

Thinking Like A Therapist

When my daughter, Breanne, was a little girl, she loved to play in the rain. On one particularly rainy Sunday afternoon, I decided to join her. We stomped in puddles, turned our faces skyward to catch raindrops in our open mouths, and competed to see who could slide the farthest in the muddy grass.

What first appeared to be another dull, lifeless afternoon became an episode of pure joy. As we entered the house, soaked from head to toe and dripping with mud and grass, we left our muddy shoes by the door.

Later, when I went to retrieve them, I found Breanne had quietly tucked her shoes in mine. Unintentionally, she had powerfully reminded me of the latest findings in the research on family dynamics. Research clearly indicates that the most long lasting, impacting relationship within a family system is father to daughter. Fathering is a sacred task, because our little girls depend on our footsteps to lead them in the right direction.

This leads me to ask-

“What does it take to be a good father to a daughter?”

- A. Work very hard to be a good provider.**
- B. Be your daughter’s friend.**
- C. Be the kind of man you want your daughter to marry.**
- D. Stand up for her when she has conflict with her mother.**

If you answered-

- A.** Being a good provider is important, but little girls yearn for more time with their daddy, even more than a trip to the mall!
- B.** It is important to “be there” and have fun with your daughter, but one of the most common pitfalls of parenting is the belief that we must be our child’s friend. Our top priority, as parents, must be to raise healthy, successful adults.
- C. Correct.** No pressure, guys, but there is clear evidence that the blueprint for your daughter’s life and her life-changing decisions will be formed on the drawing table of her relationship with you. Jack and Jerry Schereur, coauthors of the book, *Fathers and Daughters*, write- “You and I represent the entire male gender to our daughters for the first few years of their lives. Our daughters grow up with us. They learn to love or hate men largely through their

relationship with us. They learn to trust or mistrust men at least in part because of what we have shown them. They learn about appropriate intimacy, about sharing special moments, and about love from us. This is an enormous responsibility. Our daughters are watching, and we are teaching them about manhood every second they are looking at us.”

I suggest these tried and true methods for fathering your daughter:

1. **Always keep your word.** If you can't possibly follow through on a promise, don't make it! Keep your “big plans” quiet and tell your daughter only when you are convinced those plans will become a reality.
 2. **Remember, her lifelong relationship habits are formed with you.** Does your daughter beg and plead until you finally give in? Does she cower in fear when you enter a room? Are you so busy she says, “Dad, who?” Pay close attention to your relationship with your daughter; she is learning habits that will last a lifetime.
 3. **Be her champion.** We still live in a world where many girls are taught to believe they are not as important as boys. Be the first to let her know she matters and that you are behind her all the way.
 4. **Be a peaceful warrior.** Healthy fathering is a delicate balance between displaying the tender affection our daughters deserve with the strong, steadfast presence they many times need.
- D.** Allowing our daughters to manipulate us into robbing our wives of their parental power is a terrible mistake. If you are a smart dad and husband, you will avoid this train wreck at all costs!

Watching our every step, as fathers, is an act of love and the best way to offer our daughters an inheritance that will last. The direction of our footsteps decides the path our daughters ultimately take.

Remember, dad, your little girl is quietly tucking her shoes inside yours.

LADIES! You guessed it. This is another one of those articles that you need to cut out and tape to the sports page, if you want the father of your daughter to read it!