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Dads, here's how to bond with your kids

By Dr. Terri Orbuch

Today's fathers give children social and emotional support, assist with daily care and shape attitudes toward trust, love and relationships -- even if they don't live with their kids.

My research has found that most children respect their dad's opinions and enjoy spending time with him. But a recent University of Michigan study suggests that the majority of fathers and adult children do experience at least a little tension in their relationships.

So in time for Father's Day, here are some simple tips that could help improve the bond with your children:

Hug them. Children want more affection from their fathers. They also wish they could hear the words, "I love you" more often.

Get involved. Get to know your children's teachers, coaches and friends. Take part in their activities. These connections boost children's self-esteem.

Model healthy behavior. Your children are observing you and how you respond to specific situations and how you treat others, especially those of the opposite sex. Talk to them about trust, love and relationships. Depending on the child's age, ask questions like, "When you love someone, what does that mean?"

Special time. Spend regular time with your children. Allow them to decide what's best for a special night out. Set aside a consistent time each day or week to talk with them about things happening in their lives. Ask them about the best thing that happened that day or what they are most thankful for.

Positive focus. Talk to your children about what they are doing right, not what's wrong. Concentrate on their unique gifts and abilities. Your children will feel supported by this approach.

Change. Times have changed since you grew up. Listen to what your kids are saying. At all ages, children need your attention, time and support even if you don't agree with them. Rules are OK, as long as you communicate clear expectations.

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