

10 Essentials for the Successful Dad

Have you ever had a job that didn't have clear responsibilities and expectations spelled out for you? It's frustrating when you can't seem to get a handle on what you need to do to be successful in the job at hand.

Whether you're new at being a dad or a seasoned veteran, you know it's a job, a really big job that's not for the faint of heart. I've often said that *being a dad is actually our most important job*. But I've yet to hear of a hospital that hands out a job description to dads when their child is born.

So, to help you in your most important job, here's your job description with 10 essentials that will help you succeed:

1. Love your wife. Actively loving your wife is incredibly beneficial to your children. The number one source of security for kids is when they know that their dad loves their mom and is committed to her for life.

And remember that your spouse is not the enemy. You are on the same team. When my wife, Susan, and I have disagreements over things like disciplining our children or finances, she'll often say to me, "Remember, I'm on your team." Marriage is the ultimate team sport. You and your spouse were designed to complete each other, not compete with each other.

If you are not married to your child's mother, your patience and kindness toward her are still crucial to your kids.

2. Spend time with your kids. How you spend your time is a reflection of what's important to you. You value your kids by being with them and making memories that will last a lifetime. As my five kids were growing up, I tried to be intentional about spending one-on-one time with each of them doing things

that they enjoyed. I often put those times on my calendar as very important appointments. Remember, it's not just about quality time; it's about quantity time.

3. Be a role model. I cannot overstate the importance of a father modeling the type of behavior he desires in his children. Role models don't just talk the talk; they walk the walk of honor. Want to be your children's hero? Then be what you want your children to be. [Click to Tweet] These 5 Ways Parents Can Be a Role Model for Kids will help you be a good model for your kids to follow.

4. Understand and enjoy your children. Like you, every child has unique DNA, unique fingerprints, and a unique personality. In order to be the best father you can be, you'll need to understand your children as individuals and learn to show them you appreciate what makes them unique. Take note of what each of your children needs from you the most. One may need encouragement. Another may respond better with affection. Kids grow up quickly, so just enjoy being with them.

5. Show affection. Children long for a secure place in this fast-paced world. They find it most often in the warm embrace of a parent. As children grow, so does their need for acceptance and a sense of belonging. Dads meet that need in a way no one else can when he offers a hug or a kind word, and expresses his appreciation and love for his children. If nothing else, make sure to say, "I love you" every day.

6. Secure your family's financial future. Financial stress is one of the leading factors that tears families apart. In order to put your family in a position of strength, you have to shore up your finances. First, hate debt. Do everything you can to get out of it as quickly as possible. Then, make sure you establish a budget that not only trims expenses but also allows you to save and share with those in need. Have proper insurance. Finally, make sure you live and teach these frugal principles to your children as well.

7. Eat together as a family. Most children today don't know the meaning of a family dinnertime. Yet the communication and unity built during this time is integral to a healthy family life. Sharing a meal together—breakfast, lunch or dinner—provides structure to an often hectic schedule. It also gives kids the opportunity to talk about their lives. This is a time for fathers to listen as well as give advice and encouragement.

8. Discipline with a gentle spirit. True discipline is a function of a father's love for his children, which is why it should never be hard-nosed or harsh. The goal of discipline is not to intimidate or tear down, but to mold and correct. Correcting your kids should be done in private, and you and your wife should be unified in how you discipline. Strive to be consistent.

9. Pray and worship together. Families that have a healthy prayer life and take worshiping God seriously help their children understand that there is an ultimate authority in their lives—an authority who loves them and who provides moral absolutes for them to live by. Every child needs to know that there is right and wrong, good and evil. Living under the authority of God will give them that knowledge.

10. Realize you're a father forever. Someday every father must let go. As he allows his children their freedom to direct their own lives, a good father realizes that he doesn't abandon them at a dorm room, a wedding altar, or the door of their first job. He continues to love, encourage, coach and convey his wisdom to his children forever.

These 10 essentials were taken from my book, *All Pro Dad*. For more on how to be a successful dad, I encourage you to get your copy today.

What else would you offer as essentials for a father's job description? We welcome your comments below.

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