

INSIGHTS

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Building up *frequent father points*

Most dads tell me that they want a better relationship with their kids than they had with their own father. One way to build better relationships is for dads to build plenty of frequent father points when kids are young. Here's how to go about it.

A good friend enthusiastically told me how he just spent a few days away on his own with his two kids, aged 10 and 13. He was feeling quite chuffed.

He had some 'dad time' with his kids.

Good on him!

He was doing some memory-building & relationship-building, as well as having some fun.

He told me that he was aware that his kids were getting older and he knew such opportunities were diminishing.

I've been hearing this type of story a lot lately.

Gone are the days when the only relationship many men had with their kids was through their wife. She would explain to the kids, 'Your dad's very busy. He would love to see you play sport but he can't make it.' She'd keep him up-to-date with the children's lives, as well.

Blokes, it seems, are valuing the time they spend with their kids **on their own**. Or at least the dads I mix with are. Spending time alone with kids is a great way to build confidence in dads.

And the kids usually just love it.

Mothers can play a role here by not getting in the way if their husband or partner wants a little time alone with kids. (*Most mums I meet welcome this!*)

Children usually associate their fathers with activity. When I ask children to tell me about their dads they usually talk about the things that they like to **do together** with their dads. *Playing, walking, fishing, wrestling...*...the list goes on.

It's through shared activity and involvement in kids' lives that dads build up **frequent father points**. It's hard to build good connections with kids when you are not there!



Don't wait until adolescence

These relationships are best built in childhood, when kids just love their dad to bits and want to be around him. It gets trickier in adolescence, but having shared interests developed in childhood gives you a connection point during these sometimes turbulent times.

Dads also benefit from spending time with their kids. Most health scales state a healthy relationship with their children is a predictor of good health and longevity for men. I'm not sure where the health benefits come from, but I suspect there is something relaxing and de-stressing about getting into a child's space. There is a **big kid** inside most men just busting to get out.

These days we take parenting pretty seriously and it's easy to forget that one of the fundamentals of raising kids well is to spend some time in your child's space, doing stuff, or not doing stuff, whatever the case may be.

So how are your (or your partner's) **frequent father points** going? If they need some topping up then you can start by doing something together that they enjoy. Having a bit of fun together is the best place to start.

And then start to block in time to spend with kids on a regular basis. One busy dad I know goes for a bike ride with his teenage daughter each Saturday morning, and then goes to watch the local footy with his son in the afternoon. This type of ritualised approach to relationship-building works well with many blokes.

Whatever method a dad uses, the key is to start spending time with your kids right now. As I well know, they grow up in a flash, and before you know it they have either moved out, or are busy getting on with their own lives.

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