

## 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

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### 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

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#### **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.

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#### **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