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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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by Rich Batten, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Douglas County  
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

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**In this issue: The Importance of Connecting**

- Are you connected?
- Connecting with your teen is pivotal to their well-being and your relationship.
- Ideas to improve your connecting with your kids.
- Upcoming FatherWork classes in Douglas County.

## **Observations**

When was the last time you *connected* with your kid? I must admit that as much as I talk to or do things with my children, I don't connect with them nearly as much as I would like, or need to. **Connection** begins with being together. This is not necessarily a matter of physical location; it **is a matter of emotional location**. I can be physically present sitting on the floor playing a game with my son and still be emotionally miles away. I can be physically miles away from my daughter but emotionally supporting her via the phone. Creating and maintaining a meaningful connection with your child requires more than your body. It requires your soul.

The work of connecting isn't easy. Its very nature requires both of you. As a father, I put the burden, no, the joy of connecting on my shoulders, literally. I need to turn toward my son. I need to tune into my daughter's world. I need to look into their eyes and see their hearts. The holidays of November and December often provide additional opportunities to be with our children. What can you do to create the opportunities to connect?

## **Research**

A study published this fall by Brotherson, Yamamoto and Acock explores the influence of communication and connection on father-child relationships. In regards to connection, their research supported the hypothesis that **higher levels of father-adolescent connection tend to have a positive and significant influence on the quality of the father-child relationship**. Father-child connection in this study referred to a father's efforts to create and maintain an interpersonal connection with his child by active participation in the child's life. Adolescence may be a time when connection through mutual activities is an especially important part of the father-child relationship for both sons and daughters. Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health indicate that "connectedness to parents/family" is **perhaps the most important protective factor for adolescents in reducing behavioral risks** (Resnick et al., 1997).

Brotherson, S.E., Yamamoto, T., Acock, A.C. (2003). Connection and Communication in Father-Child Relationships and Adolescent Child Well-Being. *Fathering*, 1(3), 191-214.  
Resnick, M.D., Bearman, P., Blum, R.W., Bauman, K.E., Harris, K.M., Jones, J., et al. (1997) Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278(10), 823-832.

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## Ideas

- **Turn toward your child:** Pay attention to how you physically respond to your child. Do you make it a point to give her your undivided attention? Who communicates more joy in seeing your child – you or the family dog?
- **Tune into your child's world:** Can you name his best friends? Do you know her favorite music? What are his current worries? What are the three most special experiences in her life? These and similar questions will help gauge how in tune you really are.
- **Look into your child's heart:** What do you see in her movements, his expressions, her eyes? Most children wear their heart on their sleeve; we just don't take the time to observe it. Try using feeling words to describe what you see – "You seem . . . disappointed/encouraged/hurt/excited/distracted/hopeful/lonely/overwhelmed/happy."

## Connections (specific to Douglas County Colorado)

**New Dads** (four session course offered by Parker Adventist Hospital) Session one: Monday, January 12 (Dads only), Session two: Tuesday, February 17 (dads and infants), Session three: Tuesday, March 2 (dads and infants), Session four: Tuesday, March 16 (Dads, moms and infants) All classes are from 7:00 – 8:30 PM. Call 303.269.4390 for more information and to register.

**For Women Only: Insights to help your husband become an even better father** Tuesday, January 20 6:30 – 8:30 PM at Pine Grove Elementary School – Parker. Call 303.387.0128 to register. Cost \$10.00

**Dads and Daughters** (class for fathers of daughters ages 10-15) Tuesday, January 27. 6:30 – 8:30 PM at Ranch View Middle School – Highlands Ranch. Call 303.387.0128 to register. Cost \$10.00

**Spirited Kids Need Confident Parents** Thursdays February 12 & 26. 6:30 – 8:30 PM at Northridge Elementary School – Highlands Ranch Call 303.387.0128 to register. Cost \$15.00

**"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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