

What Every Dad Should Know About Their Daughter

Last week I was dropping my daughter off for a birthday party. As I was leaving, a man stopped me asking for direction. He was standing with one of my daughter's school friends. Immediately recognizing her, I put my hand out and introduced myself, explaining that our daughters sit together at lunch often.

His reaction was sarcastic as he gave his daughter a sideways glance. I didn't fully catch what he said, but whatever it was it didn't honor his daughter in any way. Looking at her, I could tell this was not abnormal behavior.

I'll be honest: I wanted to punch him.

It's challenging to articulate the influence a father has on a little girl—how much of his attitude and actions toward her can determine her future relationships. I remember how much stock I placed in what my dad thought of me. I remember how much I wanted him to be proud of me. To affirm me. To show me my value.

I remember how he would brag about me on the sidelines of the soccer field. How he would tell me I'm beautiful. How he would hug me so hard I couldn't breathe. How often he reminded me as a teenager, "Never date a boy you wouldn't marry." (What a way to narrow the playing field!)

Dad's, don't lose sight of the impact you have today on your daughter's future. Here are three things I encourage you to focus on:

1. Affirm Her

She looks to you for affirmation, encouragement and guidance. As she grows through puberty—*especially* as she grows through puberty—she needs your voice reminding her she is beautiful,

valuable and worthy of love. If she can learn to believe you, then she'll believe her future husband when he tells her the same things.

2. Set the Standard

Be the husband you want her to have one day. Enough said. Is it difficult? Yes. Does it mean sacrifice? Yes. Is it worth it? Yes. I watch my husband daily making changes to be a better husband and dad. He's amazing. He demonstrates for our daughter the kind of man he wants her to marry one day.

3. Talk About the Standard

Talk about the future. As you "imagine the end" and think about the man you hope she marries, talk about it! Let her know what you expect. Set the bar. She'll do everything she can to jump over it.

Let me level with you, dad. The more you affirm her today, the less she'll seek affirmation in some teenage boy later.

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