

Notes To Dad

by

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Learning To Be A Father "I Should Have Read A Book!"

I will never forget the early morning ride on the way to the hospital for the delivery of our first child. I woke up about 2:00 a.m. with pains about five minutes apart. The hospital was about 35 miles away, which would take us around 45 minutes to drive.

About halfway there as the pains started to progress to two minutes apart, my husband suddenly had a revelation. He very seriously turned to me and said, "We don't know anything about being parents. We didn't even read a book. What do we know about being 'good' parents?"

It was at that moment that he realized (and me too) that we were actually going to have a baby. Oh yes, we knew this all along, but the reality hit that early cold February morning. Not only a baby boy was born, but a father and a mother were born as well.

Learning to be a parent is like traveling along a long country road—there are many hills and valleys as well as twists and turns. You just hope that you end up on a hill and not too worn out from the trip still looking for a flat straight stretch of road.

By the way, the trip will never end. You're always a parent no matter how old your children become.

You learn to be a parent by doing and from observing everyone else around you, but mostly you learn from your own parents. After all, they trained you since you were born. As children we pick up their bad and good parenting traits. Where did my husband learn to be a good father? Of course, we know he didn't read a book. He learned from his own father as well as the men around him who cared about him.

Research shows that children who grow up with fathers who stay involved in their lives tend to enjoy all kinds of benefits: from better school performance to less trouble with the law, to better careers and relationships with others.

Many fathers get involved in sports or other past times that they are interested in. The important thing is that they become involved with their children somehow whether it is music, fishing, sports, chess, cars, cooking, or whatever the special interest they can share together.

Children need their fathers to be involved.

Children learn from watching their fathers.

Take a few minutes and close your eyes. Imagine that you are a young child again, and you are with your father. What are you doing together? What is he saying to you? For many of you, this experience is probably one that

makes you feel happy, safe, and secure.

Are you providing these same types of experiences for your children? How many times a week are you doing something active with your children?

Garret D. Evans, assistant professor of clinical psychology, University of Florida, explains the importance of a father's role, "In many ways, our father is one of the strongest influences on how we raise our own children. Through our connections with our dad, we build a sense of identity for the family. We may pass on family traditions, values, and opinions that continue for generations."

Evans further states that a father not only carries his father's traits into his parenting style, but he adds his new values and traditions as well. This is what makes your own father unique. It also gives hope to children that they can improve on the foundation their own father gave them. Most people would agree that no one is perfect, so there is always room for improvement at being a parent. It is important to take the good traits that have been role modeled to you by your father as well as other men around you, and adopt them to your own parenting practices.

How do you know if you are involved enough with your children and spending true "quality" time? Evans suggests asking yourself these four basic questions:

Are your children the center of your attention or are you just trying to keep them busy while you're doing other things?

Are you doing something they would like to do?

Are you saving enough time and energy every day so that you can spend it with them or are you playing or interacting with them when it is convenient?

Are you happy just spending time with your children with no particular purpose or goal in mind?

If you answered "yes" to all these questions, you are more than likely spending some real quality time with your children.

If you came up short on some of these answers, then how do you begin to start getting more involved?

Make a plan setting aside some time to do an activity with your children that you haven't done much with

them before. This could just mean 15 minutes helping with homework, throwing the baseball, or even playing tea party.

This may seem like a small effort, but take a good look at your child's face while you are doing it. There is nothing more gratifying for a parent as looking in the eyes of true happiness. It only costs your time; no cash is needed.

Did you need to read a book to learn this? The key to successful parenting is to take the time to do things with your children throughout their lives. Not just at age 8 during Little League season, but even at 17 when they act as though they don't want you around. They need you as much at age 17 to learn how to become an adult as they did when they were one learning how to walk.

This is what the books says, and this is what our parents learned after raising us.

Lawrence County Looking For Dairy Royalty

NEW CASTLE (Lawrence Co.) — If you have a desire to promote real dairy products to consumers at meetings, schools, parades, stores, media, fair and much more, and are a young woman or man between the ages of 13 and 24, unmarried, related to a dairy farmer, employee in a dairy related job, employed yourself on a dairy farm, or own two or more dairy animals as 4-H or FFA projects, you would qualify to be a dairy maid, ambassador or princess candidate.

The Lawrence County dairy promotion committee would like to hear from you by June 1. The annual pageant is at Wal-Mart Union Square, New Castle, June 9, 7:30 p.m.

For more information, contact Betsy Musser at (724) 336-4300 or Denise Whiting at (724) 658-2706.

Demuth Garden Tour June 9-10

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Fourteen private and public gardens will be open for the 18th annual Demuth Garden Tour on Saturday and Sunday, June 9 and 10, Lancaster.

Visitors also will have a chance to meet with Pennsylvania garden author, photographer and speaker Liz Ball. Her new 368-page book of advice and resources, Month-By-Month Gardening in Pennsylvania, has just been released by Cool Springs Press. Liz will appear at a book-signing Saturday, June 9, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Demuth Museum, 120 East King Street.

The annual event benefits the non-profit Demuth Foundation, which conserves the home and garden of renowned artist Charles Demuth (1883-1935), a Lancaster native.

Other highlights include Demuth's gardens and the sale of plants and original artwork at Conestoga House, 1608 Marietta Avenue, with the estate's lovely gardens open for visitors.

Festivities kick off Friday, June 8, with a Garden Gala Benefit at Conestoga House from 6 to 8 p.m. The gala is \$40 and advance reservations are required by contacting the Demuth Foundation.

Advance tickets for the self-guided garden tour — good both days of the event — are on sale for \$12 by calling the Foundation at (717) 299-9940. They also may be purchased the days of the event, for \$15, and will be available at each garden on the tour. A Garden Tour Guide Book, with detailed maps and descriptions of each garden, is included in the ticket price.



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