

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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Never underestimate the impact dads can have on the lives of their children. Whether living in a family with both parents living under the same roof or in a single parent household, it is important for dad's to stay involved in their children's lives. This past week I had an opportunity to talk about this with a group of parents and I thought you might appreciate being reminded of how important the involvement of dads is in the lives of kids. While involvement is important from both parents, this article will focus on the impact of dad's involvement.

It has been shown that kids whose dad is active in their lives tend to have better grades, develop good problem solving skills, have good health, develop the ability to maintain close friendships and develop higher levels of empathy and compassion for others. As adults, these children have a higher sense of satisfaction with life, achieve more education, and have higher incomes and more stable jobs as well as stronger and longer marriages than those whose dad is less involved.

What are some of the ways for dads to be involved in their children's lives? They can first of all provide some of the basic physical care such as feeding, bathing, helping the children get dressed or select clothing and aid in any other general care that is needed. Another way to be involved is to take the kids to doctor appointments and child care. As children get older, dads can take the kids to youth activities such as ball practice, 4-H, Boy or Girl Scouts, etc. Also participating in school conferences and being available to listen to children's problems are other ways to show children they are important.

Kids love to have interaction with their dads. Involved dads play and interact in ways that show love and limits to their children. They also know their child's likes, dislikes and routines. It is important to get to know the other important people in their life such as their friends, teachers and coaches. Develop rituals of connections; that may be a special greeting that has been worked out between the child and dad that is special and unique to just them. Maybe it is as simple as a special name that is shared when coming or going.

In an Iowa survey that was completed by two hundred youth, ages two to twenty, kids identified the following activities as being their favorite things to do with Dad or Grandpa: fishing, playing sports in the yard such as baseball, football, golf, soccer, Frisbee, etc. They also identified riding on things together such as bikes, motorcycles, cars, tractors, ATVs, snowmobiles, horses, etc. (be sure to follow proper safety rules when engaging in these activities) and lastly they said they enjoyed working together by making and fixing things around the house.

To learn more about strengthening relationships between dads and kids, check out the Me & My Dad website at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/dads/> or contact the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.