?

Try not to bribe your kids with rewards; they need to develop a genuine interest in things that comes from inside of them.

Then they'll discover the best reward of all; they'll like what they do.

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Tip #41: Take Time With Your Kids

If you spend an average of one hour each week alone with one of your children, this time with them will amount to about 39 days by the time they're 18 years old.

This doesn't seem like a great deal of time, does it?

The next time you're worried about all of the things that you must get done on your to-do list, make sure you include some time for your kids.

After all, the errands that you have can probably wait for awhile.

Your relationship with your children can't wait.

Tip #42: Don't Fix when Emotions are High

The reality is that being in a family with kids is often stressful and can be pretty emotional.

When working with your kids' emotions, remember that feelings may keep rising in your child to a "point of no return." When they get to this point it's not effective to attempt to be logical and it may actually make things worse.

The best thing to do when your kids get very emotional is usually to listen and refrain from fixing. When your child has let their feelings run their course and they have returned to clear thinking you may then get back to responding to what they said.

If you can't refrain from responding to them you may want to leave the area until you both are ready to resume.

Remember: Once their feelings get to the "point of no return" it's best to practice your listening skills with your kids and leave your fix-it mentality at work.

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Tip #43: Say “No” Often

Do you really want kids who are happy, healthy, and well-adjusted?

Then say “no” to them thousands of times! The only way kids get better at delaying gratification and learning this painful lesson of not getting what they want is for you to say no often. Not always, but often.

Kids who get a lot of “things” in their lives typically aren’t the happiest kids on the block.

Allow your kids to earn most of the truly valuable things in their lives.

They’ll feel a lot better about it years later; but first they’ll have to complain to you about it.

Tip #44: Encourage Your Kids Specifically

We all like to encourage our kids.

The way we've done it in the past is to say "good job" or "beautiful" to them if they drew a picture or performed some task. The reality is that when they get into the real world they may compare their picture to another child's and see it's really not beautiful in comparison.

Instead you can comment on some of the specifics of the picture; "I noticed that you used orange to color the sun to make it look hot." These kinds of comments don't use judgement and can help to focus their attention on what it is that they enjoy about creating the picture.

An occasional comment of “good job” is fine, but the world is filled with enough judgement that your kids will have to deal with.

Help them to learn to enjoy the performance without worrying so much about how it compares to other kids.

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Tip #45: Deal With Your History

Do you really want to improve as a father? Here's one way to do it.

Think of the one thing your child does that ticks you off more than any other. The thing that makes you boil over.

Then, take a good, hard look at yourself and ask what this anger is really about.

The chances are that what your disliking about your child's behavior is really something you don't like about yourself or about your history.

Fathers who have painful memories of fighting in their families of origin, for instance, may have great difficulty dealing with fighting from their kids because of how it brings these painful memories back for them.

When you know what your anger is "really" about it's easier to deal with it. Otherwise it's a knee-jerk response that can distance you from your children and keep you from improving as fathers.

Tip #46: Find Ways to Encourage Your Kids

So you have a child or children that are misbehaving?

There is one main reason that kids misbehave: they're discouraged by something. (It's not because they're rotten). Here are some things to look at to encourage your child:

- Work on your relationship with your child and make sure they are feeling good about it. If the relationship is damaged very little can be done.
- Make them feel important by giving them extra responsibility around the house
- Spend more special time with them alone in their world.
- Simply ask them what they would like to be doing more of or less of.
- Brainstorm ideas on how your child could feel like more a part of the family.

Or... you could punish them when they misbehave.... and wait a little longer until the next episode happens. Hint: DOESN'T WORK!

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Tip #47: Find Ways For Your Kids to Listen

Do your kids listen to you?

If not, it may be one of three things.

#1. Your relationship may be poor and they just don't want to listen to you any more.
Solution: Apologize for your part in this and start forging a better relationship.

#2. You're not a very good listener yourself and they are just modeling what they see.
Solution: Work on your own listening skills, reflect back what you hear from people, especially your own kids.

#3. Your kids have learned that they don't have to listen to you; you have to tell them eight times before something happens. Solution: Let your actions speak louder than words. If they don't listen when you tell them that they need to pick up toys, pick up their toys yourself and put them out of reach for awhile.

Kids have a way of listening better when you show them you mean business.

Tip #48: Use Mistakes as Opportunities

Someone decided a long time ago that to make their kids behave better that parents should first make them feel worse.

Parents often send kids to their room after yelling at them or whacking them and tell them to "think about what they did."

Although this may provide short-term results it ultimately will fail as a strategy.

Kids learn from their mistakes most effectively in an atmosphere of respect and caring.

Create a culture of "mistakes are opportunities for learning" at your household and toss the angry, disappointed, ego stuff away.

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Tip #49: Coach Your Kids

Are you often frustrated because you can't get your kids to do what you want? This seems to be an issue with a lot of fathers (and mothers!).

What can we do? I know what doesn't work. Telling them what to do all the time doesn't work very well.

Have you tried coaching them?

Instead of telling them what to do, ask them questions. "What do you think your responsibilities should be here?" "What do you need to be more effective?" are examples of coaching questions that could be used.

You won't always get the answer you want, but you can always negotiate if you don't. Sometimes the answers will surprise you.

The nice thing about coaching your kids is that it shows respect for your kids and shows a level of trust that they can figure it out. These are things that aren't in evidence when you tell them what to do.

After all, do you like to be told what to do? Good luck.

Tip #50: Don't Forget What's in Your Kids' Hearts

Your children will be learning a lot of facts and information when they're back at school this fall.

What they may not be learning is perhaps the most important information of all-- information about their own hearts.

How do they follow their own desires? How do they learn to use their own emotions to their advantage? How do they learn to work as a team?

This is the kind of information that you can help them with. Talk about it with them often.

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Tip #51: Be Willing to be the Problem

There is a fundamental problem which you can “cause” in your families without even knowing it.

It involves the ease with which we see our family "problems" as being caused by someone else.

We can easily see our son or daughter as irresponsible, incapable, etc., and we can convince ourselves that they are the problem.

The reality is that the more we see them as "the problem," the worse the problem tends to become.

The solution?

If you want someone to change in your family, change yourself first! Try seeing your son or daughter as capable, responsible, etc. and keep seeing them that way.

Only then will you get lasting results.

Tip #52: Educate Yourself About Your Families' Needs

Coming home from work and having a hard time adjusting to your family's pace?

Remember: often fathers are at a work environment that stresses bottom-line results and doing tasks. This usually doesn't work well with families.

Families are about what people need.

Do your family members know what you need and do you know what they need?

Tell them and find out.

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Tip #53: Use Rituals in Your Family

What are the rituals that you practice in your family?

Rituals seem to be used less often these days as both parents and kids get busier.

Are you doing all that you can to keep some meaningful rituals in your family's life?

Eating meals together, having family meetings, or regular weekend outings are all ways in which a family can have the time to air differences, acknowledge each other, or just spend some time together. Most people have better success if they start their children into rituals when they're young.

These rituals should be given the utmost importance; nobody cancels unless it is absolutely necessary. This tells your kids in a very strong way that they are important and that they are a priority.

It's also some great insurance against your family going their own separate ways completely.

Keep some rituals. Let them know how much you think of them!

Tip #54: Get Some Support

Involved fathers are the kind of people who will be willing to change while their kids change.

Not only is this a great quality to have, it's an essential part of being an effective father.

In order to get through the tough times it's often useful to have some form of support that's available to you. Whether it's a mentor or friend who has been there before, or a group of fathers who are willing to talk about the changes they're going through, find a means of support for yourself.

Seeking help is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength.

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Tip #55: Don't Judge Others Harshly

Are you judging your kids or your wife these days?

It is most likely that this says more about the "judger" than the judged.

Have you ever noticed that when you're harshly judging others that problems seem to keep coming up in your life?

Loving kindness works much better.

Tip #56: Use Problem-Solving Questions

When there are problem situations at home, there are ways you can have learning rather than shame result from it.

"Track" the problems by asking these kinds of questions:

"What happened?"

"Where were you?"

"What did you do?"

"What did others do?"

"How did you feel?"

"How do you think you handled it?"

"How upset were you?"

"How could you have handled it differently?"

"What will prevent this kind of thing in the future?"

This line of reasoning will serve to help you to discover the total picture before proceeding and it will give your child a chance to improve their ability to process these kinds of situations.

Kids don't learn or benefit from punishment or shame. Give your kid a chance to learn today.

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Tip #57: Take Responsibility for Your Anger

Do you get angry more often than you would like? Does it affect your relationship with your kids?

Take the first and the most essential step towards improving your anger—admit to yourself that the only one who causes you to get angry is YOU!

Blaming your anger on others is completely and totally ineffective.

Do you want to win ego points or to improve your relationship with your kids?

Tip #58: Use Your Family for Accountability

Do you have things that you'd like to change about the way that you are with your family?

Perhaps you'd like to spend more time with them, be more positive and less critical, etc.

One of the best ways to accomplish this is to enlist the help of your family in this process. Announce to them what your intentions are and how you would like them to hold you accountable.

This will increase the motivation that you have to go through these changes and will increase your chances for success.

Nothing like a little pressure to improve performance, huh?

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Tip #59: Keep Your Mouth Closed When Possible

As your kids grow up, they will say plenty of things that bother you.

You'll need to respond to some of these comments, but most of these comments don't require anything from you.

It will often be that the wisest and best thing you can do in response to these comments is to say nothing.

They are testing you and inviting you into conflict. That's what kids do sometimes.

Getting angry or paying too much attention to these comments will just make them happen more often.

Just let many of these comments go and know that you're passing the test.

Tip #60: Choose Wisely What to Give Your Kids

Remember that when it's all said and done, your kids will accurately reflect what you've given them in many ways.

It can just as easily be anger and pessimism as love, kindness, and generosity.

You give it to them, they reflect it back. What are you choosing to give them?

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Afterword

When things quiet down and you're able to reflect upon what you've been doing with your family, there are always going to be questions about whether enough has been done.

The truth is that questioning your commitment and the decisions you make with your family is often a sign of an effective father.

While these questions will stay with you, there **are** some things that you can make a priority in your life. Growing and changing with your kids is one of them. For the father who wants to be effective this often means to continue to learn and build skills that will serve you as a father.

Many of these skills are practical but many are of an emotional nature, and these are the ones that ultimately will determine your success with your kids. These are also the skills that many fathers have had little experience with.

For those fathers with courage, persistence, and support; these skills can be learned. Not only will they serve you as a father but in your work and other personal relationships as well.

I am hopeful that these tips will help you on your journey to be the kind of father that your kids want and deserve.

All the best to you and your family.

Sincerely,

Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC

* For those of you who are seeking additional support and coaching for your fathering, please feel free to contact me at:

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