

Being The Man You Want Your Daughter To Marry

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Recently I have been forced to re-evaluate my social coolness. In the past I felt I was a smart, hip and an in touch guy, but I stress that this was in the past. It might help if I explained that our house now consists of my wife - Andrea, three daughters - Emma, Sydney and Bailey, a nanny, our female dog - Molly, Lucky the cat (it does not really matter if it is a male or female it is a cat) and me.

Each day and often many times in a day, I find that I am dealing with emotions and attitudes that I just do not understand. Andrea continues to point out that my struggles are related to the fact that I was not raised as a daughter. She also tells me that many times there is nothing to fix. And I began to think that maybe this was all her job. It was clear, I did not understand so many things that were going on in my home. Given this fact, I have been doing a lot of reading lately to try and understand why it is that I can feel so far out of step with the world that has become my life.

It came as a complete shock that what I expected to validate for myself, that this really was my wife's responsibility, was in fact all wrong. In everything I read, one point came through very loud and clear...as men, we have amazing power, or more importantly an amazing responsibility to help our daughters grow into emotionally strong beings. Dr Meg Meeker says in her book, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*, that we must help our daughters find balance between their feelings, reason, and will. Fathers must embrace and share their wisdom, their life experience and their values to help their daughters develop their own sound moral compass. A moral compass that our daughters can then draw upon as the voice of reason when dealing with life issues as well as their own emotions and feelings. So how do we do that and stay sane?

As fathers our goal should be that our daughters are able to recognize good boys and men. To do this, we must be intentional in our role modeling of the behaviors we want them to evaluate. It is at home that we have so much influence and can provide the basis for comparison as our daughters mature. Below is a list of eleven things I aspire to do better and feel a father should do if he wants to have a positive influence in his daughter's maturation.

1. **Remember that we have earned the right to be wrong** - As a father, being able to own up to and laugh at our mistakes, teaches our daughters that they too are allowed to make them and still be worthy of love.
2. **Show respect for women** - The way we speak to all women, with our words and our body language, teaches our daughters what they should accept from the men that come into their lives.
3. **Work to teach problem solving** - Intentionally slow the process with your daughter down. Allow her to explain to you what happened or what is wrong. After she has shared all the information she feels is important, ask her what she can do to fix the situation, instead of just telling her what to do, and how sorry you are that she had to deal with that issue at all.
4. **Make sure to schedule "daddy and me" alone time** - One night in the fall and one night in the spring, take each of your daughters on a one-on-one get away. Eat what she likes, cannon ball in the pool and watch a movie of her choice as you fall asleep in the hotel. You will find these times become some of your most prized memories, while teaching your daughter she has the right to be treated special.
5. **Have a song** - Have a song that you can both sing anytime you are alone together. It sure can be a mood changer when you need one. By the way, it is ok to teach your favorite dance to them as well.
6. **Do not let work be more important** - You will not make it to everything, but make everything you can...sports, dances, birthday parties, plays, proms, have it be the exception not the rule when you are not present for big events. And when you cannot be there, do something so your presence is felt.
7. **Hear what your daughter is trying to say not just the words she is using** - Ask her questions so you really understand what the real issue is. Your questions many times help bring the real issue into focus for her.
8. **Wrestle** - Do not be afraid to grab, hug and rough house a bit with your daughter. They do not hate it nearly as much as they seem and that physical contact also helps them know that they are stronger than they think.
9. **If you say it, do it** - Do not allow your daughter to believe something you know is not going to happen. Create an environment where she can learn to have appropriate expectations and that those who do not keep their word, as a rule, are not people who she wants to be around or trust.
10. **Teach good team sportsmanship** - It sets her up to understand the value of competition, rules and the importance of fair play each play. It also teaches her that it is not the winning or losing but how she handles each that makes her a respected athlete.
11. **Discipline**- Make sure it is always about appropriately modifying behavior and never about intimidation, anger or retaliation.

"Certain is it that there is no kind of affection so purely angelic as of a father to a daughter. In love to our wives there is desire; to our sons, ambition; but to our daughters there is something which there are no words to express." - Joseph Addison

On second thought, maybe I am cooler than I think!!!

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Suggested Reading

Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters - Meg Meeker MD, Go Girl - Hannah Storm, Dads and Daughters - Joe Kelly Butterfly Kisses - Bob Carlisle, Siblings Without Rivalry - Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish