

Make Room for Daddy!

We recently wrote a book for moms about the unique and vital role dads play in parenting. It's called *Make Room for Daddy: A Mom's Guide to Letting Dad Be Dad*. In researching the book, we questioned hundreds of moms and dads about the differences between mothers and fathers, and what dads need most in order to be the best dads they can be.

Bottom line (you like to get to the bottom line, don't you?), you can help your wife to help you by telling her about your needs as a father. These "Five Talking Points About Fathering" should get you started:

1. 'Yikes! This is tougher than I expected!' "Suddenly, my world is different. I'm expected to know stuff like how to bathe a slippery baby, or how many burps are enough, and how to be a good husband, employee and dad, all at the same time."

Clue us in about your feelings! Describing your vulnerabilities helps us understand you.

2. 'But that's not the way my dad (or your dad) did it.' Becoming parents forces us to face a whole new layer of expectations or unspoken longings, based on the way our mothers and fathers did (or did not) parent us. Identify these issues, and talk to us about this stuff so we can decide together how to take the best of both families and create our own parenting style.

3. 'Let me be different.' "So what if I duct tape the diapers together (it works), feed them cookies for breakfast (hey, they're oatmeal cookies), let them wear weird clothing combinations, (shows creativity) and wrestle with them just before bed (that's my style of cuddling). We're different!"

Sometimes as moms we forget how kids benefit from these differences, and we expect dads to be male mothers. Our kids need both styles.

4. 'Sometimes I don't feel like being a dad.' "Can you believe I said that? How selfish is that? But some Saturday mornings, I want to sleep in. Or make love without fear of their interruptions. Or finish some work—alone. I love our children, but sometimes I just miss our freedom."

Sometimes we all feel like running away. Moms included! Admitting this helps us plan for the alone times we both need.

5. 'I could use some help here.' Here are some specific suggestions:

- *Leave me alone with the kids sometimes, and then don't criticize what I did when you get home.

- *Say something positive about me in front of the kids.

- *Don't expect me to be the bad guy and handle the discipline when I get home from work.

- *Share information, instead of telling me what to do, like a teacher.

Elisa Morgan and Carol Kuykendall have a combined 48 years of experience in parenting their own five children. Find great resources at
