

Subtle Ways Many Dads Unintentionally Disparage Their Daughters

Since last week was Halloween, it seems only fitting to share something that might be considered a treat.

First, a question: When you hear the word “boo,” what comes to mind?

I’m guessing that you’re picturing someone shouting that word while jumping out from a hiding place towards you. And if the attempt is successful, you probably had the bejeebers scared out of you when they did.

But instead of that specific reference point, I’m switching things up today (hence, the trick!).

When I hear the word “boo,” I immediately think of an audience in a sports arena loudly shouting that word to a referee when they disagree with a call. Can you envision that roaring sound as an entire crowd of strangers bonds over their shared opinion in response to a team they love?

In that context, the word “boo” expresses disagreement and intense displeasure, which basically lines up with Webster’s definition of it being a response marked by someone “showing disapproval or contempt.” This led me to look up the word “contempt,” which is described as “the feeling that a person or a thing is beneath consideration, worthless, or deserving scorn.”

That said, I’m wondering if you as a dad are more readily inclined to shout a boo or a cheer.

If we’re being honest, we can all admit to having booed someone before. In those times, we can easily move into a one-

up position that not only communicates disapproval but might come across as mockery of the other person's decision or position. Of course, that isn't typically our intention, but that's how the other person could perceive it, especially daughters from their dads.

We as women are easily devastated with that kind of negative interaction, even if sometimes we're the one who started it. That's where you as a dad have to be the bigger person. I'm not sure why it is, but there's something that becomes magnified inside us as girls when you give us a disapproving look, even if you don't say anything. We have feelers on top of feelers, and we internalize your disapproval. Honestly, there's nothing worse than knowing we've disappointed you. It's not the same as if some stupid kid at school says it.

It's as though we lose our footing if that viewpoint comes from someone we admire or elevate, especially you.

When it comes to our dads, it's a devastating blow when you boo us. That's when we start believing that we're "less than" or worthless or deserving of your scorn because that's what we hear you saying about us (even if you're unaware that this is what's being communicated). It's then that we often stop trying because we think that we can't please you anyway. Or we get hurt when you haven't noticed how hard we're trying because you only notice the things we *aren't* doing (hence, the boo).

The weight of the relationship has everything to do with the impact of the opinion.

So if you're a dad who wants to ensure that you're not booing your daughter, use these questions to reflect on how you interact with her:

- Does your daughter hear your comments about her clothing only when you disapprove of the choices she's made?
- Does she know when you do approve of how she's dressed

because she hears you telling her that she's beautiful in your eyes?

- Do you readily make your opinion known when you don't like the guy she's interested in, or do you make sure she knows how proud you are of her when she chooses well, especially when it comes to guys? (You might have to dig deep on this one to find something worthy of your commendation.)
- Do you let her know your disapproval when she doesn't do her chores or follow the rules, but fail to celebrate when she does respond positively and do things right?
- Do you come down hard on her when her grades start to slip but forget to applaud her when she hits it out of the ballpark on tests or gets her homework done?
- Does your daughter get an earful when you disapprove of the way she interacts with her siblings, but rarely hears you notice all the times she works hard to get along with them?

Remember: Negativity breeds negativity, so if you want your daughter to grow and thrive, she needs to hear you cheering her on from the stands more than using that three-letter word.

So Dad, ask yourself if you've shouted more boos than cheers this week. Then give your daughter a Halloween treat by letting her know that you're celebrating her with affirmation and because you love her.