

Dad, What Is a Good Way to Connect With Your Daughter?

How do you connect with your daughter?

Earlier this year, some research came out of Baylor University with some powerful insights for fathers. The researchers found that the best bonding times for dads and daughters—and what often become positive turning points in those relationships—are *shared activities*.

Take note, dad. When asked about moments when they really felt connected to their dads, daughters commonly mentioned the time when they began to play a sport. Their dads quickly jumped in and became the primary practice partner. And it's natural for dads to stay involved to help their daughters develop skills and learn lessons about competition, taking risks, and standing up for themselves.

Most of all, when dads made the effort to help coach or work on the skill with them, it made the daughters feel important—the *center of their dad's attention*.

To be clear, this isn't all about sports. Other shared activities daughters mentioned include working on a project and taking a trip together. Those experiences helped them feel connected to their dads. And often, spending that time together led to great conversations about all kinds of subjects.

Now, here's what I believe is even more interesting about this. The professor at Baylor noted that these shared activities tap into the *masculine* style of building closeness. Guys often relate more easily while *doing* things together (side-by-side), where the feminine approach is more about connecting by *talking*, (face-to-face).

Allow me to challenge you here, dad. The fact that your daughter is probably willing to do activities and sports and work on projects with you is a good thing. Maybe without knowing it, she's accommodating your male communication style.

But let's not look at this study, say, "That's cool," and quickly move on with life as we know it. It's pretty clear that daughters enjoy those activities with their dads because *they get more access to him, and the activities lead to more open communication.*

So, if *they* are willing to come over into our world a little bit, shouldn't we be eager to do the same? Those one-on-one, face-to-face conversations our daughters thrive on might not be easy for many of us, but aren't our girls worth the effort?

So look for more opportunities to do things with your daughter. If she isn't into sports, maybe join a club or take a class. Start a hobby together. The study mentioned one dad who took singing lessons so he could be in a school talent show with his daughter. I'm sure she was glowing when they performed.

And for those of you who don't have a daughter, keep using that side-by-side approach with your sons also. It's when you're doing things together that the real bonding occurs.

So, dads of daughters, what has worked for you? What special activities do you share with your daughter? Please leave a comment below.

Action Points for Dads on the Journey

- Ask your child what sport or other activity he or she would like to do together—or learn together. Then make plans to do it, even if it requires you to stretch and learn something new.
- Put a regular one-on-one outing on your calendar with each of your children. You'll be surprised how much they

open up when it's just the two of you.

- What project can you take on with your child? Try to find one that interests her, and then tackle it together.
- Plan a trip with your child to do something fun—whether it's for a few nights or just for an afternoon. Or make arrangements to take him or her with you on a business trip.
- Are face-to-face conversations with your child difficult for you? Don't hesitate to get help from conversation-starter decks (like this one or this one) or something like The Communication Game for Dads and Daughters.

Carey Casey is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a nonprofit organization seeking to improve the lives of children and establish a positive fathering and family legacy that will impact future generations by inspiring and equipping fathers and father figures to be actively engaged in the life of every child.

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