

# Dads, This Is a Crucial Relationship Element As Your Daughter Matures

Think back to when you got your driver's permit somewhere around the age of 15.

Do you recall times when you stepped on the brake a little too hard or when you drove a little too fast and threw caution to the wind? Or what about that time you accepted the challenge to see who could hit 100 mph the fastest?

Whether you knew it or not, there was a lot going on hormonally that impacted your driving. Your testosterone levels were at an all-time high, and your voice (and your entire life actually) was trying to find which octave to settle down in.

Attention, memory, spatial ability and aggression are all affected by testosterone levels. Your body was adjusting and learning how to stay in balance at the exact same time that you were being trusted to navigate a moving vehicle. It's kind of scary when you think back on it now, huh?

Yet it was all part of the learning curve.

You learned by practice and experience, by doing things too much or not enough.

It's the same with your daughter when it comes to finding and using her voice. As she hits puberty (and for many girls puberty is starting earlier so this may apply to your daughter even before the age of 12), she will use her voice too much at times and not enough at others. She will inadvertently run into walls sometimes, and even crash and burn.

But just like when you were a new driver and needed support as

you navigated life behind the wheel, your daughter needs your support as she develops into a young woman who is learning as she goes.

Let *grace* be your guide.

She desperately needs your *kind encouragement* instead of high expectations, your rules backed by a supportive and respectful relationship, with no criticism or harsh critique so she can find her way on her path to growing up.

If you truly want to assist your daughter in this 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.

It's *hard work* to stay calm when she's wordy or mouthy.

It's *hard work* to track with her when her emotional intensity is as unpredictable as the weather.

But if you want to raise a daughter who is strong, vibrant, healthy and confident, then you must gently and respectfully respond and interact as 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, you as her dad are setting the foundation for her to be a critical thinker by going through these ups and

downs *with* her.

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 with you.

This blog is an excerpt from page 92 in of Michelle Watson's book *Dad, Here's What I Really Need from You: A Guide for Connecting with Your Daughter's Heart*.

**Dr. Michelle Watson** has a clinical counseling practice in Portland, Oregon, and has served in that role for the past 17 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 titled, *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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