



Monthly Parenting Tip from the ACFC

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The Dad Effect



Fathers play a vital—and often underutilized—role in the development of children. At Active Parenting, we recognize that when fathers are actively engaged, children experience stronger emotional, social and cognitive outcomes. Modern dads are more engaged than ever—showing up not only for milestones but in everyday moments: reading bedtime stories, attending school events, coaching teams and building meaningful emotional connections with their children.

Research consistently highlights the immense positive influence fathers have on their children's lives, from infancy through adulthood. When dads are actively engaged and supportive, children tend to exhibit:

- **Better Social Skills and Emotional Well-being:** Involved fathers contribute to increased sociability, confidence and self-control, and a reduced likelihood of depression or disruptive behaviors. Longitudinal data shows that a father's early emotional closeness protects against depression and correlates with higher marital satisfaction well into the child's adult years.
- **Improved Academic Performance:** Children with actively engaged fathers are significantly more likely to achieve higher grades and pursue higher education. A father's active interest in his child's education by age 11 has been shown to have a greater statistical influence on educational success than family background, the child's personality, or poverty levels.
- **Greater Resilience and Fewer Behavioral Problems:** Dads play a vital role in instilling perseverance and helping children overcome setbacks. Kids with involved fathers are also less prone to substance abuse or risky behaviors. For instance, "The role of father involvement in children's later mental health" study by Flouri and Buchanan shows that 35% of boys with low paternal involvement become youth offenders, compared to just 18% of boys who have a highly involved father figure in their lives.
- **Strong Role Models:** Fathers teach invaluable lessons like responsibility, accountability, empathy, delayed gratification and compassion through their actions and commitment. They model traits like grit, toughness, patience and determination.

One powerful example of the Dad Effect is father-led "rough-and-tumble" play. When done safely and with attunement, this type of play helps children learn to manage high-energy emotions, regulate impulses, and recover from frustration—key life skills grounded in evidence-based fatherhood strategies.

It's not just about the amount of time spent, but the **quality** of the relationship and the parenting style. Authoritative parenting, characterized by love and clear boundaries, leads to superior outcomes across the board.

To learn more about effective parenting skills, visit the Active Parenting Online Video Library. These helpful videos are offered free of charge by the ACFC in partnership with Active Parenting. Guidance and help are available for parents of children of all ages. To access the Online Video Library, go to the **ACFC website**, click on the Active Parenting tab, and follow the instructions on how to view the videos.

FREE LIFE-CHANGING ONLINE PARENTING COURSES

In these video-based, interactive classes—available 24/7—you'll learn a consistent, encouraging style of parenting that will benefit you and your children for a lifetime. With this self-study course, you have the option of when to participate based on your own schedule and at your convenience. Gain additional insight from your online group leaders as they provide support and feedback.

Choose from four available courses:

- **Active Parenting: First Five Years:** For parents of children from birth to age 5
- **Active Parenting 4th ED:** For parents of children ages 5 to 12
- **Active Parenting of Teens:** For parents of preteens and teens
- **Crossroads of Parenting & Divorce:** For divorced and divorcing parents

Continue your experience as an "active" parent by reviewing what you learn in the class in your accompanying parent guide. Each guide contains additional information, activities, and worksheets to help you practice what you learn.

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