

6 Ways to Become a Dialed-In Dad

I know we all have quirky things about us. Among my many quirks is the fact that I love acrostics. They make it easier for me to memorize and remember things. So here is one that might click for you as you engage and re-engage your heart with your daughter in an ongoing way.

Whether you're a dad who is already dialed-in or you are a dad who knows there is room for improvement, this way of looking at where you're at could help you "kick it up a notch" today.

Here are six key areas of focus if you want to be a dialed-in dad to your daughter:

First Love: Reflect back to when you first laid eyes on her.

Get out pictures when she was a newborn and toddler—I guarantee that you will fall in love with her all over again! Doing this will help to turn your heart toward your daughter and keep your heart open, especially if you're in a tough season with her.

Affirm: Having a Love Bank means making five deposits (positive interactions) to every one withdrawal.

Dr. John Gottman has discovered this ratio to be the key to sustaining a healthy relationship. How many positive, affirming deposits have you made into your dad-daughter relationship account lately?

Tune In to her world and what matters to her, even if it's not your thing.

Take time to enter into activities that interest her. Do them together if you can (without only hiring "experts" to get up close and personal). Show her by your actions that you love

her, all the while remembering that her reactions and responses matter to her even if they don't make sense to you (like when she has a meltdown over a bad hair cut, which is always *a very big deal* to us girls). Proactively invest in validating her while remembering that she is a work in progress and process ... just like you. *Give her grace to be her age.*

Humor: Make time for fun and laughter while intentionally investing in and enjoying her.

Come up with ways to engage her in things that bring a smile to her face ... and yours. Listen and watch for what makes her laugh and then connect with her around those things. Find ways to laugh together. You could ask her to write a list of her *Top 10 Favorite Things That Make Her Laugh or Smile*. Follow up by actively investing in creating memories around those things.

Engage: Decide to proactively and consistently learn about her life by asking questions to draw her out, not questions to interrogate her.

Trust me, she'll be able to tell the difference! Remember that your goal is not to lecture *but to help her to open up* so the two of you can have deeper, honest, heartfelt dialogue. Be sure to talk *with* her, not *at* her. If you notice she's disinterested, change the subject and work hard to talk about what she's interested in. Doing this in between times you have to set limits will help the conversations be padded with love.

Recalibrate: As the adult, you have to make the first move in leading and pacing.

No matter what your relational history looks like, it's up to you to activate her heart by consistently dialing in and letting her know you care. It's about adjusting your responses to her as a father because it's up to you to lead by example. And if your daughter doesn't want to connect in person right

now, you can change course and write to her.

Summing up: Your daughter needs you to dial in to her heart. Being a dialed-in dad means you are committed to doing exactly that with your daughter in some way, big or small, every single day.

Don't give up—pursue her with real love that takes action!

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.