

# INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose – No. 1 parenting educator



## Being a great dad

*Modern dads want to be close to their kids. They want to know what's going on in their kids' lives and they want to be hands on.*

Today, involvement in their kids' lives is the mantra of most fathers. Most men want to be more than breadwinners, and want to share in as many aspects of parenting as practical. They want to know what's going on in their kids' lives and they want to be hands on.

In fact, many dads tell me that they want a better relationship with their children, particularly their sons, than they had with their own fathers. Sadly, many men still don't enjoy a close relationship with their fathers, but they are determined to change things with their own kids.

Here are seven ideas to help you form close relationships with your kids, and maximise your effectiveness as a parent and a partner:

### 1. Find something in common with your kids

Dads related better with their children when they have something in common. Finding that common bond can be tricky though. Many men relate to their kids while being active, and teach many important lessons through games and play. But if sport is not your bag, find something else that you and your kids have in common.

A common interest is a great help for fathers who live apart from their kids who are looking to maximise the time they have with them.

### 2. Tell your sons you're proud of them

Boys want their dads to be proud of them. They just yearn to hear their dads say, "I'm so proud of you and what you do!" Some dads struggle getting those words out! It's not so much that they are not proud, it's just that many dads want their sons to be better. Some dads need to be careful not to push their sons too hard or turn every game into a lesson. That's when boys turn off their dads.

### 3. Don't wimp out on discipline

Dads are traditionally the kings of play, but they can go missing when it comes to discipline. They get their kids excited in a game before going to bed, then they expect their partner to settle them down. Both parents can take their share of managing children's behaviour.

### 4. Treat your daughters well

There are strong links between close fathering and the healthy development of girls. Dads teach their daughters strong lessons about how they should be treated by males. So dads need to treat their daughters respectfully so they learn to expect this treatment in their future relationships with men.

### 5. Say goodbye Superman, hello Clarke Kent

Adolescent boys are programmed to challenge their fathers. It's part

of growing up. Author John Marsden refers to this phenomenon as the 'old ram, young ram syndrome'. Verbal jousting matches are a popular father-son game in which boys take great delight in proving their fathers are fallible. A dad at this stage needs a sense of humour as well as a willingness to stand back and allow other mentors in to his son's life.

### 6. Support your partner

Fathers may play an integral part in the lives of their children but they also have a profound effect on the quality of mothering that children receive. A woman who can share the emotional and financial burdens of child-rearing with a supportive partner is more likely to be a loving, affirming mother.

### 7. Change as your child changes

They're children one day and teenagers the next. The most effective dads are those who change their parenting to suit the needs of their kids at each stage of development, rather than stubbornly hold to outmoded ideas of how they think their kids should be.

Fathers who are little apprehensive or lack sufficient confidence should become involved in as many aspects of parenting as they can. The best way to learn about parenting is by doing it.

By being alert, watchful and listening to their children fathers can learn all they need to know about parenting.



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