

## RAISING HEALTHY DAUGHTERS



photo by Katrine Naleid for information about her photography  
please call (415) 621-4194

What Fathers Can Do

What Mothers Can Do

Boy Talk

How to Talk to Your Kids About Drugs

Resources For More Information

---

### What fathers can do

Fathers have great influence over the development of their children. Their influence is as strong as, though different from, the mother's influence. Being an absent father affects the children as much as being an involved father, only in different ways. Research has shown that fathers influence their children in the areas of self-esteem, sex role identity, and school achievement.

- Children have higher self-esteem when their fathers are involved, affectionate, and spend more time with them.
- The way fathers relate to their family members strongly affects the son's and daughter's acceptance of the masculine or feminine role. **When a father appreciates his daughter and shows respect for his wife, the daughter accepts her own femininity; she doesn't learn that only the masculine is valuable.**
- A father can affect how highly their children value education. For example, one researcher found a relationship between children's reading levels and the amount they saw their fathers reading in the home.

**Be involved** -- Go to school and sports events, take your daughter to work and show her the world outside the home, teach her about a car, how to throw a football, play with her, read to her, take her shopping, and show her the endless possibilities that await her.

**Support your daughter** -- Expect success from your daughter and encourage her to voice her opinions. Listen to her and show you value what she says. Accept and support her individuality and uniqueness. She is becoming her own person, and needs to be guided as well as accepted for who she is.

**Spend the time --** Time with your children is an investment in their future. Taking time for your child when she needs it will be more important than taking time for the child when it is convenient.

**Know your daughter --** What does she think and feel? What are her hopes and dreams? What is her everyday life like? Know the person inside so that when her body matures and she looks like a woman, you still have a connection to the person who is your daughter.

#### Additional Recommendations for Fathers

[back to the top](#)

### **What Mothers Can Do**

**Be an example to your daughter --** As a mother, you are your daughter's primary role model. One of the challenges our daughters face today is realizing the possible futures that lie before them. Girls have innumerable options. However, many are not aware of the extent of their powers.

If you are a mother who works in the house, introduce your daughter to other realities -- from books, meeting professional women, through the Internet, through your own stories. If you work outside the home, take time to show your daughter the girl inside of you. Play with her, read with her, let her see that there is more to life than work, and that home is a pleasant place to be.

**Encourage your daughter --** "You can be anything you want to be." "I will love you no matter what you do." Girls need to be encouraged in areas such as technology, math, science, and athletics, in addition to areas traditionally accepted as appropriate for girls. Expect your daughter to be good in math and science and provide her with the resources she needs to excel. Don't allow her to stumble just because she's a girl.

**Share with your daughter --** Share your history with your daughter, so she knows where she came from. Research the family, the women in the family and point out their accomplishments. Share your work with your daughter, explaining your thoughts and feelings. Share her life, asking, understanding what she experiences. Help bridge the gap between generations and give her a sense of community among women.

**Learn with your daughter --** It's never too late to expand your horizons, increase your knowledge. Set an example for your daughter by taking classes, learning along with her. Showing her that it's never too late to take in new knowledge and is an invaluable lesson.

[back to the top](#)

### **Boy Talk (It's Not What You Think!)**

Boys are taught by society that feeling some emotions, dressing or playing in certain ways, or not having specific abilities makes them "like a girl" or "a sissy" or "momma's boy." This teaching produces the idea

that being a girl or being like a girl is bad, shameful, and something to avoid. Both boys and girls learn this socially. This area will be an ongoing discussion between boys and girls about these and other issues that affect the way boys and girls relate to each other.

Though the primary focus of this site is building girls' self-esteem and sense of community through a technological medium, we do want to encourage understanding between boys and girls. Once a month, we will present a hypothetical situation and each week, post boys' and girls' responses to it.

[back to the top](#)

---

[Resources for Teachers](#)

[Lesson plans and more!](#)

["What's The Difference?"](#)

[Findings from the research on play preferences of boys and girls.](#)

["What We Can Do To Get Girls Involved in Technology"](#)

[Recommendations from the research.](#)

[Teaching Gender Equity](#)

[Recommendations from Academy Street Associates](#)

[Resources](#)

[Resources for girl development and gender equity information.](#)

[Internet Links](#)

[Links to Internet sites with information about girls.](#)

[Let Us Know What You Think](#)

[A feedback form.](#)

[Girl Tech Methodology](#)

[How and why we review Internet sites for girls.](#)

[back to the top!](#)

*"Women are like snowflakes. One alone may melt, but together we can stop traffic."*

Laura Liswood, Director Women's Leadership Project, Harvard University

*"Women's rights should not be separated issues because women's rights are human rights. Our issues impact men, children, culture...all aspects of life."*

U of M/Flint Town Hall Meeting & Women Matter Forum

*What is an advocate? ... An advocate is "one who pleads another's cause."*

The New Merriam-Webster Dictionary

### **Did you know...**

- Over 60% of female high school graduates go on to college?
- 1 in 3 girls participate in high school sports?
- In 1994, equal numbers of girls and boys, K - 12, excelled in mathematics courses, including Advanced Placement Calculus?

### **And,**

- Michigan ranks 34th of the 50 states and the District of Columbia on the proportion of its female labor force employed in professional and managerial occupations.
- 810,200 Michigan women suffer from osteoporosis.
- In 1992, homicide was the second leading cause of death among black females, age 1-14, and the leading cause of death between the ages of 15-34.
- Women account for 14% of the Michigan AIDS cases.
- It 's estimated that domestic violence costs companies between \$3-\$5 billion a year in lost productivity.

### **But did you know...?**

- 53% of girls are unhappy with their bodies by the age of 13; 78%; by the age of 18?
- 4,000,000 American women are physically abused each year?
- Approx. 33% of girls will be a victim of sexual assault before the age of 18? The statistics are much higher for girls in the Juvenile Justice System.
- 34% of 9th grade girls have seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year?
- Did you know 40,000 teenage girls drop out of high school each year due to pregnancy?

### **References:**

*Women's Voices '96: Solutions for a New Economy*, published by the Center for Policy Alternatives, Washington, DC

*The Status of Women in Michigan*, published by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, Washington, DC

The US Department of Labor

Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

## **Facts on Girls, School, Health, and Women in the Work World**

### **GIRLS, WOMEN, AND TECHNOLOGY**

- Women's average earnings in information technology, a field in which there is no historic wage gap, are still only 85% that of men. (American Association of University Women, *Tech Savvy: Educating Girls in the New Computer Age*, 2000)
- Only 127 Latinas took the 1999 Applied Placement computer science exam, making up less than 1% of all test takers. (American Association of University Women, *Tech Savvy: Educating Girls in the New Computer Age*, 2000)
- The top five fastest growing occupations between 1998 and 2008 are information technology occupations, which require advanced computer skills. However, girls enroll more in clerical and data entry computer courses, the contemporary equivalent of typing classes, than in advanced computer classes (Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment Projections*, 1999; American Institutes of Research, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children*, 1998).
- Girls consistently rate themselves lower on than boys on computer ability, and have less positive attitudes toward computers (American Institutes for Research, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children*, 1998).
- In 1998, girls made up only 17 percent of the high school students who took the advanced placement exam in computer science (*The New York Times*, September 1999).
- Women earn only 18 percent of doctorates in computer science in the United States (*The New York Times*, September 1999).
- Parents purchase technology twice as much for their sons as their daughters, while at school only a quarter of the students using computers during free time were girls (Girl Tech, "What's the Difference?," 1995, 2000).

### **GIRLS TODAY**

- 53% of girls said it is true that "people think the most important thing for girls to do is to get married and have children." (Girls Inc., *Taking the Lead: Girls' Rights in the 21st Century*, 2000)
- 62% of girls said that it is true that "in school boys think they have the right to discuss girls' bodies in public." (Girls Inc., *Taking the Lead: Girls' Rights in the 21st Century*, 2000)
- 47% of girls said it is true that "people think girls are weird if they plan to be firefighters or police officers." (Girls Inc., *Taking the Lead: Girls' Rights in the 21st Century*, 2000)
- 56% of girls said it is true that "girls are expected to speak softly and not cause trouble." (Girls Inc., *Taking the Lead: Girls' Rights in the 21st Century*, 2000)

### **GIRLS AND SCHOOL**

- Boys receive more praise, constructive criticism, and feedback from teachers than girls (American Institutes for Research, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children*, 1998).
- Teachers give boys more time to answer questions than girls, discouraging girls from participating in class discussions and undermining their self-confidence (American Institutes for Research, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children*, 1998).
- Gender role stereotypes, such as girls not having the ability to understand science and math, are often reinforced by teachers and students alike in the classroom (American Institutes for Research, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children*, 1998).
- The students that teachers report liking least are "aggressive girls" (Sadker and Sadker, *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls*, 1995; Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, 1992).

- Eighty-five percent of girls say they have been sexually harassed at school (American Association of University Women, *Hostile Hallways*, 1993).

#### **GIRLS AND HEALTH**

- Each year, nearly 1 million teenage women-10 percent of all women aged 15 to 19-become pregnant (The Alan Guttmacher Institute, *Facts in Brief: Teen Sex and Pregnancy*, 1999).
- Girls and young women aged 13 to 24 account for 49 percent of reported HIV cases (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, 1999).
- Only 54 percent of high school girls report exercising vigorously 3 or more times a week, compared to 72 percent of boys (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *1997 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance*, 1998).
- Ninety percent of all cases of eating disorders are found among girls and young women (National Council for Research on Women, *The Girls Report: What We Know and Need to Know About Growing Up Female*, 1998).

#### **WOMEN AND WORK**

- Women make up 46 percent of the workforce today. From 1998 to 2008, women's labor force growth will increase 15.3 percent, compared to 9.7 percent for men, increasing women's share of the workforce to 48 percent by 2008 (Fullerton, H. N., "Labor Force Projections to 2008: Steady Growth and Changing Composition," *Monthly Labor Review*, 1999).
- Despite making solid gains in corporate America, women still account for only 11.9 percent of corporate officers in the nation's top 500 companies, and only 41 of these companies have women filling more than a quarter of their corporate positions. Less than 15 percent of companies count a woman among their top five earners, with women holding only 77 of the 2,353 top-earner spots (Catalyst, *1999 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners*, 1999).