

- **Overview** Fathering adolescent children is an excellent way for fathers to use their generativity because it allows a father to begin treating his son/daughter as more of a companion. It is a unique time in a child's life when the father can pass on to the child favorite skills on a higher level than before with his child. Not only can the adolescent learn a new skill or hobby with his father, but the father can also develop new skills related to the son/daughter's interests. Being treated as a companion in such activities helps the teen develop identity and the cognitive skills necessary for healthy development. Through this reciprocal relationship, fathers can also manifest generativity; thus both the teen and the father progress together.

In finding generative activities, a father should consider two things: (1) what his teen is interested in, and (2) what he himself is interested in. Any type of shared activity, such as working or playing together, are excellent activities for fathers (as well as mothers) to do with their son/daughter. Although "work" is usually not considered as an activity to do together, it can be one of the best shared activities because it provides large amounts of time to interact (talking, telling stories, teaching new skills, etc.). Most sports activities can include positive competition. Fathering adolescents can be an exciting time for both father and teen as they begin to be companions, doing activities on a more similar level.

### **Communication**

- Have some time set aside with your child to discuss her/his future plans and goals--career, college, marriage, etc. (include your spouse in the discussion as well).
- Tell your child stories of when you were their age--fun memories, major events, embarrassing or funny experiences, what you did after school, your struggles, etc.
- Use old photos to share stories and learning experiences about you when you were growing up (especially when you were their age).
- Express love, forgiveness, values, concerns, etc.
- Express genuine interest in your child's feelings, thoughts, interests, friends, worries, etc.

### **Teaching**

- Teach her/him the reasons behind family rules. Many adolescents are now able to cognitively understand the purpose and reasoning of rules. This will help them to respect the rules more, and help them see how to develop their own set of governing values and to foster their independence.
- Teach your child decision-making skills by involving them in decisions and in establishing rules. Through this process, not only will the child learn how to make decisions, but they will be much more likely to respect decisions and rules that they helped create.
- Teach your child the future skills he/she will need before they leave home--laundry, cooking--balanced meals, money management, time management, decision-making skills, doing taxes, etc.
- Discipline appropriately when necessary.
- Teach them the skills they presently need--social skills, hygiene, dating etiquette, how to resist negative peer pressure, cultural skills, etc.
- Teach other specific skills to your child--scouts (boy or girl) with its variety of skills and activities is an excellent way to be involved in teaching your child.
- Teach him/her useful car maintenance skills--how to check the oil, change a tire, etc.
- Teach your child computer skills.
- Teach your child the moral and health issues related to sex education--values, risks, etc. (involve your spouse, especially for a daughter) (see A Parent's Guide, 1985).
- Teach spiritual development--praying together, etc.
- Teach responsibility through chores, etc.

*Coordinate these teaching activities with the child's mother to combine your efforts.*

### **Monitoring**

- Be aware of homework assignments. Monitor your child's academic situation and be available for help. Attend parent-teacher conferences.
- Be aware of the child's extra-curricular activities and give support.
- Be aware of where your child goes and what is done on dates and activities.
- Have a party at your house so you can get to know his/her friends and oversee TV or movie watching.
- Monitor her/his progress in difficult areas, and give praise for improvement.
- Be aware of the health, grooming, and well-being of your child--anorexia/bulimia, drug/alcohol use, promiscuity, depression, etc.

*(Monitor together with your spouse. By working together, you may be able to be more aware of your child's situation.)*

### **Thought Processes**

- Think, write, or discuss with your spouse the plans and dreams of the kind of father you want to be. How can you stay on track?
- Think, write, or discuss with your spouse about another person who you have noticed parents in a way you think is admirable. What can you learn from their example?
- Think, write, or discuss with your spouse the memories you have of your own father. How would you like to father your own child based on those experiences.
- Think, write, or discuss with your spouse the times you enjoy most with your child. What aspects of your relationship are you doing well in?
- Think, write, or discuss with your spouse the challenges you have had with your child. What are some of your strengths you can draw on to better meet those challenges?
- Think, write, or discuss with your spouse the kinds of stories you would want your child to tell of you as their father.
- Pray for your child and for you as his/her father.

### **Errands**

- Go with them to do their (or your own) errands. This is a natural way to be with and communicate with your child without it being a formal "sit down and talk" session.
- Be available to drive your child where they need to go.
- Make calls for her/him.

### **Care Giving**

- Take care of your child when she/he is sick--take them a blanket, cook some soup, take their temperature, give them medicine, etc. Like most people, teens seem to enjoy the extra attention they receive when they are sick, even if they usually do not want it.

### **Child-Related Maintenance**

- Do the laundry, dishes, cooking, and cleaning for your child. If possible, include your child as you do it.
- Repair broken items for your child that need fixing.
- Help care for a child's pet.

### **Shared Interests**

- Develop a shared interest with your child--possibly something unique between the two of you. Spend time doing and learning more about that interest. (sports, animals, stars, nature, cooking, computers, cars, etc.)

### **Availability**

- Be available to answer your child's questions--concerns, worries, peer problems to resolve, questions about intimacy, etc.

- Be available to help with homework.
- Be available to attend parent-teacher conferences at your child's school.
- Be available to attend extra-curricular activities such as school plays, dance or music recitals, sports events, spelling bees, etc.
- Be available to attend award ceremonies and special recognition events for your child.
- Be available to meet his/her friends. By making your house available for social gatherings (parties, videos, games, etc.) you can easily meet and have fun with your child's social group. Through this process, you may also become a generative "adopted parent" to some of his/her friends that do not have a generative parent of their own.
- Allow and encourage your child to enter into your own leisure activities.
- Be with your child when he/she won't go alone--doctor appointments, facing fears, etc.

*(Coordinate with your spouse to be available for the child.)*

### **Planning**

- Plan vacations and trips that would be interesting to your child.
- Plan shared activities with your child.
- Plan your work schedule so you can be available to spend time with them--coach a soccer team, attend events, etc.
- Plan birthday parties, surprises, holidays, etc.
- Save for his/her future. Encourage them to do the same.

*(Involve the mother in the planning.)*

### **Shared Activities**

- Work together doing yard work--mowing the lawn, weeding, planting, etc.
- Work together doing house maintenance--doing the dishes, painting, cleaning, etc.
- Fix the car together. Allow the child to actively participate and learn.
- Go shopping together--groceries, clothes, etc.
- Play sports together--basketball, soccer, tennis, swimming, biking, ping-pong, etc.
- Walk or exercise together.
- Go to the movies or go dancing with your child.
- Eat meals together.
- Celebrate holidays together.
- Chaperon events for your child.
- Spend time together in the outdoors--picnicking, camping, fishing, rappelling, hiking, hunting, dutch-oven cooking, bird watching, canoeing, etc.

*(Since peers are so important to your child at this time in life, you may consider occasionally including their friends in these activities, but not every one. Be sure to use some of the activities to spend time with just him/her.)*

### **Providing**

- Provide opportunities for your child to develop personal interests, skills, or talents--music lessons, scouts, sports, nature clubs, drama or choir trips, etc.
- Provide educational/occupational information and opportunities--how to prepare for the SAT/ACT or a trade exam, how to write resumes, how to complete applications, what to do in an interview, how to find a job, etc.
- Provide the necessities--housing, clothing, financing, food, medical care, etc. Adolescence is also a good time to foster independence by allowing him/her to begin to provide some of these things for themselves.

- Provide appropriate insurance for your child.

*(Coordinate these efforts with your spouse.)*

### **Affection**

- Give physical affection--hugs, kisses, pats on the back, back rubs, etc.
- Give verbal affection--praise, express thanks, compliment on looks, say "I love you," encourage, etc.
- Remember, a smile is worth a thousand words and a bunch of hugs.

### **Protection**

- Instruct child about emergency preparedness--fire and earthquake safety (and other natural disasters).
- Ensure the child wears seat belts, helmets, life jackets, etc. when appropriate.
- Instruct about personal safety--rape, self defense, activities to avoid, etc.

### **Supporting Emotionally**

- Support the development of your child's interests, even if they are different from your own. Be available for advise, comfort, and coaching.
- Support and encourage their extra-curricular activities, whatever they might be