

# How Dads Can Teach Sons to Respect Women

Are you being intentional about teaching your son the right way to treat women?

Honestly, some of what I see in the culture is out of whack. There are guys who think it's okay to "put a woman in her place" every now and then, even if it means getting physical.

Some guys feel justified in taking their anger out on their wife or girlfriend, like that is just what you do. Some think going out of your way to make her happy might be seen as a weakness.

I've also seen husbands withdraw and let their wives kind of take over and run the whole house. They don't see themselves being an active leader in the family, and that's another way of disrespecting her role and the importance of mom-dad teamwork.

There are a lot of myths out there about how a man is supposed to treat a woman, and this is on my mind a lot when I'm with my two sons, Marcellus and Chance, and the two other sons who married my daughters. I'm trying to school them up all the time.

Men, we have to train our sons about what's appropriate in boy/girl relationships, and make respect for women a high priority. How can you do this? Below are some suggestions, and I should mention that several of these are also covered in our free ebook, *5 Things Every Kid Must Get From Dad*, which you can download right here.

**1. Be a positive model.** As with all other areas in life, your son is watching you. Use your powerful influence to model respect for women—to your sons, the boys in your neighborhood

and even other men. Demonstrate that women are to be valued for their character and integrity and the feminine personality traits that complement and complete our masculine approach to things. This is perhaps the most potent way to shape your son's character—by showing him what that respect looks and sounds like.

If you're married, let your kids see you show love to your bride. Be thoughtful and romantic. Put her needs above your own. Many of us never witnessed that with our own parents, but it's important that our kids see our commitment to our wives. They draw great security from that—particularly in today's world—and you're also setting a great model for them to follow someday in their own marriages.

If you're not married, do all you can to respect your child's mother and support her. If things are really difficult with her, taking the high road will serve your children well. They will respect you more and develop healthier attitudes about relationships.

**2. Be proactive.** Early on, your son needs to learn the importance of protecting a young woman's integrity and well-being. A lot of this can happen during teachable moments that come up in the course of life, as you talk through different situations and how your son needs to handle himself.

But please don't let these conversations just happen. *Take the initiative.* Ideally, that means looking ahead and preparing your son with some purposeful discussions. For example:

- Tell him what love is—how it often involves strong emotions, but it's more about a steadfast commitment and a decision to serve and seek her best interests, even when the emotions aren't there.
- Give him a long-range perspective. Most likely, a teenage dating relationship will not turn into a marriage, so why get serious with anyone at a time of

life when neither of them is really ready for it? Encourage your son to work toward creating a strong friendship, and if it does become serious later in life, that friendship will be the best foundation.

- With any girl he's interested in, encourage your son to get to know her parents. It teaches him to relate to adults, helps him understand how her family situation has influenced her and reminds him that any relationship is really bigger than just two people.
- Talk specifically about boundaries. What's appropriate with physical affection? Or time spent alone? What about risky behaviors involving drugs or alcohol that could arise?
- Invite his questions and be available to continue the discussion as time goes by. Check in regularly about this.

Also: Hold him accountable. Be willing to confront your son about improper behavior that you see. Sometimes you'll need to sit him down and say clearly, "This is unacceptable," tell him why, and challenge him to do better.

**3. Get his mom involved.** I remember when Melanie and I were dating in college, and I brought her home to meet my family for the first time. Sunday morning, we were getting ready for church. Daddy had his suit on, Mom was getting dressed, and Melanie said, "Sweetheart, could you go to the car for me? I left my Sunday shoes there." I said, "Yeah, sure," and I went and got them.

That day probably wouldn't have stuck in my memory if it weren't for what my mother did afterward. She pulled me aside and said, "Son, if Melanie ever becomes your wife, *don't you ever stop doing that.*"

After we were married, there was another time when we all witnessed a man being very rude to his wife. Once again, my mother pulled me aside and said, "I better not ever see or

hear you talk to Melanie like that.”

Like dads, moms have a strong influence over their sons, but they also have a sensitivity and keen insights about these things that most dads don’t have. Your son will benefit greatly from that womanly perspective.

Dads, how have you taught your sons to honor and respect women? I’m eager to get your ideas on this. Share your ideas with me and other dads either below or on our Facebook page.

### **Action Points for Dads on the Journey**

- Schedule a trip or an outing for just you and your son, where you talk about the differences between boys and girls—physically and relationally—and how those differences bring can be fascinating and challenging at times.
- What did you learn about respecting women from your dad or other father figures? Share one or two of those lessons with your son.
- Train your son to look for ways to serve his mother, sisters and other women: holding doors, offering his jacket, giving up his seat, holding or offering an umbrella, etc.
- Ask your son to hold *you* accountable by pointing out when you drop the ball when it comes to honoring your wife or other women.
- A man I greatly respect—the late Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor, a pastor and professor—told a powerful story about the importance of respecting women. See this blog post to check it out.

**Carey Casey** *is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a nonprofit organization dedicated to changing the culture of fathering in America by enlisting 6.5 million fathers who to make the Championship Fathering Commitment.*