

Our Great Dads

By Barrington H. Brennen, June 4, 2013

Thank God for dads. Anyone can be a father (sperm donor), but it takes someone special to be a dad. The best thing a dad can do for his children is to love their mother. Research tells us that children have happier lives when their fathers spend time with them. Children do better in school and are less rebellious when fathers are involved in their lives. Dads are not just substitute moms. Dads are friends and playmates, economic providers, caregivers, teachers and role models, monitors and disciplinarians, and protectors. Good dads know that is manly to love intensely. Good dads treat their families as they treat their own lives.

They also accept the fact that dad's love compliments the mother's love, not compete with it. Ten years ago I made this statement about fathers: "The love of dedicated Bahamian and Caribbean dads is like crazy glue between two pieces of wood, baking powder in a cake, yeast in bread dough, gray cement in white sand, and water on a dry parched land. A Caribbean father's love is sensational, powerful, and healing."

On November 29 last year our daughter and son-in-law gave birth to their first child and our third grand child. What was most exciting was the response of my son-in-law as he assumed the role of fatherhood for the first time. You should have seen the beam in his eyes. I have never seen a dad so loving, attentive, involved, caring, and tender. It made Annick and I feel confident that our new grandson will not only have a great mother but also a great father.

A few weeks ago I came across "Traits of a good dad." I selected a few of the traits to share in this article. Here they are:

1- He's a good disciplinarian: A good father loves his children, but he doesn't let them get away with murder. He strongly disapproves of his children's misdeeds, using tough love to prove a point. He does this through the power of his words, not his fists.

2- He allows his kids to make some mistakes: A good father realizes that his children are human, and that making mistakes is part of growing up. Spending money recklessly, getting into minor car accidents, getting drunk and sick for the first time, even dating questionable women are rites of passage, and a good father recognizes this. However, he makes it clear that repeated irresponsibility won't be tolerated.

3- He teaches his children to appreciate things: A good father never lets his children take what they have for granted. From the food on the table to the good education he's paying for, a good father will make his children see the value in everything they have.

4- He accepts that his kids aren't exactly like him: Everyone is different and a father knows this well. He won't expect his children to live the same kind of life he does, and do the same kind of work. He also respects their values and opinions, as long as they don't harm the family or anyone else.

5- He spends quality time with his children: A dad knows how to have fun with his kids too, taking them out to games, movies, and supporting their sports teams by attending their matches. He takes the time to listen to his children and have a good,

easy chat with them. He also makes time to help them with their homework, every night if necessary.

6- He leads by example: A good father is above the old "do as I say, not as I do" credo. He will not smoke if he doesn't want his kids to do it, and definitely won't drink heavily. He teaches them to deal with conflict with a family member and with others by being firm but reasonable at the same time. A good father also illustrates the importance of affection by professing his love for their mother in front of them. And he won't fight with her in their presence. In all, he adheres to the values he'd like his children to follow.

7- He teaches his children lessons: A father figure is the prime source of knowledge in the ways of men, and teaches his kids accordingly. From shaving to being courageous, a father molds his kids into well-rounded members of society. He especially instructs them in proper etiquette, on being honest and keeping their word, and on being thankful.

8- He protects his family at all costs: As the main provider of security and necessities, a father will do whatever he can for his family. He'll take a second job to provide for them, and he'll put his own safety on the line to keep them out of harm's way. This is how a father instills in his children the importance of personal sacrifice.

9- He shows unconditional love: This is the greatest quality of a good father. Even though he gets upset at his children's faults and may lament that they did not attain what he hoped for them, a father loves his children no less for it.

Perhaps what is the most important trait of a good dad is putting his wife first, then his children. If he does not have a wife or partner, he puts his children first. When this is done we have less problems in the family and the society.

Today I honor our wonderful dads. Contrary to popular belief there are countless good and happy fathers in our community. They are active in molding their children's lives. They clearly understand that their lives and habits can impact the current and future lives of their children. A good dad is truly a lover. Happy Father's Day

Barrington H. Brennen is a marriage and family therapist. Send your questions to barringtonbrennen@gmail.com or write to P.O. Box CB-13019, Nassau, The Bahamas, or call 1-242-327-1980.