

Why Every Dad Should Follow This Formula With His Daughter

If I could give you a three-step quick-fix formula for being the best dad alive, would you want it? Of course you would! It's human nature to want the fastest, easiest and most efficient path possible to success.

But when it comes to fathering, it doesn't quite work that way. It's the "slow and steady wins the race" pattern that really makes all the difference.

In other words, the most effective fathering tool is simply showing up.

Taking it a step further, I want to assure you that you don't have to do big, extravagant, out of the ordinary things to be a hero to your daughter. It's all about being there for her in the day-in and day-out routine that matters the most.

If you recall the things your dad did that had the most value to you as a kid, I'm guessing the biggest impacts were often the seemingly small, regular things he did that now bring back the fondest memories—from playing catch or teaching you to ride a bike to letting you barbecue alongside him or raking leaves together. It's those everyday things that communicated that you were worth his time and effort.

So what means most to a daughter?

It's being there to kiss her boo-boo's (which get harder to make "all better" the older she gets) and letting her know that you want to understand where she hurts.

It's about saying no to watching the game on television and yes to knocking on her door just to hear about her day.

It's about having breakfast on Saturday mornings while watching cartoons or listening to her favorite music, reading the paper or talking about what interests her—even when it's not your favorite subject.

It's being at her track meets to see her win—or lose.

It's about being willing to sit with her through torrents of tears and bite your tongue when everything inside you wants to give a mini-lesson (. lecture) that says, "I told you so" or "how many times do you have to do it wrong before you'll finally get it right?"

It's about looking at her in the eyes to see her responses to your intensity (namely anger) and being willing to ask forgiveness when you've over-reacted and hurt her, thus closing her spirit.

It's about giving her hugs even when she tells you she's too old for cuddling, despite the fact that she longs to be close to you and needs to know you cherish her.

It's about making sure your job doesn't consistently take priority over your family while remembering that the greatest legacy you will ever leave is your kids, not your work.

I acknowledge that this fathering thing is not for the faint of heart. Truth be told, it actually would be easier if it wasn't daily. And it sure would be easier if your daughter came with a playbook.

But here you are, willing to learn what she needs so that you can give her one of the best gifts ever: your love.

So here's a fathering formula to assist you as you pursue your daughter's heart: six things she needs from you. Whether you're a dad who is already dialed-in or a dad who knows there is room for improvement, this provides a way to evaluate where you are while developing strategies for kicking it up a notch

today:

First

- Reflect back to when you first laid eyes on her.
- Show her pictures from when she was a newborn or toddler, and I guarantee you will fall in love with her all over again.
- As the adult, you have to make the first move toward her, not the other way around.
- Be the first to humble yourself by saying you're sorry and making amends.

Affirm

- Love Bank = five deposits to one withdrawal (Make this your goal every week—or every day if you want extra credit.
- Choose to give her five times more positive investments to every one negative interaction. This includes discipline, which is necessary, but needs to be balanced with intentional positive connections first to offset the intensity of the hard conversation.
- Ask yourself: How many positive, affirming deposits have I made into our dad-daughter relationship account this week?

Talk

- It's very important to verbally dialogue with her, not just talk to her.
- Converse with respect and soften your tone, just as you would with a work colleague or neighbor down the street.
- Practice speaking with her for at least five minutes per day with face to face check-ins to find out how her day went and maintain eye contact when you're interacting.

Humor

- Make time for fun, laughter and enjoying her today.

- Come up with new ways to engage her in things that bring a smile to her face.
- Listen and watch for what makes her laugh and help to keep it coming.
- Be willing to let her laugh at you without taking yourself too seriously.

Engage

- Text her and tell her how much you love her right now.
- Schedule a dad-daughter date and get it on the calendar, even if it's a couple of weeks out. If you don't intentionally make it happen, then life takes over, and it's easy to inadvertently grow apart.
- Decide to learn one new thing about her this week: a song she loves by her favorite band, a new boy she likes, a class she's struggling with, a relationship that's challenging for her, a book she's reading, a question she's pondering.

Realize

- The years fly by. If you don't intentionally invest daily. Before you know it, she'll be out of the house, and you'll wonder where the time went.
- She longs for you to be proud of her and needs your validation and approval, so tell her why you delight in her and give specific ways that you are proud of her.
- No matter what your relational history looks like, it's up to you to win back her heart.

The FATHER Formula is a template for you to gauge where you are when it comes to putting your love for your daughter into action. Write and let me know how it goes because I love celebrating with you as I applaud your willingness to make the First move by Affirming and Talking with your girl, all the while finding the Humor in life around you, not taking yourself so seriously, and never giving up as you seek to Engage her heart by communicating encouragement because

you Realize how much your daughter needs you to be proud of her as you celebrate the uniqueness of who she is.

These six things will dramatically improve, revive, reinforce and strengthen your relationship with your daughter. It's all about getting in there and showing up, no special training necessary.

All you have to do is try.

And if you want the FATHER Formula in just 12 short words, here's my summation: You don't have to be perfect; you just have to be present. {eoa}

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 nine-month group forum that is designed to equip dads with daughters ages 13 to 30 to help them focus more intentionally on consistently pursuing their daughters' hearts. She released her first book titled, *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 he wants to be and his daughter needs him to be. You can also follow or send feedback on Facebook and Twitter.