

# DADS AT A DISTANCE

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## ***Working Dads***

### Ideas for Strengthening Relationships Between Dads and Kids

Research tells us that children with active dads receive benefits that kids without involved fathers don't get.

**Children with active dads have** better grades, positive problem solving skills, good health, ability to maintain close friendships, higher levels of empathy and compassion.

**Kids who have involved fathers become adults with** a higher sense of satisfaction with life, more education, higher income, more stable jobs, stronger and longer marriages.

**Involved dads** provide physical care such as feeding, bathing, clothing and general care. They take children to doctor appointments, school conferences, child care, etc. Involved dads play and interact in ways that show love and limits to their children. They know their child's likes, dislikes, and routines. Active dads know the important people in their child's life like friends, teachers, and coaches. They connect with their children on an emotional and spiritual level as well as reconnect with their children after an absence.

Working dads provide a stable financial base for their children, and teach them career skills. When children know what to expect while Dad is away, and have contact while you are traveling, their sense of comfort and security is strengthened.

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## **Before you go:**

- **Tell children why, when and where** the travel will occur. Use time concepts each child can understand.
- **Virtual travel.** Show them where you are going. Get a map and trace the route. Help your children learn about where you will sleep and eat.
- **Establish a “good-bye” ritual.** For example, when it's time to go, give your child a hug, a kiss and say “A Daddy's love lasts forever. See you soon!”
- **Make a memory box** with your child before you go. Help your child select items to put in it that will help when they start to miss you.



- **Hide surprise messages or treasures** for your child to discover. Make a map or leave a list of clues.
- **Videotape** you and your child playing a game or reading a book. Your child can watch it in your absence.
- Put a **picture of your kids** on your phone so you see it every time you use it.

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## While you are away:

- **Take pictures** to show or send to children. Send photos by e-mail or upload to a social networking or photo website.
- **Call or text home every day.** Say: “Tell me about your day.” “Who did you hang out (play) with today?” “What are you looking forward to this week?”
- **Read a book** over the phone or Skype at bedtime.
- **Send mail!** Send postcards, letters or e-mail regularly; children enjoy receiving their own mail.
- **Buy school supplies** from the city or country you are in. Get pencils or pens from the hotel, Chamber of Commerce or business with which you are working. When your kids use these supplies at school, they will think of you thinking of them while you were at work.
- Learn how to say or write **“I love you”** in another language. Share it with your child. If you are in another country or area culturally different than your own, send your child something that has the country’s native language on it.



## When you return:

- **Schedule un-interrupted time** at home and stick to it. Turn off the cell phone, computer, TV, etc. This shows your kids that they are important to you. Spending time outdoors together can help you and your child be healthier, happier, smarter and create memories to share later! For outdoor activity ideas go to Greenhour: <http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Activities.aspx> and Nature Explore Family Club: <http://www.arborday.org/explore/families/>
- **Listen to your family** before you tell about your trip. They have much to share about things that happened while you were gone.
- **Eat a favorite family meal** or together prepare a new recipe from the travel site. For ideas go to Food for Fitness and Fun: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/food/>
- **Have a family meeting** to talk over chores, schedules and plan a fun family time for next week.
- **Talk about money** with your kids and partner. <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/finances/personal/>
- **Play “Work”** when you get home. Provide office supplies. Help your child make artwork to sell (to you). Use real money and teach them to make change.
- **Schedule time with your partner** to stay connected as a couple and as parents.
- **Thank your partner** for her dedication to the children during your absence.

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