

Rural Response for Healthy Children

10 + 1 Tips to Be an Involved Father

1. Support and respect the mother of your children.

By both mother and father showing respect for each other, children grow up in a secure, nurturing environment. Romance and strengthen your relationship as a couple, keeping channels of communication open. Children learn from this openness and likewise gain respect for themselves and others.

2. Work together as a team, sharing equally in all childrearing tasks.

Get up at night to help look after your child. Take an active role in supportive fathering of the breastfed baby if your child is newborn. Discuss with your partner concerns and issues you have about your child's health, safety and development. Realise that your partnership means a father's active involvement as well as mother's.

3. Spend time with your children.

Read to your child. Play with him or her. Attend your child's school events, music recitals or sports events. Participate in the school classroom or assist with a field trip. Do an organised activity together such as hockey or gymnastics. Have fun together doing chores around the home and let your child help out in his or her own way. Also, just spend some quiet time together. Children want your involvement in their lives and need you in order to help develop their own sense of confidence. Putting your children first may mean reprioritizing your life. The rewards are great and will last a lifetime for both you and your child.

4. Show love and affection toward your child.

Be committed to your child's emotional wellbeing. Encourage and teach your child to live a life of intimacy and integrity with respect for others. Reward your child's desirable behaviour and be prepared to offer guidance for less positive behaviour. Establishing boundaries, setting reasonable limits and disciplining in a fair manner might be necessary on occasion. Children need to understand how their behaviour may affect others. This understanding is reflected in a secure, loving and caring relationship with you.

5. Protect your family.

Enjoy the physical maturation of your child and be aware of your child's immunization record and visits to the family doctor or dentist. Your child's health is as much your responsibility as that of your child's mother. If necessary, childproof the home environment, making secure items that may be potentially dangerous to the child. Teach "street smart" skills and how your child can learn to take care of him/herself if necessary. Educate your child to the world outside the home so that he/she is prepared.

6. Spend time together as a family.

Share a meal together on a daily basis. While eating, listen to your children and encourage them to talk about their day. Provide them with support and advice as to how to cope with various situations they experienced. You may also want to consider visiting friends and relatives as a family. Go bowling, swimming, skating, fishing, etc. together. Attend a community event. Ask your children to help plan a family vacation and let them assist you in organizing it. Help your children develop good judgment relative to the TV by letting them help or choose a video or TV show and watch it together. Ideas for family activities are numerous and help a child experience fun with a sense of warmth and security. These feelings will enrich your child's life as he or she grows.

7. Tell your story.

Your history, that of your parents and your own family, can be interesting to your child. A young child often feels the world began at his/her birth. By your reflections on your past, you provide your child with the intriguing sense of history and of past generations. You need not tell all the details of your history, but only those which leave your child with the feeling that you too were once a child and you grew up and became an involved father.

8. Promote and encourage your place of work to be father-friendly.

Organize a father's day event with your colleagues such as a dad's picnic. Have photographs of your family displayed at work and take along pictures your children have made. If possible, promote a "bring your child to work" day. Schedule in your day planner time to be at home with your child doing homework, attending school or seeing a movie together. Educate your children to your work environment and tell them the importance of work for you. They will better understand when they see you are working for them and to meet the needs of your family.

9. Be an example.

Model to your child manners, honesty and self-discipline. Earn the right to be listened to by your children. Remember, your child is watching you and your interactions with others. Setting a nurturing example, you can promote a feeling of acceptance and respect in your own child.

10. Being an involved father is for life.

Your children will grow up and perhaps eventually will have children of their own. Your participation in their lives and those of their children is ongoing. Fatherhood is a lifelong commitment and your relationship with your child is forever.

10+1. Dads can do it!

Believe in yourself and your potential to be an active, caring father. Every child deserves a loving, involved father.

