TIPS FOR MEN:
How to Be a Feminist Dad
#LeanInTogether

How to be a feminist dad

Involved dads raise happier, healthier, and more successful children.[1] Moreover, kids benefit when that involvement goes beyond the traditional paternal role. When parents have 50/50 partnerships, children grow up with more egalitarian views and can envision more possibilities for themselves. Telling your kids "you can do anything" is not nearly as effective as showing them they can!

1
Be an active father

SITUATION

Spending time with your kids makes a big impact on their lives. Children with involved fathers have higher self-esteem, better cognitive and social skills, fewer behavioral problems, and higher academic achievement.[2] This is true at every income level and regardless of how involved mothers are. When fathers participate in their lives, daughters have higher self-esteem and are more willing to try new things and sons are better equipped to cope with stress and less likely to fight.[3] What's more, teenagers who feel close to their fathers end up in healthier, happier marriages.[4]

SOLUTION

Be an active and involved dad. Help with homework, read books together, talk about your kids' daily experiences and goals. You don't have to be perfect—you just have to be engaged.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fathers who participate in caregiving are more patient, empathetic, and flexible and enjoy greater job satisfaction.[5] Fatherhood is also linked to lower blood pressure, lower rates of cardiovascular disease, and a longer life.[6]

2
Close the wage gap at home

SITUATION

The wage gap starts earlier than you think. Parents often place greater value on the chores boys typically do (like taking out the trash) than on chores that girls usually do (like setting the table). As a result, boys spend less time on household chores but make more money than girls.[7]

SOLUTION

Give your children equal chores and equal allowance. If your son and daughter take turns setting the table and taking out the trash, they'll grow up knowing that women and men can—and should—split work evenly. Equally as important, show your kids what 50/50 looks like. Seeing parents divvy up dishes and laundry shapes children's gender attitudes and career aspirations.

3
Challenge gender stereotypes

SITUATION

Kids' beliefs about themselves and others are shaped by the world around them, and girls are often sent the wrong messages. Traditional girls' toys focus on appearance and caretaking, while boys' toys focus on competition and spatial skills.[9] Children's books are twice as likely to feature a male character in the lead role.[10] Kids are exposed to an average of eight hours of media every day, and women are underrepresented or sexualized in much of that media.[11]

SOLUTION

Make sure your kids play with a variety of toys so they develop a range of cognitive and social skills. Be thoughtful about what your kids read and watch, and talk openly with them about the messages the media sends about women and men.

4
Help your daughter lead

SITUATION

Despite our best intentions, girls are often discouraged from being leaders. As early as middle school, parents place a higher value on leadership for boys than for girls.[13] Girls are often labeled "bossy" or "know-it-all" when they speak up or take the lead, and they're called on less in class and interrupted more than boys.[14] These factors take a toll on girls. Between elementary school and high school, girls' self-esteem drops 25%.[15] By fifth grade, one in three girls are afraid to lead—a trend that continues into adulthood.[16]

SOLUTION

Celebrate your daughter's efforts to lead. Help her set goals and break them down into small, achievable steps. Encourage her to reach outside of her comfort zone to build confidence. Just as she practices soccer or piano, she can practice small acts of assertiveness like ordering at restaurants or shaking hands when she meets new people. Get your daughter into sports or other organized activities where she'll learn to collaborate, speak up, mess up—and try again.

DID YOU KNOW?
Your daughter's not "bossy"—she has executive leadership skills!

5
Don't tell your son to "man up!"

SITUATION

As important as it is to teach your daughter to lead, it is equally important to teach your son to respect his feelings and care for others. Movies, video games, and comic books bombard boys with stories of men who are strong, aggressive, and in charge but rarely vulnerable or nurturing. Boys often emulate these oversimplified characters. As a father, you can model a more complete definition of manhood.

SOLUTION

Teach your son to value intelligence and thoughtfulness over toughness. Encourage him to respect his own feelings and have empathy for others. Avoid language like "man up" or "be a man," which can be as damaging to boys as words like "bossy" and "know-it-all" can be for girls. Model gender equality for your son by supporting the women in your life and celebrating their achievements.

DID YOU KNOW?
Equality begets equality: Boys who grow up in more equal homes are more likely to create equal homes as adults.[17]

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