

Because We're Dads: Reaching and Mobilizing Father's to Promote Gender Equality

Five Things Dads Can do to Advance Gender Equality (High School)

Gender equality is everyone's issue. All of us have a gender and all of us are impacted by gender inequality (although to different degrees and the impact is different). Furthermore, gender equality benefits all of us. We all have a role to play. Dads have particular opportunities and roles to help achieve gender equality. While recognizing that dads also benefit in significant ways as a result of gender in-equality:

- most dads are relieved of the "2nd shift",
- the standard for being perceived as a "good dad" is much lower than the standard for being perceived as a "good mom",
- our society continues to place higher values on dads (particularly white, middle-aged and middle class dads) than on moms, etc.);

dads also benefit from gender equality:

- Better leave opportunities for being at home,
- Being supported to stay home and developing our caring capacities,
- Increased health and wellness benefits.

Here are five things dads can do to help promote gender equality with your children:

1) Develop Media Literacy. Your child is developing critical thinking skills. You can support them to apply these skills to what they read, watch and the music they listen to -- specifically reviewing the messages about gender and gender equality that they're receiving. It's more important that you support them to critique the media than for them to hear your critique. Invite them to reflect on their own values (especially their values of gender/gender equality) and the ways that what they're reading, viewing and listening to is or isn't reflecting these values.

2) Flirt and Date with Respect. Kids at this age are really getting into practicing how to flirt and date. Talk with them, and model for them, not only how to flirt and date with respect, but how equality is an inherent aspect of respect. This includes both how they flirt with others, and how they receive flirting from others.

3) Encourage Friendships. Continue to encourage your child(ren) to have a wide variety of friendships with people of all genders. *If* they have friendships with people of the same gender differently than how they have friendships with people of other genders, explore this with them and why this is. OF course, you continuing to model this for your child(ren) by also having meaningful friendships with people of all genders is also critical.

4) Model Caregiving and Emotionality. Continue to be actively "there" for your child. As girls enter puberty, dads too often tend to step back from being emotionally and physically present and expressive. Your daughters still need and want you to be huggable and available. But they also need you to listen carefully and respond to their emerging boundaries. They are practicing boundary setting with you. Just make sure you're relying on their boundaries and not placing boundaries due to your own discomfort or awkwardness.

Sons also begin to have different level of comfort with being emotionally and physically expressive with their dads. Make sure you stay present and active, while listening to their boundaries (even if they're not clear about their boundaries.)

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What you model during this time has critical and long-lasting lessons for your children in terms of how they interact with others, and practice setting and respecting the boundaries of others. As well as how they practice and express caregiving and emotional support.

5) Take Action. Join your child(ren) in public events, demonstrations and rallies in support of gender equality. Take an active role, alongside them, in the planning of these events and rallies. Put up a yard sign proclaiming your household as a “Household that promotes gender equality.” Buy a bumper sticker for their first car. There are dozens of ways that you can take action alongside your child, and show some leadership in organizing, promoting and mobilizing others as well.

There are lot of other ways that Dads can be active in raising our children to promote gender equality. Join the “Because We’re Dads” campaign to connect with other dads, and to access additional resources and tools. You can also check with your local domestic violence agency to see if they offer their own version of “Because We’re Dads.” [Click here to find your local domestic violence agency.](#)

Follow Because We’re Dads on Facebook, or [access the website \(tools and resources are added regularly\).](#)

Books

This One Looks Like a Boy: My Gender Journey to Life as a Man by Lorimer Shenher