



# Connecticut Fathers' Resource Guide

*Make a Difference in  
the Life of a Child*

## What is Responsible Fatherhood?

Responsible fathers are men who:

- Wait until they are emotionally and financially prepared to father children.
- Establish legal paternity when they biologically father a child.
- Actively share with the child's mother in emotional and psychological care of the child.
- Teach responsible behavior.
- Teach by positive example.
- Ensure their children have health insurance.
- Model responsible behavior (including paying bills on time, following through on responsibilities and commitments.)
- Conduct themselves with basic dignity and self-respect.
- Recognize that a fathers' health and vitality are interconnected with that of their child.
- Love, care for, and protect their child.
- Determine with the mother reasonable limits of tolerance and discipline.
- Prioritize time with their children.
- Take responsibility for knowing basic life and child development skills such as changing diapers, early child care development, and providing for a child's basic health needs.
- Recognize that fatherhood is a life-long commitment.
- Teach and raise children in a way that will help them be successful.
- Build their child's self-esteem, self-worth and self-confidence.
- Ensure their child is financially supported.
- Maintain responsible relationships as part of a family and as a role model.



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*Remember:  
Anyone can be  
a father -*

*It takes  
someone  
special to be a  
Dad!*

## Awareness of Your Child

How well do you know your child? Here are a few questions to help you know your child better:

- Who is your child's all time hero?
- What are your child's most prized possessions?
- Who is your child's closest friend?
- What causes your child the greatest stress?
- What was your child's most prized accomplishment this past year?
- What was your child's biggest discouragement this past year?
- What is your child's favorite food?
- What member of your extended family does your child like the most?
- What would your child like to be when she grows up?
- What is your child's favorite television program or movie?
- What does your child like to do in his spare time?
- What is something that really upsets your child?
- If your child had \$20 to spend, what would she buy?
- What does your child like to do with you?
- What is the most important thing you need to discuss with your child in the next 6 months?



## Ideas on Discipline

*The goal of discipline is to help children build their own self control. Discipline techniques are often age specific and may need to change as your child grows and develops. When your child makes a mistake, focus on the behavior not the child. Remember that it only becomes a mistake when you don't learn from it.*

### Tips for Encouraging Appropriate Behavior:

- Help children clearly understand your expectations of their behavior.
- Discuss consequences of misbehavior before it occurs. Have the child help set the consequence.
- Give praise often, so children know how well they are doing.
- Realize problems can be expected when children are bored, tired or frustrated.
- Give your child safe choices.
- Don't wait to deal with your child until you have been pushed past your limit.
- Teach your child appropriate behavior by modeling appropriate behavior.
- Let your child know why he is being disciplined, if behavior continues.
- Be consistent in disciplining your child to avoid confusion. Make sure both you and your child's mother agree on discipline styles and expectations.
- Use calm, positive words instead of threatening words.
- Make sure the consequences fit the behavior.
- Make sure consequences are realistic and enforceable.
- Be consistent with enforcing consequences.

### Tips for when Misbehavior Occurs:

- Step in immediately when your child is harming themselves or others.
- Realize that calling attention to the misbehavior might be enough, if the behavior stops.

## Eight Steps for Better Listening

- Face your child squarely. This says that you are available to your child.
- Adopt an open posture. Crossed arms and legs say, "I'm not interested." An open posture shows your child that you are open to him and what she has to say.
- Put yourself on your child's level. Kneel, squat down, lay across his bed, lean toward him. This communicates "I want to know more about you."
- Maintain good eye contact. Have your ever talked to someone



whose eyes seem to be looking at everything in the room but you? How did that make you feel? That is not something you want your kids to experience with you.

- Stay relaxed. If you forget nervously, your child will think you'd rather be somewhere else.
- Watch your child. Learn to read his nonverbal behavior: posture, body movements and gestures. Notice frowns, smiles and raised eyebrows. Listen to voice quality and pitch, emphasis, pauses and inflections. The way in which your child says something can tell you more than what she is actually saying.
- Actively give your child nonverbal feedback. Nod. Smile. Raise your eyebrows. Look surprised. These small signals mean more than you realize. They'll encourage your child to open up even more and let you into her life.
- The last step to listening is speaking. But, before you give your response, restate in your own words what he has told you. That proves that you were listening, and it gives the child the opportunity to say "Yes, that's it" or "No, what I really mean is . . ." Remember, the goal of communication is understanding.

## Rights of Fatherhood

*Every child has a right to a responsible, loving and involved father. Men who are responsible fathers should be granted rights that acknowledge and support their commitment to being better dads. These fathers have a right to:*

- Know and establish themselves legally as a father.
- Have a relationship with their child.
- Be involved in their child's development.
- Not be discriminated against.
- Be geographically close to their children.
- Have equal access to their child.
- Environments which are "father-friendly."
- The community's respect for their role as a father.
- Appropriate resources to be a good father.
- Learn how to become responsible fathers.



## Creative Activities to do with your Children

- Plan family meals when everyone has a chance to share a particular experience, thought or feeling they have had that day.
- Go for walks together.
- Listen to your child when she needs to talk.
- Meet your child's friend who you don't already know.
- Visit your child's school or classroom. Meet his teacher.
- Watch your child as she plays; observe her creativity in her play.
- If your children do not live with you, commit yourself to a phone call or lunch date.
- Visit the Children's Museum.
- Ask your child what is the one thing you do that she or she would like to learn, and then teach it.
- Put an encouraging note in the textbook of your child's worst subject.
- Take your children to the library and give them time to browse and check out some books.
- Ask your child what she wants to be as an adult, then take her to visit such a workplace.
- Listen to your child's favorite music. Ask him what he likes about the music.
- Read a newspaper article to your child and ask what he thinks about it.
- Go to the zoo and laugh together.
- Read a story to your child every day. If you can't see him/her every day, get a small taperecorder and record books for them.
- Review their homework or school activities and find out what's happening in school.
- Play games together on a rainy afternoon.
- Make a birdfeeder. Spread peanut butter on a pinecone, roll in birdseed, tie a piece of string around the stem and hang in a tree. If you can't find a pinecone just thread cheerios on a string.
- Paint snow. Fill a dishpan with snow and let your child color it with food coloring. Talk about what is happening when the snow begins to melt.
- Paint with a straw. Put a few drops of paint on some paper. Have your child use a straw to blow the paint, spreading it in many directions!
- Make puppets using paper bags or popsicle sticks and paper plates or even plastic spoons. Turn a table on its side and have a puppet show.
- Take a trip to an appliance store. Get a large box (stove or refrigerator size). Create a castle, a store, or a fire truck - let your imagination run wild.
- Make a "walkie-talkie." Using two tin cans with one end hopen, punch a hole in the center of each can. String one end of twine into the holes and tie a large knot inside each can. Now you're set to send lots of special messages.
- Make "play dough" - You'll need 2 cups salt, 2 cups flour, 1/2 cup oil, 1/2 cup water and food coloring. Mix first three ingredients and add water slowly until dough is workable and not too sticky. Add a few drops of food coloring and create.

***"Parenting is the hardest job in the world, but it is the greatest adventure you can have."***

**- Dale Murphy  
National League  
Most Valuable Player  
1982, 1983**



## Co-Parenting Tips for Non-Married Parents

It is a child's right to have the best relationship possible with both parents. Children need to feel loved by both parents and need to know that they do not have to choose one parent over the other. When parents are out of conflict, children can prosper. Parents will have to work together for the rest of their lives - not until their child turns 18. Having good co-parenting skills will benefit everyone.

- Keep a flexible routine and leave room for spontaneity. Help your child feel that he has 2 homes, mom's and dad's, where he feels free to come and go.
- Talk to each other and keep focused on the subject of your children. Children should not serve as the direct line of communication between the two of you.
- Take the anger out of your communications. Do not use your child as a way to get back at each other or validate your anger with each other.
- Get help dealing with the anger from a broken relationship. Learn to communicate in a less reactive, more proactive, way.
- Help to prepare your child for visits. Be positive about the experience.
- Share information. Have a calendar with all the family engagements written on it and let the other parent know of any changed plans.
- Set up a system for monthly phone calls or meetings with a specific list of required issues to discuss.

*This publication was made possible by a collaboration of the following:*

*Department of Social Services, State of Connecticut  
Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund  
Education Connection / Litchfield County Head Start  
New Haven Child Development Program  
The Village for Families and Children*

*Information printed in this publication was gathered from and reprinted with permission from the following:*

*National Center for Fathering (1-800-593-DADS or [www.fathers.com](http://www.fathers.com))  
Illinois Fatherhood Initiative  
Education Connection, Good Guys' Gazette*