

5 Practical Tips for Dads*

1. Create a vision for fatherhood. We believe dads today benefit from creating a clear vision for fatherhood. *Twenty years from now, what do you hope your children say about you as a father? What do you hope they don't say?* Answering these questions will help you clarify your sense of purpose as a dad and guide you in important decisions with your own children.

2. Be the bridge between your own father and your children. Whether or not you look to your father (or mother) as a model for parenting, the legacy of our parents, for better and for worse, lives inside each of us. This is why it's important to explore and understand your family legacy, particularly your relationship with your father. *How will you pass on the positive aspects of your relationship with your father to your own children? How will you avoid repeating the negative aspects of your relationship with your father?*

3. Establish a ritual dad time. One way to spend positive time with your child regularly is to create a *Ritual Dad Time*. This is not meant to replace more frequent rituals like taking your kids to school or reading to them at bedtime. It is a special, once per month, one-on-one time with dad. It's about choosing something you both enjoy doing — cooking breakfast, going for a bike ride or walk, building something out of cardboard, etc. — and *being together* as father and child. It's not so much about *what you do*, rather *that you do it*.

4. Know your children. Every child craves the interest, attention, and presence of their primary caregivers. They need you to *know* who they are as unique individuals, not as vessels for our own grand plans or unrealized dreams. By becoming an expert about your children's lives - *knowing* what a certain look on their face means, the best way to get them to sleep, who their friends are, what they're doing in school, what causes them stress — you send a clear and powerful message that they are worthy of your time, interest and attention.

5. Be known by your children. Letting your children know more about *you* through storytelling is a great way to strengthen your bond. *What were you like at your child's age? What mistakes did you make? How did you handle embarrassment? What were your friends' parents like?* Not only do stories humanize you and give children a sense of where they come from, but they can also be an effective way to initiate meaningful dialogue with your child.

* Based on material from *The Modern Dads Dilemma* (New World Library, 2010) by John Badalament and adapted by The Fatherhood Project.