

How Dads Teach Values

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"No man can possibly know what life means, what the world means, what anything means, until he has a child and loves it. Then the whole universe changes and nothing will ever again seem exactly as it seemed before."

Rudy spent two days camping with his father last month and then a day with him on bring-your-son-to-work day. The special days didn't include detailed plans, but Rudy remembers a lot about them. Those of us who went to work with our fathers have a special place for that memory.

Rudy told his teacher about it: "Dad's a dispatcher. He says you have to be careful to get it right and to get along with the other people." Rudy remembers nearly all the details of his day at Dad's work. Rudy's father probably did not intend to teach Rudy anything specific, but during his time with Rudy he was sharing his values and his example.

How are you handling this important aspect of character-building? Here's a checklist:

1. Are you more often the encourager or the critic?

It is tempting to react to the mistakes of others and forget to recognize the other person's successes. The father who chooses the role of encourager improves the family atmosphere and has a closer relationship with his kids. The critic builds distance and an unhappy family.

2. Are you available to listen or more often in a hurry and distracted? There's more to conversation than just what is said. It sends many messages including how much one person values the other. Chances to be close to a child or especially a teen are missed when a father is overly talkative about his concerns or silently aloof when his son or daughter has the airways. An available parent will be blessed with available children.

3. Are you more often a model of cooperation or competition? Fathers have usually experienced a competitive world and want to provide their children with a strong spirit for success. Yet Rudy's busy father emphasized cooperation so that Rudy would have a social life to enjoy as well as things.



Rudy's Dad was sharing his values and his example

4. Are you more often a man with time available for your kids or a man with other priorities? The priorities of love are best assessed not by words but sharing your time.

What values do you want to model for your son, daughter, or student? Try keeping a diary for two weeks to note how you spend your time with your child or teen. What values do you think will come through? How do you model those values?

Source: www.parentsuccess.com

Some bearpits for the unwary...

Overindulgence

- Build resilience by helping your son or daughter fight the little battles against pampering himself with food, phones, fads, computer and television.
- Help your child see at every opportunity that we should not build our happiness on things, but in generous love for others.
- Model a positive attitude; avoid complaining and dwelling on criticism. Teach the virtues of working hard, of physical toughness and endurance. Make light of tiredness and inconvenience. Be mindful of the words of John Paul II about his own father: "He was so tough on himself he never needed to be tough on me"

Self centredness

- Help your son or daughter discover the duty we have to help others in need, and the happiness that comes from serving others. They will need a good heart as well as well grooved habits of service. Teach the link between generosity and happiness.
- Teach your children to be grateful. Show your own gratitude readily.

Poor preparation for human relationships

- Prepare your son and daughter for permanent relationships of love. Teach that love is giving of oneself. Teach the difference between feelings/impulses and deliberate decisions.
- Insist on loyalty and on taking full responsibility for all decisions that one makes. Teach a sex education that goes beyond biology to commitment and the spiritual dimension. Talk to your son about respect for women and model it... put your wife on a pedestal.
- Invest much creativity in homelife.

Underchallenged and therefore underdeveloped

- Develop a loving demandingness. Ask more of your son or daughter than last year. Be consistent with your wife's expectations and talk out different approaches so that you are both in synch. Have high but loving expectations and remember that close follow up of expectations takes generosity. "Kids respect what we inspect."

Superficial faith

- Gandhi said, 'There is more to life than increasing its speed'. Look for the spiritual dimension to life... and death. Once we are attuned to the spiritual, we are awake to community and family. We cannot fulfil ourselves in isolation, no matter how hard we try. Those who do not experience the self-gift and affection of others remain tragically unfulfilled. This operates on at least three levels: the parent-child bond, the spousal bond and, for many, the creature-creator bond.
- If we want to pass on faith to children we must develop habits of prayer and pass these on. Take the advice of an older daughter who once said to her father: 'Talk less to your son about God and more to God about your son.'
- Talk about our calling to holiness and how that should colour all our actions in our lives.