

Dad Tips on creating more meaningful memories.
Spending more time with your child reaps rewards and builds strong foundations for life.

The time a father spends with his child is important. Spending quality, one-on-one time together enables you to deeply connect and get to know your child. You get to know their likes, dislikes, worries, fears, inspirations and aspirations. Fathers who spend this time with their children also have been found to be better at caring because this time helps a father to be more sensitive to their child's need for love, attention and support. Children need to know their dads think they are special.

Meaningful Time

It is not just about the amount of time. You can't put a number of minutes around quality time. What is important is that it's meaningful, and regular, that will create lasting special bonds; playing together, watching or creating something together. Studies have shown, the memories of time with dad with the most impact, were when the child felt they had their dad's undivided attention, without interruption.

They need to know that you want to be with them, to listen to them and care about how they feel. In studies where adults have been asked to recount the times, they felt special with their dads, it wasn't so much the activity they were doing, it was the feelings they remembered. It was because it was their special time their dad, with a feeling of togetherness and bonding between dad and child.

Everyday Memorable Moments

When it comes to meaningful moments your child will remember, the everyday type moments together can have just as much value as big events. Regularly reading or telling bedtime stories, when your child is younger, establishes the supportive conditions for the brain to learn and remember.

Of course, there are certain circumstances that result in some dads being unable to spend time every day with their children, yet it has been found that it's what you do when you are with them that is important. The time you spend giving your child your undivided attention to make them feel special will be equally impactful for their future.

A great way for dads to create memorable moments with their children is to play and have fun with them. Children will remember you smiling, laughing and enjoying being with them. Plus, evidence has shown that not only is fun play a wonderful way to connect but play with dad, has a unique role in the development of your child. Play encourages children to explore, discover, negotiate, take risks, and problem-solve which supports the development of cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills. Even as they get older, they will still crave time with you and love to play.

Dad tips for creating more moments together

1. Dad Dates

One-on-one dad dates are a concept used by the Fathering Project to help fathers to plan and remember to schedule regular one-on-one time with their children. Dad dates provide one-on-one time with each child, so if you have three kids, you have three separate dates. The date doesn't have to be an extravagant or an expensive event, it is about the time together one-on-one to play, talk, listen, laugh and have some fun. You will find your children will really look forward to their dad date because it's their time just with you, to feel special, loved and listened to.

Some ideas for your dad date

- Walk the dog
- Go to the local markets on a weekend
- Attend a sports event
- Cook together
- Bike ride and stop for a snack
- Play golf together
- Go to a movie
- Indoor tent or backyard camping
- DIY project together
- Make music together
- Go to a live performance
- Visit the aquarium or science museum
- Visit a special exhibition
- Plan and share a bush or beach hike

If you start this when children are young, these dates will provide opportunities for you to really connect with each child, to check in on their health and wellbeing and how they coping as they grow up. You will also find they will be more likely to discuss any issues or problems with you in these one- on-one times because they are alone with you. This is particularly important especially when they reach adolescence.

2. Good times banking

Good times banking works from the theory that a solid relationship needs a ‘store’ or bank of positive experiences that you, and your child build together. Like any good investment plan, it is important to have regular deposits. The learning brain thrives on regular emotional connections. So much so that even much later in life the brain has been found to respond to these positive memories with the release of dopamine, triggering a feeling of pleasure and deep sense of being cared for.

Good times banking can particularly help if you’re having difficulty with your relationship with your child or you’re dealing with challenging behaviours. Think of the regular positive one-on-one banking time with your child give as credit. Sometimes, during tough times you need to draw down on your account. If you are having a disagreement or trouble communicating, you can reflect on these positive memories as a starting point to reconnect i.e., “Remember when we went camping and talked for hours, we really opened up and you know you can trust me, so just tell me what happened, and we can sort it out together”.

This collection of meaningful moments collected into your good times bank help you develop strong and lasting bonds to take you through the good times and the challenges in your relationship with your child as they develop.

3. Reinforcing Memorable Moments

Children may not remember all the details of the activity you did, especially if they were younger but, they can often recall the feelings they had. Memories that generate stronger emotions and are repeated are reinforced and more likely to last. To give a boost to these memories, emphasise how special this time was with statements like, “I was so proud of you”, “We had such a good time together”, “We did an awesome job on that....” This not only boost the memory, it also helps build your child’s self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

You can make these memories and the associated positive emotions last a lifetime taking photos of the experience or moment and looking at photos and talking about the special time you shared. Even after many years these photos and memories can produce the same emotions you felt back when the moment or experience occurred.



Don't stop creating memorable moments with your kids or revisiting the ones you already have! Remember, the times they will remember most are when you make them believe:

“Dad thinks I am important to him, and he wants to spend this time with me.”

