

What Daughters Really Want from their Fathers

This world sure could use more kindness, less strife, clearer appreciation of universalities, greater celebration of differences, a sweeter sense of time and a deeper connection with beauty. How, then, do we develop our humanity and inspire another generation to seek enlightenment and protect civilization? I wish I knew how to answer my own question. I do believe that we are all shaped by the relationships that etch the strongest impressions in us. The first and most enduring of these are also likely to have the deepest impact on how we grow to feel, think and act. Certainly the relationships between children and their parents are among the most primary that give shape to what kind of person we become. I was recently asked to offer some thoughts on the particular dynamics of daughters and their fathers. Foolish enough to accept the challenge, and ever thankful to my own daughter for teaching me the following ten humble lessons (among many others) that I could have, should have and only occasionally actually learned, I hope the following list resonates with your own experience and wisdom. I also believe that these suggestions, or their complements, hold true for the exquisite importance of relationship between either gender parent with either gender child.

Give her a daily hug packaged with a smile and an “I love you”

From infancy through adolescence, every child needs to feel special, first and longest of all to their parent. The honesty and feeling communicated through these simple acts of love give children a boost of confidence and hope as they venture out on their day's activities.

Ask about and listen to her feelings with genuine interest - and give advice judiciously

Sit down for a few minutes and show your child that she truly matters to you. Ask what's in store for her today (or at the end of a day, how her day went). Listen intently and don't give any unsolicited advice. Take advantage of unexpected instances when she directly asks for your guidance (Chances are, your daughter really respects your opinions. Chances are, too, she'll never tell you that.). Before you answer, you might first ask her how she's seeing the choices herself and what she's unsure about.

Care enough to say “No” when she asks for permission to do something neither one of you is sure is a good idea.

Sometimes kids feel pushed to do things they don't really feel ready for or may not even want to do. Know when to set safe limits and how to encourage healthy stretching that could lead to growth.

Give her lessons on riding a bike, driving a car or anything else she wants to learn

These are happy, proud memories that she'll keep all her life. These teaching moments will remind her that people acknowledge her interests. They will also help give her the confidence to attempt to master challenges that reap great rewards now and in the future.

Enthusiastically attend her school, sports and arts events

These are moments that you will laugh about in remembering and retelling for years to come. She may not need you to be there in order to perform or achieve her goals, but her achievements will feel so much greater for your presence and her disappointments will be softened by your sympathy and encouragement.

Play when invited

Believe it or not, there will be times when she will want you to be the one to share some fun game, chore or

challenge. If you're available or can ask her to wait for you, you'll both grow closer and, through the experience shared, will likely learn something important about each other.

Make her feel that she is the smartest, prettiest, best and most unique girl in the world

Children who, from their earliest years, hear consistent praise and appreciation for their special qualities, develop a positive sense of self that they bring to expectations for their ever expanding relationships and efforts. They are also more likely to show respect to peers, teachers and partners and become successful and popular in life.

Go on an occasional date together

Though it doesn't have to involve much expense or effort, take opportunities to do something with or go someplace special to your daughter. Treating her with respect, admiration and affection will make her feel terrific and help her to expect to be treated that way by people she may feel especially attached to later in life. These private occasions are also great times to share your own precious memories of important events and relationships that hold a poignant place in your heart. Your daughter will get to know and love you all the more.

Offer a shoulder to cry on

If you are there when some distress or crisis occurs, you will soften the blow, shorten the recovery time and secure the most important lesson to learn from disappointment – that I may have slipped and fallen but I am still and always loved, valued and able to learn from experience.

Model how to treat others, especially women

Remember that you are the first and maybe the most formative role model for your daughter to learn how men and women treat and relate to one another. Will you teach her to expect to receive and reciprocate respect, equality, dignity and caring?

If all else fails, send money.