

Moms, Are You Listening?

Often a dilemma comes to The Father's Cry ministry such as this: "I want to be involved in my child's life, I want to be a great dad, but my wife (ex-wife, girlfriend, and ex-girlfriend) puts up too many obstacles. Either she criticizes me for everything I do, or she won't even let me see my child." Unfortunately, our social system and court system don't always help. The prevailing attitude is that mothers are far more important than dads. The truth is that both are important. So, how can moms ensure that their children have a much-needed relationship with their father? How can they support their child by supporting their child's father?

According to a study in the June issue of the *Journal of Family Psychology*, a mom's words of encouragement or criticism directly affect how involved their child's father becomes in the day-to-day care of their baby. Researchers found that when a mother criticized her partner's child-care efforts, it often caused him to lose confidence and even withdraw from caring for the baby. But when a mom praised dad's efforts, he took a more active parenting role.

Mom, you often play the role of a "gatekeeper" to dad's participation in your children's lives. Chances are, he's depending on you in many ways—your motherly instincts, your greater knowledge and experience with child care issues, your greater sense of responsibility for your child that starts early during your pregnancy, and your commitment to always do what's best for your children. But please be careful. Your intentions may be good, but so what if he mismatches a toddler's outfit or if a diaper leaks and he has to change it again? If you insist that he always do things the "right" way, re-do something he's done for a child, roll your eyes or create the impression that he doesn't know what he's doing, he may very likely get discouraged and not be as involved as he could be. And that could influence his feelings about fatherhood for many years to come.

Sure, dads make mistakes, but they also need opportunities to gain experience and wisdom and—sooner or later—succeed with our kids. So please make room for Daddy: give him some space and encouragement; allow him to fail (unless your child's safety really is at risk), learn from his mistakes, and become the father that your children need.

A mother's view of her husband's fathering will be profoundly affected by her own father. If he was distant or unreliable, she'll find it hard to trust her husband with the children. Dealing with those memories can be a long and painful process, but the ultimate answer lies in the reality that there is a Father—a perfect heavenly Father—who is completely reliable and trustworthy. When you look to Him for your self-worth, it allows you to forgive your earthly father and overcome any pain that relationship has caused. And as you learn to trust your heavenly Father to meet your needs and the needs of your children, you are able to cut your husband some

slack and not expect perfection from him. You free him to be the best father that he can be—and that's a huge benefit to him.

ACTION POINTS for Committed Dads – and Moms

- **MOM: Point out the positive results you see from your husband's efforts to be a good dad.**
- **DAD: When you feel unprepared or frustrated as a father, don't give up! Being a good dad is one of the most important roles you'll ever have.**
- **MOM: Find opportunities to leave your child alone with her father. He needs to learn child care skills on his own and build stronger bonds with his child, and you can probably use the break.**
- **DAD: Think of one parenting or child care skill your children's mother has that you don't have—just one for now. Then ask her: "Would you show me how to ...?"**
- **MOM: If you disagree with a decision your children's father makes regarding the kids, discuss it with him privately. Do your best to support him in front of the kids.**

With the support of Moms, Fatherhood will be a wonderful fulfillment in a man's life. So women, I challenge you to listen, listen, love, love - your children's father.