

A SECRET OF SATISFIED FATHERING

In June 2006 the National Center on Health Statistics (NCHS) released their sixth National Survey of Family Growth with some encouraging findings concerning fathers. For example, 94% of the men with children said that being a parent was worth it, despite the cost and effort. And among fathers who live with their children, 74% feed their children or eat meals with them every day, 81% play with their children daily, and 52% help bathe, dress, and/or diaper their young children every day.

Where previous NCHS studies have looked at women in families, this report focused on men aged 15 to 44. It's encouraging to see the increased focus on fatherhood and the positive signs in fathers' values and behaviors.

To Think About...

The research at the National Center for Fathering shows that the more involved fathers are in the lives of the children, the higher their satisfaction levels will be as fathers. We are seeing a growing movement in the commitment level of fathers to their children. Where previous generations of fathers may have focused on the role of providing for their children, the current generation of dads more fully understands the need to be more involved in their children's lives – not just by providing, but by reading with their children, playing catch, doing homework, attending sports events or musical concerts and the like.

To be even more specific, the one quality or skill that was most commonly linked with satisfaction for dads was verbal interaction – being able to talk with and, especially, listen to their children.

Action Points for Committed Dads...

- ◆ Go on a leisurely car ride with your kid and be ready with some questions that will draw him out in the conversation. Mom might have some good ideas.
- ◆ As life always seem to be busy, renew your commitment to eat together often as a family.
- ◆ Verbally affirm your child about something, without including “if,” “and,” or “but.”
- ◆ Have you and your child had a disagreement recently? Did you fully hear their point of view? If not, go and tell them you want to hear them out completely. An apology might be in order? Then listen without arguing, making judgments or giving solutions.
- ◆ Actively participate in some of the daily routines of caring for your baby or young child. Include lots of verbal affirmations as you're doing it.

Dad, this begins with you. Dads must make family and children their priorities in life. Yes, we need to work to provide and “Providing to Our Children” is one of the *Seven Secrets of Successful Fathering*; however, it cannot take all of our time, energy and effort. The common misunderstanding of men is that “men need to be home or spend extra effort in those teen years.” The formative years between Father and Child are between 4 years old and eleven years old. We can’t leave the “raising of our kids” to the mom and expect to be the “guy” in those teenage years and then ask ourselves what went wrong with this kid?! We can’t come in and out of children’s lives; we must stay engaged forever. This fathering is a tough deal but when we decided to have children, we took upon ourselves one of the most sacred gifts of mankind – a child.

In all things listen, listen and love, love.