



Father's Day advice for single dads

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Peter Ehrlich is a father whose articles on single dad issues have appeared on askmen.com, www.parentcentral.com and singledadlife.com.

Father's Day is supposed to be about celebrating dad, and quality time between fathers and their kids—but if you're a single dad, you know it's often not that cut and dried.

Depending on factors such as how much access you have to your child, and how well you get along with your child's mom, it can often be difficult to celebrate this occasion with your kids.

Therefore, single dads should be diligent in their efforts to have a valuable experience with their kids on Father's Day, says Peter Ehrlich.

"It's more essential for single dads to be involved in Father's Day than married dads, because they only have their child, at most, 50% of the time, so their time together should be that much more meaningful," says Ehrlich, a Toronto-based marketer and single father to a 19-year-old son whose articles on single dad issues have appeared on askmen.com, www.parentcentral.com and singledadlife.com.

If you have access to your child on Father's Day, ensure that you'll have a fun and memorable time together, Ehrlich says. One way to pull this off, he says, is to plan an activity based on an interest you'd like to share with your child, perhaps one you never got to enjoy in your own childhood.

"For instance, I liked to toss a baseball around with my son, and my dad never did that with me, so that's been a very enjoyable experience for both my son and me. It's best to do things together that resonate within your own soul," says Ehrlich, who, in a similar fashion, has invested in a telescope to enjoy night-time stargazing with his son.

Activities that involve working together to create something are also great for father-child bonding, says Ehrlich, who, in the past, has built a rocket ship with his son, as well as taken him fishing and overnight camping.

"When you have to work together to create a living environment," says Ehrlich, in regards to camping, "it's a very intimate thing to do together, because you're depending on each other."

Also important to achieving a meaningful experience is to ensure there's enough time for you to properly catch up with your child, he says.

"Father's Day is a good time for connecting one on one, and a good time for the truth. You need to build in some time to check in with your child and ask, 'Are you happy?', and 'Is there any way I can make your life better?'" he says.

Where possible, try to find ways to make your activity extra special, Ehrlich says.

"Once, I bought my son a metal detector, and I hid quarters along a path near our home. Then we took it out for a walk along the path, and Noah was delighted to be discovering the coins," Ehrlich says. "I'm a strong believer in bringing magic into any relationship, and children need magic."

Often, magic lies in the simplest activities—Ehrlich says one of his fondest memories with his son is riding a tandem bike together.

"I've never seen a child not smile when they're riding a bike beside or attached to their parent. It's the most amazing thing," he says.

Keep in mind that enjoying special activities with your child takes planning—planning you'll have to do in advance to pull them off successfully, Ehrlich says.

"You have to call ahead to find the best campsite, or research where to get a tandem bike. You can't do these things at the last minute—you have to plan ahead," he says.

When you're with your child, make sure to avoid distractions and to give them your full attention, he says.

"All technology should be turned off. If I see one more scene of a child begging for attention while Dad is on his Blackberry, I'll pull my hair out. You need to be engaged," he says.

Finally, he says, remember that this day is just about the two of you.

"Don't bring anyone else into the mix, like a girlfriend or new wife," Ehrlich says. "Father's Day is about the celebration of fatherhood, and about building your relationship with your child."