

Fathers and daughters are a strange mix

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?A daughter needs a dad to be the standard against which she will judge all men.?

Parents, the world over, may not fully realize the role they play in their children's lives.

There are intricate dichotomies when it comes to fathers and sons and fathers and daughters. Since I?have two of the latter, I can offer some insights into dealing with girl children.

Right from the start let me tell you that while we have a ton of resources at our disposal these days (much more than previous generations), I don't think we're much better at the parenting thingy. Drawing upon our own childhoods may not be the best method. We basically go and grow on the fly, learning as we go. Unfortunately, we amass just enough knowledge about parenting when our job is done.

Studies show that men tend to spend more time with their sons than they do with their daughters. Some dads back away and get a bit scared of pre-teen and teen girl stuff. But it's a vital time in their lives so we need to put on the armour and get into battle.

While it's difficult to be ?perfect??role models, we have to exude decent qualities. We need to be open, honest and positive.

We need to answer questions honestly.

Verbal encouragement and always being there and ready to talk are also vital. Mark these pages in your parenting handbook.

There are many ?rules, recommendations, guidelines??and ?musts??when it comes to setting an example for our female children.

Here are just some of them.

It's important to love your spouse (their mom) and display this affection. Even if kids tell you it's gross, keep doing it, if only to embarrass them! But seriously, there's nothing wrong with open affection. I realize that some men still have difficulty showing their feelings, but guys, it's something to work on. And it's never too late. I was once a ?hopeless romantic,??and I'm guilty of letting that side of me slide over the years. There's no excuse.

It's important to always be available for girl children. It can be quality time, helping with homework, being the dutiful chauffeur and even watching her favourite movie with her.

Men tend to be reactive and solution-driven. While we can't all be superheroes, we need to come to our children's rescue from time to time. That means helping them out of a jam, getting up in the middle of the night to pick them up from somewhere they shouldn't be, etc. Take a deep breath and answer the call.

Enjoy the times together.

From my perspective I?love children and dogs when they're wee ones, before they talk back and ignore me! But I?have grown to love them at all stages (well not all). My eldest is 16 and she's becoming an adult. She's already scarce around the house with a part-time job, boyfriend and other commitments. How sad it is to turn around and find yourself staring out the window, wondering where the years went?

So, relish in every moment you have together.

Support her hobbies and sports. My eldest loves soccer and has tried almost every sport. I've been in the stands for many years. My

youngest has embarked on gymnastics and is quite proud of her weekly accomplishments. I have been known to leap from my seat and cheer loudly.

Girls will fight with their siblings and their mom. This is a very delicate matter. Some men choose to stay out of the fray and not choose sides. Being on the losing end more often than not, this is a continual learning experience ??I?got nothing to offer!

I?am told that a parent should not be their child's friend. I'm guilty of this. Perhaps it's a subconscious way of getting their approval. Boy that's weird.

I have a hard time saying ?no??to my girls.

They have a certain power and they know how to use it.

It's important to tell all the females in a man's life they're beautiful. There are so many pressures and media images telling the opposite, and putting a dent in girls' self-esteem. We need to give them a boost.

We've been lucky in that our kids all enjoy the great outdoors and elements of nature. I?think it's important to expose them to the environment at every opportunity. It gives them a much better appreciation of our planet and it's also a humbling experience.

Girls can do anything boys can do. We need to tell them that and encourage any activity they choose, whether it's math or soccer.

There are more and more females in upper-level management positions these days so why not encourage them to reach for the top?

As much as we all raise an eyebrow when our youngsters start belting out the songs, it's good that they enjoy music. Music is likely unique to our species and we may not find it anywhere else in the universe. It speaks to all of us. Let them sing, even if they can't!

When they enrol in anything from art class to Brownies to gymnastics, be there and show your support. It doesn't matter how many other dads are in the stands ? it's important that you are!

As independent as they are, they may crawl in bed with mom and dad after a nightmare, or simply for some reassurance. We all need it from time to time.

Some suggest maintaining a keepsake box or writing notes on important life issues and giving it to her when she leaves home.

Today she's walking to school, complete with an over-sized backpack, pink shoes and ponytails. Tomorrow she'll be off to university.

Don't miss the time in between.