Great Dads Provide Security For Their Children

I do not spend as much time with my children as I would like. I am a professional father and my work often keeps me in the office late hours and I am away from home about one week a month. The time that I spend with my children is limited, so the quality of that time must be of the highest importance.

My children are young, neither are school age, but I can tell you with certainty, based on my experience as a high school teacher and now a Head Start director working primarily with adults, that the foundations of connection provided by Dr. Becky Bailey and Conscious Discipline create strong connections, which produce security and lead to willingness.

Each initial interaction I have with my children, either in the morning when I leave for work, when return in the evening, or when I come back from a work trip has four components: Eye contact, touch, presence and a playful situation. When I began to learn about the power of connections, I used models from the book, *I Love You Rituals*, by Becky Bailey to provide a framework. Now these interactions come naturally to me.

My son was born with a breathing concern and his mom had a difficult birth process which meant that I was the only parent able to accompany him on a flight to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and spend the first days of his life with him. He was my first child and really my first actual experience with a baby. I always pictured myself raising a self-sufficient child that could take care of himself and could handle what life threw at him. This vision included being a no nonsense father who wasn't emotional and left dealing with tears and diapers to mom. I found myself in a situation where I needed to provide 100% of the emotional support my young child needed and that reality did not align with my perception of what a father is.

My transformation was not immediate and I continue to grow every day to become an emotionally responsive father. I can say with certainty however that my initial perception of a good father was incomplete. Children that receive emotional support from caregivers develop into more successful adults.

Parents are the first and most important teachers of their children. For dads, this means that children will not only learn what is taught directly, like how to tie their shoes or clean a fish, but by who you are. Daughters learn what a good relationship looks like from her father and will generally seek a partner of similar character to her father. Sons model themselves after their father’s character and will be a reflection of his father’s choices.

Providing security for your children means more than just food, shelter and safety from physical harm. Dads must foster strong connections with their children to create emotional security, which will lead to strong future connections. These connections are what will help you and your children get through difficult times. If you find yourself struggling to build a positive relationship with your child, connection is what is lacking.
When I ask her pick up her toys my three year old daughter will sometimes still look at me with angry eyebrows and say with a deep raspy voice, “go away bad daddy”. However, I can happily report that by using the principles of connection- eye contact, touch, presence and a playful situation- the frequency of her randomly hugging my leg and saying is a sweet little voice, “good daddy”, is increasing.

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