



Celebrating Fatherhood

A Family Centre Parent Tip Sheet by guest contributor, Pete Saunders

I think of Father's Day as a wonderful opportunity to celebrate fatherhood. Imagine your partner and kids treating you to breakfast in bed, allowing you uninterrupted time to watch your favorite sport or show on TV, and then later taking you out for a meal at your favorite restaurant. Nice right? That is exactly what I am not talking about when I said "celebrating fatherhood."

I do not mean to be celebrated as a father. I mean for you, Dad, to celebrate the reasons – your partner and your children – that you are a father. I believe we are true fathers not because we helped produce the children, but because of what we give to them after they are born. Of course, some of us were deeply involved in the process of their entrance into this world, but that doesn't make us fathers any more than planting a vegetable garden makes us chefs. In truth, many of us are fathers to children we had no role in bringing into this world. And many of us have been fathered by men like that.

So, this Father's Day, and any other time you choose, celebrate your children – express your gratitude to them for the privilege of being called "Dad."

Listed below are seven ideas for how you could celebrate fatherhood.

1. Write your children a letter: The written word can be a lasting source of guidance for your children, sometimes more so than the spoken word. One idea for a letter is to let them know that your relationship with them is mutually beneficial. It is also an opportunity for you to leave something tangible, personal, and meaningful that your children can reflect upon when they get older. While writing, it may help to ask, "What would I say to my children if I know I was going to die tomorrow?" Praise them. Encourage them. Give them something to turn to for inspiration and a reminder that they are loved and appreciated. Make it more memorable by writing it in your own hand rather than a computer letter printout.

2. Treat your children to a special meal: Instead of being the one treated on Father's Day, switch things up a bit and surprise your children with a special meal. This will be a welcome surprise and a unique opportunity to express your gratitude to them. Some researchers have found that there is a strong association between family meals and personal wellbeing. So, you will be increasing the benefit for everyone, including yourself. The thing that really makes family mealtime magical is the use of the time to interact and engage with each other.

3. Father's Day (Reversal) Gift: Although it is OK to receive a father's day gift, it is much more meaningful and powerful to give your children gifts on Father's Day. I am confident they will be eager recipients. This is an unforgettable way to celebrate them, letting them know you are a father because of them and the opportunities provided to you through them. You don't need to make the gift expensive, only meaningful to you and them.

4. 24-Hour Activity with Dad Coupon: All children have some kind of activity they could spend the entire day doing, even adult children. If you don't already know what that is for your kids, figure it out. After you have done that, plan a day of engaging them in that activity. For example, if it's swimming, then go beach hopping. Select seven beaches, and spend the day visiting and swimming at each one. Make it one of their most memorable days. And be sure to take pictures!

5. Gratitude Talk: Before you end the day, spend some quality, uninterrupted time with your children talking about and sharing something you are thankful for. There is always something. Give your kids the opportunity to share as well. Help them develop an attitude of gratitude. This will not only improve your outlook on life, but also strengthen the bond you have with them.

6. Keep Electronics Off (for the day): Decide to limit, or eliminate screen time for the day. Top priorities are the TV and your phone. Be present with your children, as well as yourself. Doing this will create plenty of opportunities for meaningful conversations and interactions. If you don't know what to do without your gadgets, leave it up to your children. They are very creative.

7. Organize a “Celebrating Fatherhood” Get-Together: Invite other dads to join you in celebrating everyone’s children. Help make plenty of children feel special on that day. Plan games and activities to lighten up the festive mood. You could also give the other dads an opportunity to share something special about their kids.

Father’s Day provides an opportunity to give thanks for your children, and to also express your gratitude to them. I am confident that I’m not the only one who believes that gratitude, along with love, kindness, and compassion, are among the most important values we can practice and instill in our children. As fathers, let us not be concerned with what we can, or will, receive on Father’s Day, but on what we can (and continue to) give. Let’s truly celebrate fatherhood this year.

PETE SAUNDERS is married to Annesa Saunders, and together, they are the proud parents of Dakari, a happy and loving 6 year-old with cerebral palsy. Pete is the founder of Razors & Diapers, an organization committed to strengthening families by empowering fathers. He runs a fatherhood blog at <http://blog.razorsanddiapers.com>, and is also a blogger for the American Counseling Association. He writes a fatherhood column for B3: Bump, Baby, and Beyond, a Caribbean parenting magazine. He enjoys bowling, reading, and martial arts movies. Pete is currently pursuing a master’s in Social and Community Services at Capella University.

If you would like more information on this topic you can contact Family Centre and ask to speak with the Community Support Worker at 232-1116.