

Places for Struggling Teens™

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"It is more important to get it right, than to get it first."

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Are Fathers Necessary?

by Lon Woodbury



Father's Day seems to bring this question up more often every year. After years of sitcoms and advertisements usually showing fathers as well meaning dunderheads, and divorce courts seeing fathers as primarily "money-making machines," there does seem to be a wide spread sense in our society that fathers are incidental. Many people seem to have the attitude that fathers might be nice to have around, but the real work of raising a child is done by the mother. At the extreme, some seem to feel a single mother can provide everything a child needs to grow up into a mature adult – and that fathers are not necessary.

This attitude of dismissing the importance of the father to their children does a child no service. A fatherless home sometimes cannot be avoided, and more power to the mothers (and fathers) that tackle the job of a single parent, but this is not the ideal for a child. It is best when possible for a child to have both a loving mother and a loving father.

The Gurian Institute, writing under the umbrella of Rocky Mountain Learning Enterprises, Colorado, wrote a response (in their email on July 10) to an article that appeared in a national magazine for Father's Day making the case that fathers were relatively useless. The Institute published a number of statistics showing that children are in greater risk in a number of ways when raised in a fatherless home. Many examples can be found by simply entering into a search engine the term "Children Raised Without Fathers." Some of the statistics from examples that come up include:

- 63 percent of youth suicides are from fatherless homes (5 times the average) *US Dept. Of Health/Census*
- 90 percent of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes (32 times the average)
- 85 percent of all children who show behavior disorders come from fatherless homes (20 times the average) *Center for Disease Control*
- 71 percent of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes (9 times the average) *National Principals Association Report*
- 70 percent of youths in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes (9 times the average) *US Dept. of Justice*
- 85 percent of all youths in prison come from fatherless homes – (20 times the average) *Fulton Co. Georgia, Texas Dept. of Correction*

This is something to think about the next time you see some article, sitcom, movie or advertisement depicting fathers as somebody to not take seriously. Is this attitude damaging the future of some children?

Visit parent-empowerment-blog.com/2010/07/12/are-fathers-necessary/ to discuss your opinion on this topic.

Three Qualities That Make Dads Great

by Rose Mulligan

As we recognize fathers everywhere, parenting and education experts Laura and Malcolm Gauld share some words of wisdom about what they've seen work best for dads who are successful in their parenting.

As the president and head of family programs of the Hyde Schools, a network of prep and charter schools based in character education, Malcolm and Laura have worked with dads and their families for more than three decades. As the authors of "The Biggest Job We'll Ever Have" book and parenting seminars, they've seen what works – and clearly what doesn't.

"Every parent has the best intentions," says Malcolm.

"Nonetheless, it's easy to fall into common parenting traps that won't help your kids."

What are some of those traps?

"Believe it or not, one of the big traps is focusing on rules,"

Laura explains. "Every family needs some rules, as they offer specific boundaries. But applying new rules every time something starts to spin out of control, like 'No, you can't eat in that room, either!' will not help your kids."

This is what the Gaulds suggest instead:

1. Rather than focus on rules, place your primary focus on principles.

"Principles are the rock foundation that deepens your children's understanding of what it means to live a good, meaningful life,"says Malcolm. "They are the values you live by, what you believe in, what you stand for. These are the things that will guide your children through life."

2. Make truth a priority —- even at the expense of harmony.

Fathers who understand and practice the concept of placing truth before maintaining harmony in the family earn deep respect from their children and their parenting partners. All dads want harmony, but those that prioritize the truth over maintaining harmony raise families of strong character.

"We can all relate to not wanting to hurt someone's feelings by avoiding telling the truth to keep the peace, or wanting to please someone," Malcolm explains. "We often easily rationalize these

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