

Simple Truths for Dads Facing Barriers

Although divorced dads may identify with this most easily, every dad faces relationship barriers of some kind, and all dads can benefit from being reminded about a few simple truths.

It is pretty well a daily deal that I talk to guys who are divorced or facing a divorce. For the sake of the article, I will call the guy Dave. He's been through some very difficult trials and has made some mistakes that really became roadblocks for a relationship with his daughter. But recently Mike's daughter made contact with him indicating she wants to be part of his life. The problem is, Mike feels paralyzed. He can't forgive himself for the sins of his past.

All dads face challenges, whether they are divorced, married, single, new dads, stepfathers, dads of teenagers, dads in prison, dads who travel a lot for work, and so on. Some dads are fighting just to see their children. Others might not see their kids for months at a time because of some unavoidable arrangement of work responsibilities, where the mother lives, or other factors. And some do see their children, but may feel paralyzed because of fractured relationships, unhealthy patterns they have established through the years, feelings of inadequacy, or big mistakes their children have made and they don't know how to make things better. Some dads, like Dave, can't seem to shake their own painful memories and mistakes.

When you've hit a barrier to connecting with your children and hope is in short supply, there are no quick-and-easy solutions. But in the long run, you will benefit from taking a few simple truths to heart—and acting on them:

1. Though the challenges are daunting, your child still needs you to be her dad. She knows that she will always have a connection to you. She needs you to be strong—strong in patience, courage and love.
2. There is still time. Don't be deceived into thinking there's no hope. There is always tomorrow. We always have reasons to hope and be optimistic. If you can't see your kids, your past isn't pretty, you've been treated unjustly by the system, or whatever, it's important to have hope that the future can be better.
3. If your circumstances or other people are making it difficult for you to be a good father, don't give up. Just like with Mike's daughter, things do change. Kids grow up and start putting things together; many times they want to know their dad in a deeper way. Believe that your opportunity will come, live with integrity today, make healthy decisions, and be ready for that day. It

would be a shame if you did something now that might jeopardize that opportunity.

4. Be willing to start fresh and put the past behind you. Ask for forgiveness, when appropriate, and strive to better the relationship from here forward.

ACTION POINTS

- Even in difficult and frustrating situations, do all you can to maintain your poise. You will be a powerful model for your kids regarding how to handle adversity.
- Make whatever adjustments are necessary to connect with your kids in your situation: write letters; send texts and emails; ask your child's teacher, coach, or youth sponsor to help keep you informed; look into changing your work schedule; make the most of the opportunities you do have.
- To connect or reconnect with a child, try turning off cell phones and other distractions, getting away together, and simply talking to each other. Say something like, "Sweetheart, you're important to me. How have things been going?" Or, "How can we stay more connected?"
- Get a copy of a book your child is reading for school and read it yourself, then discuss it—even if it's over the phone.
- Are you in a struggling marriage? Do everything you can to make it work. Many divorced dads say that, knowing how difficult it is being a dad now, they wish they'd tried harder with their ex-wives.
- For whatever specific fathering challenge you're facing, chances are we have articles online that will give you some practical help. See what's available for your situation, your kids' stages, and other hot topics.

Recommended Resources:

- [Still a Dad: The Divorced Father's Promise](#) by Serge Prenel
- [Live-Away Dads](#) by William Klatte

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