

Dadvice: This Might Work Better With Your Daughter

I am hopeful by now that you, Dad, really know that I'm one of your biggest fans. To underscore that fact, I have a tagline on my website that truly captures my heart, which is simply this: *Helping Dads Become Heroes*.

You've heard me say time and again that in order to be a hero, you have to take action. Think: Superman, Batman, Spiderman, Iron Man. Now think: *You*.

Truth be told, superheroes can't hold a candle to you because you have the ability to take your superpowers and use them to touch your daughter's heart and life in profound, forever ways. You as a superhero are the first man to love your daughter. That is your most incredible superpower.

I know that you want to see your daughter grow and bloom and soar. I believe your deepest desire is to mold and shape her in ways that hold her in good stead throughout her life.

Yet because you're a mere mortal and not a superhuman, your mask and armor come off when you get home. That's where things sometimes don't always line up between your head and your heart. That's where the emotional switch gets flipped on and buttons get pushed. That's where you say things you later regret, leading to the need for making amends.

If I could offer one piece of advice to help you achieve your goal of being the best dialed-in dad you can be, I would say this:

Soften your tone.

Or to say it another way: *Your tone changes your tune*. Your daughter will hear you differently if your tone of voice is

gentler.

I realize the word *soft* isn't the most masculine of terms and yet if you want to see better results in the quality of your relationship with your daughter, trust me when I say it's worth the work to hone this skill because your interactions will thrive as a result.

Over time, I've come to discover, both from interacting with dads and daughters, that men don't always realize how intense their vocal tone actually is. In one fell swoop, those forceful words cut like a knife to the heart—to her heart.

Oftentimes as men you think you're talking in a gentle tone to your daughters, but to them it sounds like a harsh command. They hear your words as an order being barked at them. I know you don't hear it that way, and you're confused because your sons never seem to have a problem when you talk to them like that, right?

And though fathers sometimes say that their daughters are the ones who have the tone problem because of their big emotional reactive responses, I would suggest that change has to start with you. If you stay soft, she will calm down.

So how do you activate this stance of softening your tone?

1. Give yourself a time out. And not just for a random number of minutes. I suggest one that is synonymous with your age. I know that might sound crazy but it works in the same way with adults as kids. If you're 50, then you need 50 minutes after being enraged or frustrated to calm down. Decide here on the front end that you will never set limits, correct or instruct when you're angry and emotionally activated. Walk away and come back later. That way there's less chance of saying something you'll regret. It's *always* a good idea to wait until your emotional midbrain has returned to its normal state before engaging in a potentially intense interaction.

2. Find another dad to be accountable to. I continue to be aware that men are most highly motivated when there is competition and/or camaraderie. So why not find another father who is working on softening his tone and then challenge each other to change the way you interact with your kids. Touch base at least once a month and encourage each other to stay the course.

3. Ask your daughter for periodic feedback. Since your goal is to nurture her heart space, why not use her feedback as a template to gauge how you're *really* doing. Let her know you're working on this and then invite her to give you input. This will add yet another layer of accountability as you ask your daughter to weigh in.

I have yet to meet a father or a daughter who doesn't want their relationship to be healthier and stronger. And I have yet to meet a father or a daughter who isn't happier and more hopeful when their relationship is on track and in harmony.

But if the bridge has been bombed out between the two of you due to this exact issue of heart hurts, there is no better time than the present to soften your tone and change the dance.

She'll be glad you did. So will you.

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 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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