

Dad, This Is How to Make Your Daughter Feel Like a Princess

"I wish I could be a princess," my 9-year-old niece Amy said longingly as we walked out of the theater after seeing *Princess Diaries* starring Anne Hathaway back in 2001.

I'll never forget the faraway look in Amy's eyes as she expressed her secret wish to be in the same place as Mia Thermopolis, whose fairy tale came true after being plucked from obscurity upon discovering that she was the heir apparent to the crown of Genovia, a small fictional kingdom in Europe.

My theory as to why this movie struck box office gold, yielding \$165.3 million, was that it captured the heart longings of many girls (young and old) as their fantasies were captured on the big screen.

As my niece Amy twirled around in the foyer that day, still in her post-movie daze, I tried to tell her about something beyond the fairy tale, about the way we can be women who use our platforms to influence the world for good, whether or not we're a tiara-donning princess. I'm not so sure she fully grasped my lesson in her pre-adolescent stage of development, but I did my best to make the most of a teachable moment.

This weekend the entire world was transfixed about seeing a real-life princess story unfold as Meghan Markle married Prince Harry in London, England.

Now you as a dad may think this whole thing is a bit silly and sensationalized, but I assure you that your daughter (and perhaps other women you know) may have a different opinion. In fact, I just read an article describing the royal wedding as "one of the most anticipated events of the year" with a play-by-play timeline of the entire day, starting with guests arriving at 9 a.m. GMT/4 a.m. EST up until the bride arrives

at 11:59 a.m. GMT/6:59 a.m. EST, with only one minute to spare when the wedding was slated to begin promptly at 12 p.m. GMT/7 a.m. EST. Whew. that's precision, wouldn't you say?

I have to ask myself what it is about this type of romantic story that captivates women around the world.

In my research with teen and 20-something girls, I asked them whether they ever longed to be a princess. I was told repeatedly that there is something in the heart of a girl where she longs to be chosen above all the rest.

Essentially, she yearns to know that she is uniquely special, that she stands out from other girls in a way that sets her apart. She doesn't want to blend in with the crowd; she wants to be cherished and loved just for being herself, even when less than perfect.

Then I asked these girls an even more important question: How can your dad make you feel more like royalty, like a princess?

I believe you'll find their responses informative as you glean from their input and apply it to your own relationship with your daughter:

- "I would love to hear my dad say how he really feels about me and express his enjoyment in being around me."
- "I wish he would spend more time with me."
- "Maybe reach out to see how I'm doing more consistently instead of the other way around."
- "Encourage my dreams without telling me they're impractical or too unrealistic."
- "My dad already treats me that 'm his little girl, always."
- "He could just out of nowhere—and for no reason other than to make me feel those things—just send a little letter or note or message saying that he loves me, thinks I am special, accepts me, and enjoys who I am. Just to hear his honesty about what he thinks about me

and when he thinks about me makes me feel all of those things.”

- “I think one of the biggest things is when he helps me to see my strength, my beauty, my talent, my uniqueness and when he shows me that I am a woman to be cherished and pursued by doing just that.”
- “Anything my dad does to just let me know he is thinking about me or wants to spend time with me means a lot and makes me feel honored, like a princess.”

So Dad, why not use the royal wedding this weekend as a conversation starter to delve into those distinctive places tucked deep inside your daughter. If you ask, I imagine she’ll share her thoughts.

Here are some questions to get the dialogue started as you pursue her intentionally and celebrate her longings with her:

1. As a little girl (or even now) were you drawn to movies about princesses? Who were your favorite characters and why?
2. Now that you’re older, do you ever think about being a princess anymore? If you did bring “the princess” back into your life, what would that look like for you?
3. Can you think of any ways I could make you feel more like a princess?
4. If I were to fill up your love tank by making you feel more loved and special and accepted and enjoyed, what could I do specifically to make you feel those things now in your life?

Have fun helping your daughter feel like a princess, because it’s always a good time to bring the princess back. {eo}

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magazines (online and print), as well as her own bi-monthly Dad-Daughter Friday blog. In 2014 she released her first book titled Dad, Here's What I Really Need From You: A Guide for Connecting With Your Daughter's Heart and hosts a weekly radio program in her hometown of Portland, Oregon called "The Dad Whisperer." You can reach her at drmichellewatson@. Visit for more information.

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