Being a Man and Dad

Fathering in 15
An Online Learning Experience

What to Know

Have you ever built a model car, boat, or airplane? The idea was that if you followed the instructions, your model should have looked like the picture on the box.

What you learned about being a man and dad works the same way. You learned from your parents and culture a model for how a man and dad should look and act. This model came with instructions to help you grow into the "right kind" of man or dad. These instructions are called "social norms."

As you grew into an adult, this model became a part of whom you are. It has guided your decisions and actions from that point forward. It guides you in how to treat yourself—your physical, emotional, and spiritual health—your children, the mother of your children, your coworkers, and anyone else in your life.

Men in all cultures learn some very good things and, in some cases, not so good things about being a man and dad. No matter the culture you grew up in, part of being a good man is to have good character. **You can't be a good dad if you're not a good man**.

The key to becoming a good dad is to first become a good man. Many cultures point to these six traits as the mark of a good man:

- **Confident**

- **Courageous**

- **Dependable**

- **A Leader**

- **Self-Reliant**

- **Successful**

You must first work on yourself before, or at least at the same time, as you work on your knowledge and skills as a dad.

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What Else

Your character is key to how good a man and dad you can become. Your character is a combination of the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and moral traits that that make you unique.

Morals are the key to character. Like the instructions to building a model car, boat, or airplane, morals give you a sense of direction by telling you what's right and wrong.

You must work on your character if you are to raise healthy children. If you have good character, and your children see this, then your children are likely to become people of good character. Children of good character tend to avoid risky behavior, such as alcohol and substance abuse, smoking, and violence.

You must always teach, model, and reinforce morals in your children. Your children will learn more from what you do than from what you say. In other words, good morals are more caught than taught.

What to Ask

Reflect on each of the questions below. Take your time. Write your answers if you like.

1. How have I been affected by what my parents and culture taught me about being a man?

2. What did I learn about character from my parents or those people who raised me? What did I learn that was good? What did I learn that was not so good?

3. What are five character traits that I can begin working on right now to become a better dad?

4. Which traits do I want to pass on to my children? Which traits do I not want to pass on?

5. Which morals do I want to teach, model, and reinforce in my children? How will I teach, model, and reinforce those morals?

Learn More

One of the best things you can do for your children is to teach them lessons about being a good man and dad. Teach these lessons through what you do and say. These lessons will help your son be a good man and dad and your daughter to look for good traits in a man who might become a dad for her children.

Our society doesn't do a good job raising men or dads. Adults, including parents, don't prepare their sons to be dads as well as they prepare their daughters to be moms.

Our society also doesn't do a good job teaching children that they should become adults and spouses **before** they become parents.

Steps to Become a Parent (Not Ideal)

BOY/GIRL ▶ DAD/MOM

BOY/GIRL ▶ MAN/WOMAN ▶ DAD/MOM

Steps to Become a Parent (Ideal)

BOY/GIRL ▶ MAN/WOMAN ▶ HUSBAND/WIFE ▶ DAD/MOM

The fact is children do best, on average, when they grow up in a home with their two married parents. That's as true today as ever. Tons of research proves this.

While you might not be married to your children's mother, there's no reason why you can't tell your children they should get married before they have their own children.