

What to Know

What most affects how you raise and care for your children? If you said, “The effect of the family I grew up in,” you hit the nail on the head. The family you grew up in is called your “family of origin,” because it’s the family in which you began your life.



Who in your family was the most powerful force in your life? Perhaps it was your dad. If so, his impact on you started, quite simply, with his presence, or lack of it. The amount and quality of the time he spent with you increased or decreased the impact of his presence. Your dad’s impact might have been mostly good or bad, likely a little of both.

What knowledge or skills about being a dad did he transfer to you? Maybe he was a “show me” dad rather than a “tell me” dad. Either way, you learned about raising a child by what he did and said, and by what he didn’t say and do.

On the other hand, perhaps your mom was the most powerful force in your life.

A mom often is in a family where the dad worked all the time, was never known, walked out on the family, or died. Perhaps your uncle or an older cousin stepped in to serve as a “father figure.”

No matter who in your family of origin had the most impact, you must connect with the good and bad aspects of how you were raised and how they affect how you raise your children. If you don’t, you might not rely on the good aspects enough. And the bad aspects will worm their way into how you raise your children.

What Else

Media and entertainment are also part of your family of origin. And they will be an even bigger part of your children’s. You must focus not only on the impact that your dad, mom, relatives, and others had on shaping how you raise your children. You must also be aware of the powerful impact that movies, TV, music, social media, and the Internet have had on you.

That’s because most media and entertainment still portray a poor image of dads. They show dads as one or more of the “3Ds.” Dads are dumb, dangerous, or distant, unable to care for even the most basic needs of their children.

Worse yet, they often portray dads as stalkers, rapists, drug dealers, and murderers. Moms must swoop in to save their children, even from dads who aren't a danger to their children but who don't have a clue about how to raise them.

What to Ask

Reflect on each of the questions below. Take your time. Write your answers if you like.

1. What knowledge and skills did I learn about being a dad from my own dad, mom, or others in my family?
2. Who in my family had the most impact on how I raise my children, and why did they have the most impact?
3. What good things did I learn that I should use more often to raise my children?
4. What bad things did I learn that I shouldn't use to raise my children?
5. How have media and entertainment affected how I raise my children? Have they had an impact on how good a dad I think I can become?

Learn More

Your family of origin might have had a good or bad effect on your **self-worth** as a man and dad. What is self-worth? It's what you think overall about yourself as a man and dad. It's a combination of your **self-concept** (what you **think** of yourself as a man and dad) and your **self-esteem** (what you **feel** about yourself as a man and dad).

No matter the impact of your family of origin on your self-worth, use these six tips to build your self-worth as a dad. (Hint: Use these tips to build self-worth in your children, too!)

1. **Positive Reminders.** On a small sticky/post-it note(s), write the traits or behaviors you would like to develop. Place the note(s) somewhere you will see it every day, such as on the fridge.

When you do something that reflects the trait, or you practice the behavior, draw a star on your note(s) as a reward and write the date as a reminder.

Use this same idea for traits and behaviors you want for other family members. Every time you see the trait or behavior, praise the person or the behavior.

- 2. Praise for Being and Praise for Doing.** Praise for Being is when you praise someone simply for being who they are. The praise isn't tied to a specific action. Praise for Doing, on the other hand, is tied to a specific action. Give "Praise for Being" to family members every day. Give "Praise for Doing" to family members every day.

Make it a habit to accept praise given to you. A "thank you" is the polite way to receive and value such a gift.

- 3. Self-praise.** Make it a habit to give yourself Praise for Being and Praise for Doing every day.
- 4. Touch.** Nurturing touch is a wonderful way to build self-worth. Give and get hugs and kisses on a regular basis. Remember that adults (you included) and older children need nurturing touch just as much as they did when they were younger.

Touch also helps with proper brain development in children.

- 5. Sweet Spot.** Know what you are good at and do more of it. Find that "Sweet Spot" and nurture the same in your children.
- 6. Help Others.** Lend an ear and value what another person has to say or believes, even if it's different from what you would say or believe.