

# 4 Things to Remember When on a Date With Your Daughter

It's challenging being the father of a daughter. But it's even more challenging when you're the father of a 14-year-old stepdaughter.

My stepdaughter Faythe's biological father abandoned her when she was only 6, and it shattered her tender heart into a million pieces. So when I married her mom, she had very little trust for men. And now I was considered the new man on the block who was stealing her mom's attention and affection.

I knew I wasn't going to get anywhere with Faythe until I was able to earn her trust and win her heart. And I accomplished this by regularly taking her out on daddy-daughter dates.

I must confess, I had no idea how to go about dating my daughter until my mentor, a father of five boys and three girls, gave me some advice that not only transformed my relationship with my now 14-year-old stepdaughter but ultimately earned me the right to be called her "daddy."

For dads looking for the perfect night out with their daughter, here are four things to remember.

**1. Make it safe.** Make sure your daughter knows she can share anything with you, and you won't criticize or be angry with her when she does. This is critical in building trust and learning her heart. Personally, I try to pretend I'm Faythe's wise friend, not her worried dad.

**2. Learn to ask questions.** You can't win your daughter's heart if you don't know what's going on in her heart. Having been an educator for more than 23 years, I've learned the art of asking children open-ended questions and following up to learn more. Here are just a few questions you can ask your daughter

to get the conversation started:

- What's made you the happiest (been the most fun) at school this past week?
- What's been the latest drama at school?
- What's gotten you angry or upset recently?
- What have you been struggling with lately?
- What's coming up soon that you're really excited about?

**3. Make it mostly about her.** Your actions with your daughter will always speak louder than your words. So resist doing most of the talking by doing most of the listening. The more your daughter talks, the more you'll learn; so keep the focus and spotlight on her as much as possible. This will also make her feel valuable and loved.

**4. Speak a building block of truth into her life.** During the date, always try to speak something positive into your daughter's future that affirms, encourages and reminds her of her value. For instance, "You're growing into a beautiful young woman, and some man is going to be so lucky to marry you someday."

And just for good measure, I personally end every daddy-daughter date by holding Faythe's hand and praying over what we've talked about during our time together. I try to keep the prayer short and just about her.

I truly believe, if you do these four simple things during your daddy-daughter dates, not only will you earn your daughter's trust and win her heart, you'll also set a high standard for any man who tries to do the same in the future.

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