

Dad, Here's Why You Want Your Daughter to Push Back and Fight

Most dads I've talked with tell me they want their daughters to grow up to be confident, empowered, emotionally healthy women who are strong in their morals, convictions, and beliefs. But what happens when your daughter pushes the boundaries at every turn and challenges the values you are trying to instill, despite your best efforts?

Let me tell you the story about a 24-year-old young woman named Danielle.

Danielle is the youngest of four children and is one of those girls who has always loved to push the boundaries—whether at home, at school or in relationships. Simultaneously, she is a self-proclaimed “Daddy’s Girl” who says that the worst thing imaginable would be to disappoint her dad.

Honestly, Danielle has contributed to the bountiful population of gray hair on the heads of both her mom and dad. And all three of them would tell you that the highs and lows of life have been way more extreme than any of them would ever have chosen or thought possible.

Yet somewhere in the midst of six to seven very challenging years, **Danielle has emerged into a young woman who has now found her voice.** She has gone from being a self-described “victim” to an assertive, bold, straightforward, confident, gutsy young woman.

She would tell you that none of this would have been possible without her parents’ support. More specifically, she would tell you that none of this would have been possible had her dad pulled away and stopped loving her through the process.

In her own words Danielle says, *"Truthfully, I think that had my dad pulled away and stopped loving me through the hell I put him and my mom through, I would have lost myself even more than I did. And to even think about that being a possibility back then, is a scary thought."*

So here you are as a dad who wants to launch your daughter into adulthood in the best way possible. But, sometimes I've discovered that dads with this intention are also the same dads who want their daughters at home to:

- Obey without question
- Compliantly follow their rules
- Stop most (or all) intense emotion, and
- Not use their voices to assert themselves, especially if it's in opposition to her parents values

Dad, if you truly want to assist your daughter in her voice-finding venture, here's something to keep in the forefront of your mind:

"You can't tell her that you want her to use her voice out in the world if you aren't willing to let her practice finding it, using it and honing it at home."

I realize that it's hard work to listen when you have no margin after a long day.

I understand that it's *hard work* to stay calm when she's wordy or mouthy.

I acknowledge the fact that it's *hard work* to track with her when her emotional intensity is as unpredictable as the weather and seems to come at the most inopportune times ...

"But, if you want to raise a daughter who is vibrant, healthy and confident, then you must gently and respectfully respond and interact while she is learning to use that amazing voice of hers."

Yes, this will take a boatload of strength on your part, especially when you want her to stop wrestling through the tough issues of life—from rules or guidelines to spiritual questions to boundaries. **Just keep reminding yourself that if you want her to be strong and bold, then you as her dad have to set the foundation for her to be a critical thinker by going through these ups and downs with her.**

- Be her sounding board as she talks things out.
- Be patient with her in the process of figuring out what she thinks, believes, wants, needs, and dreams about, especially when it deviates from your hopes and ideals.
- Be a role model of patient steadiness, remembering that she will change her mind probably a dozen more times in the next few years regarding what she thinks, believes, wants, needs, and dreams about.

She'll come through it one way or another. And with your loving acceptance she'll figure it out, even if she's off course here and there on that journey (according to your values or timetable, that is).

Like Danielle says, "If there is one piece of advice I could give other dads struggling with their relationship with their daughter, it would be to NEVER give up on her and NEVER make her feel anything less than a beautiful deserving young woman that can accomplish anything she wants to in life. Maybe she will shut you out at first, but that doesn't mean you should give up on her. She needs someone to fight for her and show her she is worth so much more."

As your daughter matures, she will be all over the map in knowing how to properly use her voice. But like anything in life, the only way to gain expertise is with practice.

Let her practice using her voice with you, Dad. {eo}

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years. She is founder of The Abba Project, a 9-month group forum that is designed to equip dads with daughters ages 13 to 30 to dial in with more intention and consistency, and has recently released her first book entitled, Dad, Here's What I Really Need from You: A Guide for Connecting with Your Daughter's Heart. She invites you to visit for more information and to sign up for her weekly Dad-Daughter Friday blogs, where she provides practical tools so that every dad in America can become the action hero they want to be and their daughters need them to be. You can also follow or send feedback on Facebook and Twitter.

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