This Sunday is Father’s Day. If you are reading this, it is a perfect time to honor every dad who shows up for his kids each day, committed to being the best father ever. It is more than just a moment to buy a card or the latest gadget for your father. Take time to recognize all the support your father gave you and commit yourself to being a supportive parent for your children.

Fathers are important to children’s emotional and social development. I had the luxury of having a great father. Was he perfect? Of course not. But he was present in our lives and I still hear his words of wisdom in my head as I go through my life now.

Men are the single greatest untapped resource for America’s children. We currently live in the best of times and the worst of times for fatherhood. Fathers who are engaged in their children’s lives spend far more time than fathers of any previous generation. However, millions of children continue to miss the regular presence of dad.

Let’s not kid ourselves; our kids need a father. We’ve come to appreciate the contribution of all those mothers out there, but don’t sideline dads as unimportant. Here are some recent research findings on the importance of fathers to our children.

Children whose fathers are involved with them in a positive manner do better in school, demonstrate better psychological well-being and lower levels of delinquency, and attain higher levels of education and economic self-sufficiency.

Toddlers with involved fathers start school with higher levels of academic readiness. They also are more patient and can handle the frustrations and stresses of schooling better than those whose fathers are less active.

When fathers are active and nurturing, children have better verbal skills, intellectual functioning, and academic achievement when they are adolescents.
Kids who feel they have a good relationship with their father are less likely to use drugs. But this works as well with those who have a strong male figure in their life (uncle, grandfather, etc). Those without a strong male figure are more likely to drop out of school, abuse drugs and alcohol, and wind up in prison.

Kids who feel they don’t have their father’s respect are more prone to anxiety. Boys who wish their father spent more time with them weigh, on average, 10 pounds more than boys who feel they spend enough time with their father.

When fathers are involved in their children’s education, the kids are more likely to get As, enjoy school, and participate in extracurricular activities. One of the most important factors in girls’ academic achievement is their father’s expectations.

Kids that have rocky relationships with their mothers grow up to be worse parents, unless they have a good relationship with their father. In that case, they grow up to be very good parents.

Infants are sometimes a challenge for dads. However, those fathers who take a week or more off to spend with their newborns are closer to their children at every stage of life. Research shows that men have a hormonal response to becoming fathers and a part of this response is a natural protectiveness toward the baby. The more time fathers spend holding their new babies, the more comfortable they feel in comforting and caring for their babies.

Fathers are particularly important in the emotional development of children. It is critical that a dad be warm and emotionally available to his child. Parents should listen to their children’s feelings and validate their children’s emotions.

While children may not always recognize the importance dad plays in their lives, most children long for and need a loving, involved and responsible father or father figure. Here’s to all those dads who are working to be a better father. Happy Father’s Day!

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