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never underestimate the power of caring

Father's Day

It is a wise father that knows his own child.

—William Shakespeare, playwright

Every June, Father's Day appears. The challenge for parents, however, is to not have unrealistic expectations about the holiday that result in a letdown. To make Father's Day more meaningful, consider these ideas.

Tips for . . .

All parents

- Instead of thinking of the holiday as one that celebrates only dads, think of it as a family day. What activities can you do as a family to enjoy being together? If you don't have custody of your child today, call your child and say hello.
- Hang out with your kids today. Join in with what they enjoy doing, such as shooting hoops, playing video games, or making something together. If you don't know how to play a certain video game, ask your child to teach you.
- Tell stories about what you love or admire about your kids. Remember times when they were younger that made you proud.

Parents with children ages birth to 5

- Spend time playing with your kids today. Dr. Stanley Greenspan says that spending 30 minutes of floor time (getting down on the floor and playing with your kids) has the most benefits. Instead of dictating what to play, ask your children what they want to do, and play on their terms.
- Go on an outing with your child that gets your child excited, such as visiting the zoo, going to a playground, or seeing an exhibit at a children's museum.
- Follow the timeframe of your child. Young children thrive on routine, and they need naps, snacks, downtime, and stimulating time. Make sure your Father's Day activities fit into their routines.

Parents with children ages 6 to 9

- Do an activity at home that your child would love for you to participate in, such as building a fort in the living room. Make a fort out of blankets draped over chairs. Crawl in the fort with your child and read picture books aloud by flashlight.
- Visit or call your dad. Show your kids how important all the generations are by staying in touch in some way.
- If you're a mom, encourage your kids to make Father's Day cards and gifts. Or take your kids shopping to buy something for Dad. If Dad is out of the picture, consider doing something to celebrate Grandpa.

Parents with children ages 10 to 15

- Encourage your kids to do something nice for Dad, such as washing his car, helping out with his garden, going fishing with him, or giving him a neck rub.
- Realize that preteens can be moody, so don't let your child's mood determine how good or bad Father's Day turns out. If your child isn't in a good mood, be patient and focus more on another child or another activity.
- If your children don't have much (or any) contact with their dad, connect with another positive male role model, such as a grandpa, an uncle, a neighbor, or someone in your congregation. All kids need male and female role models, and the more they have, the better.

Parents with children ages 16 to 18

- Watch for subtle clues from your teenager about how much he or she wants to connect. For example, if your family goes out to a movie, ask your teenager whom he or she wants to sit with. Don't be surprised if your teenager wants to sit far from your family—or if your teenager insists on sitting with only one sibling or one parent (and no one else in the family). Respect your teen's wishes.
- Think back to when you were a teenager. What kind of relationship did you have with your dad? How does that relationship affect your relationship with your child?
- Organize an outing with your teenager's best friend and his or her father. Go out to eat. Go to a concert together. Do something fun that everyone will enjoy.

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