

# Fastbreak For Fathers

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**a monthly e-mail to help you be the kind of dad your child needs you to be.**

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**In this issue: *Dads and Daughters***

## OBSERVATIONS

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My oldest child, my daughter, recently turned seventeen. Yesterday, as I told her goodnight, I realized our brief time of connection each night would soon be gone. A ritual that used to include; tucking her in, butterfly kisses, a prayer and the phrase, "I love you . . . bullfrogs," now involves; maneuvering through the obstacle course called her floor, diverting her eyes from the laptop on her bed, a kiss on the cheek, a prayer and the phrase, "I love you . . . bullfrogs . . . don't stay up too late."

"Bullfrogs," that amphibian has verbally hopped back and forth between us almost every night for sixteen years. It started, innocently enough, in response to beer advertisement. One spring evening, as I strapped her in the car seat, her eyes were drawn to a huge billboard image of several bullfrogs towering over our car. My eyes caught what had captured hers and I described what we both saw. "Bullfrogs," I said. She responded with a gift of laughter no father could resist, so I said it again, and again as we drove home, and later that night as I tucked her into bed. The sparkle in her eye and smile on her face told me we had stumbled onto something that was worth protecting. Now almost sixteen years later our little ritual continues.

Before I am ready to accept it, she will no longer be sleeping in the room down the hall. Our nightly ritual will adapt to e-mails and phone calls. Transcending our personal lingo, our life together has shaped each of us and will continue to shape us as the dynamics of our relationship changes through the years. I would be remiss to write off the impact "bullfrogs" has had on our relationship. That silly little amphibian moniker has captured our world like a raindrop captures the sun. It will stand the test of time.

## IDEAS

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Studies repeatedly confirm that young women fare substantially better if they have fathers who affirm and support their development, yet a recent national poll on the state of father-daughter relationships, commissioned by the national advocacy nonprofit Dads and Daughters (results are posted at [www.dadsanddaughters.org](http://www.dadsanddaughters.org)), found that two-thirds of the

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dads surveyed didn't think their active involvement was vital to their daughter's health and well-being. While your daughter's well-being will be impacted by numerous influences, I believe you, as her father, play a vital role. Consider these ideas as you seek to nurture your relationship:

- **Develop little rituals** that reinforce the message, "Dad loves me, he cares about me."
- **Take her out on dates.** Brainstorm a list of things to do together and then put them on your calendar.
- **Listen to her** with both your eyes and your ears.
- **Connect to her world.** What does she like? Dislike? What does she look forward to? What is she worried about?
- **Play with her;** help her be physically active and affirm her abilities.
- **Never stop hugging her.**
- **Focus on what she thinks, feels, believes, dreams and does,** more than how she looks.
- **Be the dad she needs you to be.**

## RESEARCH

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Examining data collected from girls beginning at age 5 and extending to age 18 in the U.S. and New Zealand, Bruce Ellis and colleagues found that daughters who experienced father absence were more likely to become sexually active as teens and experience a teen pregnancy. The rates of teen pregnancy for girls who lived in a home without their father were seven to eight times higher than those who lived with their father. The researchers indicated, "**father presence was a major protective factor against early sexual outcomes, even if other risk factors were present.**" This and other studies underline how important it is for dads to stay connected to their daughters during adolescence and particularly when a family breaks up. Ellis et al (2003). Does Father Absence Place Daughters at Special Risk for Early Sexual Activity and Teenage Pregnancy? *Child Development*, 74 (3), 801-821.

A study of 2,722 British adolescents aged 14-18 years explored whether paternal involvement can protect against low levels of well-being even when maternal involvement and risk and protective factors are controlled for. Results showed that **although both father and mother involvement contributed significantly and independently to offspring happiness, father involvement had a stronger effect.** Father involvement appeared to be as closely bound up with the well-being of daughters as it is with that of sons. The study did not find any evidence to support the notion that family disruption weakens the salience of fathers for children's well-being. Flouri, E and Buchanan, A. (2003). The Role of Father Involvement and Mother Involvement in Adolescents' Psychological Well-Being. *British Journal of Social Work* 33, 399-406.

## RESOURCES

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**Daughters** ([www.daughters.com](http://www.daughters.com)) newsletter delivers effective parenting and communication techniques tailored specifically for parents of girls in all stages of adolescence. A highly-targeted, all-in-one-place parenting resource, Daughters blends the expertise of professionals with the ideas and wisdom of experienced parents – digested, filtered, and compiled in a compact, easy-to-read, take-it-anywhere reference delivered in 6 issues per year.

**Father~Daughter Summits** – Day long experience, developed by the National Center for Fathering, designed to strengthen the relationship between dads and their daughters.

<http://support.fathers.com/site/PageServer?pagename=FatherDaughterSummitDetails>

**Books**

*Dads and Daughters: How to inspire, understand, and support your daughter when she's growing up so fast* by Joe Kelly.

*Girls Will Be Girls: Raising Confident and Courageous Daughters* by JoAnn Deak.

*How to Father a Successful Daughter* by Nicky Marone.

**Websites**

[www.dadsanddaughters.org](http://www.dadsanddaughters.org) national advocacy nonprofit

[www.girlpower.gov](http://www.girlpower.gov) interactive site for teens as well as their parents

<http://edcdenver.com> Eating Disorder Center of Denver

[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org) National Eating Disorders Association

**CONNECTIONS (specific to Douglas County Colorado)**

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**Father Fraternity** – (Parker Adventist Hospital) Classes for new dads. Call 303.269.4390 for more information and to register.

**Sky Ridge Dads** – (Sky Ridge Medical Center) Classes for new dads. Call 720.225.2229 for more information and to register.

**The Parent University** – (Douglas County School District) Parenting classes. Call 303.387.0128 for current course schedule.

**"You can't be the kind of dad that you want to be. You can't be the kind of dad that you wanted to have. You've got to be the kind of dad that your child needs you to be."**  
-Roland Warren, The National Fatherhood Initiative

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**Fastbreak for Fathers** is a publication of the *Douglas County FatherWork Connection*, a countywide, research-based, fathering education and advocacy initiative committed to increasing the probability of every child in Douglas County Colorado being intimately connected to an involved, responsible and loving father or father figure.

**The Douglas County FatherWork Connection is facilitated by  
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