

"Where Do We Go from Here?"

Ten Things Men Can Do to Help Themselves Become More Involved Fathers:

1. Be more active. Take initiative, and if you're not sure how to change that diaper or heat that bottle, ask your partner for suggestions instead of allowing her to do it for you.
2. Get more practice. Remember, whatever your partner knows about raising kids, she learned by doing.
3. Take pride in the special way you are with your kids. Men and women have different ways of interacting with their children, and their kids benefit from both.
4. Be emotionally available to your children. The first step in doing this is to become more aware of your own feelings.
5. Be a partner, not a helper. Share responsibility for the care of the child and the household.
6. Be available more than on weekends. Be a part of the day-to-day decisions that effect your kids - what they'll have for dinner, what clothes they'll wear, who they'll play with, etc.
7. Show respect for your partner. Recognize the ways in which your partner keeps the family running, and back the decisions she makes when you're unavailable.
8. Be aware of the need to communicate with your partner. If she seems reluctant to share the role of child nurturer, be gentle - women have been conditioned to believe they must be the primary care givers.
9. Know your legal rights. Changes in the law have given fathers more rights in order to help them balance work and family. Educate yourself.
10. Stay involved after separation or divorce. Fewer than 15% of fathers receive shared or joint custody of their children after divorce, and too many of those who don't get custody end up slowly fading out of their children's lives.

Seven Things Women Can Do to Help Men Become More Involved Fathers:

1. Look at things from your partner's perspective. Women tend to measure what their husbands do against what they do. Men tend to measure what they do against what their fathers did, and what their male friends and coworkers do.

2. Treat men as partners, not as helpers. Stop thinking of your partner as your assistant. Don't ask him to help – ask him to do his share.
3. Adjust your standards. No child ever suffered long-term trauma from a loose diaper.
4. Praise your partner. Men generally like doing things that make them feel competent.
5. Don't be a gatekeeper. Even if you know how to stop the baby from crying, let your partner have a try at it.
6. Recognize that you can't do it all. Let your partner know that you have limits in time, and in energy.
7. Redefine work. When dividing up responsibilities, give parenting the same weight as other domestic chores.

Eleven Things Government and the Private Sector Can Do to Help Men Become More Involved Fathers:

1. Reduce gender stereotyping in schools.
2. Encourage schools to provide parenting education earlier in life.
3. Provide government funds and other support for fatherhood projects on the local level.
4. Make fathers welcome in doctors' offices.
5. Fund more public-awareness campaigns by federal, state, and local governments about the importance of fathers.
6. Overhaul welfare practices to encourage father's involvement.
7. Encourage joint custody.
8. Uphold divorced fathers visitation rights.
9. Implement father-friendly employment practices.
10. Insist on more accurate portrayals of fathers in the media.
11. Encourage better books for better fathers.

Excerpts from: *Throwaway Dads* – Ross D. Parke & Armin Brott

