

BOAZ ADHENGU



FATHERHOOD

BOAZ ADHENGU

FATHERHOOD



ulu
2020

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, this publication may only be reproduced, stored or transmitted, in any form or by any means, with the prior permission in writing of the author, or in the case of reprographic reproduction in accordance with the terms and licences issued by the CLA. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside these terms should be sent to the publishers at the undermentioned addresses:

627 Davis Drive, Suite 300
27560 Morrisville, North Carolina.
United States



©2021 By Boaz Adhengo. All Rights Reserved

The right of Boaz Adhengo to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

Printed in Great Britain by
Adhesh-Kapur Colour Press Ltd, Gosport, Hampshire

To purchase your own copy of this or any of Jahwar Amber Creative Enterprise collections of Adhengo's list of eBooks please go to www.adhengo.mizizzi.com

eBook ISBN: 978-1-716-32383-6

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://www.adhengo.com/fatherhood.info/reader>

Design and typography: **Adhengo Boaz & Associates**



www.adhengoboaz.com



[@adhengobeuz](#)



Table of Contents

I	Cultured	1.
II	Reflections	7.
III	Becoming Practical	19.



Cultured

Chapter One

In traditional African communities, where the collective need commonly overrode that of the individual, mothers became the first members of the family to present this social lesson to their children. They and their helpers presented such lessons through teachable moments bound to daily life activities. They used a variety of instructional methods such as songs, sayings, proverbs, and play to teach the children the right attitudes and behaviour expected of them in the community. The instructional methods and content proceeded from the philosophical tenets of African indigenous education. Among these tenets were that education was a preparation for successful life in the community, it was holistic, perennial and communal. The mothers contrived teachable moments to train the children. There would be some organized plans of instruction that the growing children were exposed towards community programs such as instruction at circumcision or de-teething initiations, as is the case with the *dholuo* speaking ethnics.

Mothers punished behaviour that was frowned on by the community in various ways depending on its severity; the severity of the behaviour hinged on how disruptive of communal and personal peace it was. This punishment ranged from reprimand, age appropriate learning chores, to infliction of pain such as paddling for children old enough to understand its meaning. Hence, due to this close interaction between the children and their mothers in these formative years, the relationship that grew between them reinforced the important status that mothers held within the family and in their children's eyes, even into the children's adulthood. Mothers are revered by their children who consult and defer to them in their major decisions throughout life.

As the children grew older and increasingly engaged with community members, they became the responsibility of all in the community while still maintaining a strong attachment to their nuclear families. At the age of about 10 years, more structured instruction was designed for the children in the community. This kind of instruction was additionally contrived when compared to the instruction the children received from their parents and relatives. Some content that involved community members required specialized instructors such as community youth sexuality counsellors. Such counsellors organized instruction sessions for young people during rites of passage into adulthood, such as teeth extraction for the Luo girls and boys.

Parenting is a universal phenomenon pervasive in all human cultures and societies. Although culturally universal, parenting is culturally relative. In other words, whilst parenting is known to exist across all cultures, it differs from one culture to another. Parenting in western or individualistic cultures significantly differs from that in collectivistic cultures like the Kenya or wider Africa. Throughout the world, different groups of people favour particular behaviours in carrying out parenting obligations. Just as with other aspects of human life, childrearing practices have been influenced by changing times and trends. Lately, enhanced communication and exchange of ideas have also enabled the sharing of different parenting styles and roles. Traditionally, Kenyan ethnic communities assigned distinct parental roles to mothers and fathers. With the passage of time, parenting in Kenyan ethnic communities has changed, blurring the roles of mothers and fathers and even introducing alternative providers of parenting services. Additionally, societal dynamics from within and outside the country

continue to influence and redefine the traditional practices of parenthood among Kenyans. Other impacts of modernity include the unravelling of traditional family structures; factors that pre-date modernity such as disease, poverty, and strife have also influenced how Kenyan parents rear their children. Yet, some aspects of traditional and pre-colonial childrearing practices are still practiced today.

Parental roles and practices evolve to adapt to emerging ideas and trends. These roles are modified by the changing social, economic, cultural, and personal needs and ways of life of the community members.

There have been dramatic changes in family patterns throughout the industrialized world during the last third of the twentieth century. Male-female relationships have become less committed, at least as indicated by the rapid rise in divorce and in cohabitation, which in most countries also involves less commitment than marriage. The couple relationship has become a much less central and stable element in adults' lives, both for men and for women. These patterns are frequently noted.

Less frequently noted, however, is a clear concomitant: that parenthood has become a much less central and stable element in men's lives, not only compared with the past, but particularly as compared with its role in the lives of women. In all of the countries undergoing these changes, the connections between men and children have become complex. Men are increasingly unlikely to live with their own biological children, struggling (*some more and some much less successfully*) to maintain rewarding and supportive

relationships with them, yet increasingly likely to live with other children, the children of their current partner, with whom it is not clear at all what sorts of relationships should be established or maintained.

Fatherhood is a process related to the formulation of fatherhood practices determined by social traditions, values and norms. Understanding the cultural coding of men as fathers, we must take into consideration not only the fathers' rights, duties, responsibilities and statuses but also the broad discursive terrain around fatherhood and fathers.

Fatherhood is formed by a variety of social institutions and discourses including the government, the legal system, medicine and public health, the mass media and the educational system. These institutions and discourses reflect deeply engrained values, influence public policy and affect the private lives of many men.

Currently experts of gender studies and family sociologists pay a considerable attention to masculinity studies and the phenomenon of fatherhood. The improvement of women's situation in society is inevitably related not only to social visibility of their problems and strategies of empowerment in the public sphere but also to the transformation of the meanings of hegemonic masculinity and the more equal share of power among genders in society. The findings of masculinity studies demonstrate that in contemporary societies the role of men in family life and particularly in child care becomes a more significant part of masculine self-realization than ever before.

Reflections



Chapter Two

Zeno of Cyprus, a Greek philosopher, is said to have conceived of a cosmic unity which preceded the Roman concept of universal brotherhood, already three centuries before the birth and life of Jesus Christ; who then extended on the idea of the brotherhood of man by making us understand that God was the Father of all people. Many philosophers claim that the meaning of one's life cannot be found solely within or with reference to oneself any way.

A life that truly has meaning, they say, reaches out beyond itself to affect others and make an impact that is, in some sense, significant and positive. Although some disagree with this assessment, at the very least it is relatively uncontroversial that making such an impact can be a component in an ultimately meaningful life. And all other things being equal, a life that does create a positive impact does seem to be more meaningful than a similar life that doesn't. If fatherhood does provide a meaning to life, therefore, it may do so partly in virtue of the fatherly activities one performs. If a father receives his meaning in life from performing those activities, it is because he himself has chosen to perform those activities.

Fatherhood is a concept that has prevailed for fifty centuries and is understood in different ways by different cultures and religions globally and is therefore socially constructed. Despite these small differences in the construction of the concept, a golden thread can be seen in the meaning that most cultures and religious affiliations attach to it. Most understandings then entail a patriarchal notion, which inherently also links to the provision and protection role of the pater. As a general and broad definition, fatherhood is understood as a position of power over one's biological or adopted children thus justified by the provision, protection and

disciplinarian role inherent in the conceptualisation of *'father'*. Christianity through the institution of the church has the performative function of monitoring the behaviour of affiliates, thereby encouraging sexual fidelity and commitment to the family, and providing a meaningful order which supports men to deal effectively and constructively with the numerous stresses of daily living, in a modern, globalised world.

It is understandable that there are no perfect human specimens in the human race; however, social sciences have concluded that when an individual is incubated within an atmosphere of love, unity, and caring between two parental elements, there is a definite transfer of those qualities and characteristics to the next generation. In essence, the human family produces after its own kind.

The natural, logical process of reproduction, which involves the intimate consummation of two individuals, gives evidence that God designed the human family to procreate within the context of a strong, stable union structured to provide the social, psychological, emotional, physical, and spiritual environment for successful development. Therefore, the greatest enemy of man is ignorance of self.

Nothing is more frustrating than not knowing who you are or what to do with what you have. It is debilitating to have something but not know what it is for or how to use it. Even more frustrating is to have an assignment but not know how to fulfil it. Being a father can be taxing, and not just because we fail sometimes. Rather, it has a lot to do with knowing what is involved in being a good father. Of course, having knowledge of the essential qualities of fatherhood is

one thing; using such knowledge in daily living is another; but to become a good father, it is important to grasp the essentials of fatherhood. And this involves an understanding of the roles and responsibilities expected of a father more so than the rights and privileges of fatherhood.

An authentic father, aside from being well versed in the norms of the society, is a person who must have a well-integrated personality. He must be hardworking, financially prudent, socially competent, morally acceptable, and culturally adept. By financial prudence, I mean having the skills necessary to provide for his entire household.

The meaning and worth of love as a feeling is that it really forces us, with all our being, to acknowledge for another the same absolute significance which, because of the power of egoism, we are conscious of only in our own selves. Love is important not only as one of our feelings, but as the transfer of all our interest in life from ourselves to another, as the shifting of the very centre of our lives. Fatherhood is about transferring an orientation from self to children. This transference requires attentiveness to the past and to any unresolved concerns which exist as barriers to love.

Psalm 82:5 identifies three progressive components that are the source of our suffering in life. First, there is a lack of knowledge - "*they know nothing*." Second, there is a misunderstanding or misconception of life - "*they understand nothing*" and cannot comprehend their environment. And third, there is a lack of spiritual sight - "*they walk about in darkness*"; they see nothing. The word

“darkness” in the original Hebrew connotes the principle of ignorance.

If you attempt to live and solve the challenges of life from a position of ignorance, then you are walking in darkness and will experience exasperation, frustration, and failure; that is why fathers have to understand their purpose in this role of relation, and this is wisdom.

Fatherhood is not a choice for a male but is inherent in his very nature; the essence of the male is fatherhood. Every adult male is meant to be a father, and his personal fulfilment is linked to living out that purpose.

Purpose is the source of all true fulfilment and defines one’s existence. Without purpose, life ceases to be an existence and it becomes a mere experiment. If men do not know, understand, or fulfil their God-given purpose, then problems will arise both in their identity and their relationships.

The male is the nourisher of fruit. The seed of a tree gets planted, and then it becomes another tree that bears fruit. Whatever comes out of the seed is fruit; therefore you, as a father, are responsible for nourishing the fruit. The seed supplies the tree that sustains the fruit that, in turn, produces more seed. A father means nourisher; more so, the male is the source of the female.

First Corinthians 11:8 says, “*For man did not come from woman, but woman from man.*” Therefore, the glory of the man is the woman. In other words, the man is responsible for what came out of

him. Since woman came from man, men are responsible for women and how they treat them. If you are a young man who is dating a young woman, you are to treat her with respect, as you would want someone to treat your own daughter. You are not to pressure her into sexual intercourse before marriage. When a woman goes out with a man, she's supposed to feel protected physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Fatherhood is an awesome responsibility because you are the progenitor of all that comes out of you and must protect all that comes out of you. Father means a nourisher and a protector.

Fatherhood is God's way of building and sustaining the human family. His plan is to fulfil His vision of the earth as an extension of His heavenly kingdom. This happens as the male functions as the foundation of the home, allowing all those he is responsible for the protection and freedom to grow and prosper as God intended, for His glory and the expansion of His ways on the earth.

At the root of sin is the absence of real fathers in our world. The sin problem is a fatherhood problem, because sin is the result of a man - Adam - who declared independence from God, his Source and Father. Adam believed he didn't need a father and that he could be a father without the Father. That is when the human race fell into rebellion against God.

Adam became a fatherless child, yet Adam himself had children whom he inflicted with fatherlessness. And Adam's first child was not Cain. The first "*offspring*" that came out of Adam was a female - Eve. (See *Genesis 2:20-24*) Since Adam spiritually orphaned himself, Eve and every subsequent offspring were spiritual orphans.

The mission of Jesus was to return orphaned humanity back to God, and to restore earthly family relationships to the way He intended them to be. Malachi prophesied that this would begin to happen when John the Baptist prepared the way for the Messiah: “*He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse*” (Malachi 4:6).

A path of access, a special doorway to the mystery of God is given to little children, that of God’s mercy. In light of mercy we can contemplate the whole mystery of God, and penetrate it very intimately. For this to occur, however, we must live this mercy. We must let ourselves be enveloped by it completely, which demands the attitude of great humility. The merciful father locates himself directly within the “*world*” of his child. He chooses to be compassionate, tender, sensitive, and empathic, though he may wish to be perceived to be as strong as iron. Empathic fathers are competent at actively listening to their children’s body language, words, and silence.

The greatest example of the critical role of father was demonstrated in the life of Jesus. He spoke of His Father more than anyone else. He expressed and emphatically confessed His need, dependency, and submission to His Father at every opportunity. He never hesitated to give credit to His Father for any activity or success, thereby confirming the sustaining work of God in His life. He saw His Father as the source, resource, and purpose for His entire life.

We would be much better fathers to our sons if we had a much better understanding of our own fathers. If you are like most men, though, you find the subject painful. You don't want to talk to your spouse, friends, or children about how your father made you feel when you were growing up. You don't want to analyse your father's behaviours toward you and how they influenced the person you became. When did you last have an in-depth discussion involving your feelings about your father? At best, you probably can count these discussions on the fingers of one hand. At worst, you can't recall this type of conversation at all.

Men's reluctance to explore these issues isn't always because their fathers physically or verbally abused them or because their parents' divorce hurt them. Instead, men *naturally* avoid intense, life-shaping feelings from their childhood. It may not be a specific incident but a pattern of paternal behaviour that made them feel ashamed, scared, or angry. They don't want to think about all those times their father didn't acknowledge their achievements or contributed to their sense of insecurity or inferiority.

Men also don't want to focus on how what happened all those years ago affects their own fathering behaviours. It is scary to realize that you are having the same negative impact on your son as your father had on you. While your behaviours around your son are probably different, you are conjuring up the same feelings in him.

Exploring these feelings, however, can make you a much more *conscious* father and help you to change your behaviours toward your son in a positive way. Men father reflexively. They don't think a lot about what they are going to say to their sons at any given

moment or how their actions may affect their sons. As a result, they slip into patterns that are directly related to their experiences with their own fathers, and some of these patterns are not emotionally healthy.

You are never going to be willing to examine your relationship with your father until you stop protecting him - and yourself. Subconsciously, you are terrified of what would happen if the details of this relationship were exposed. Even if nothing truly terrible happened during your developmental years, it feels terrible. When you are a five-year-old whose father snubs him, it seems like a slap in the face. You may have been raised in an environment of numerous arguments, and the memory of all the then-traumatic fights still feels traumatic now, even though they were typical family fare. From your perspective, it seems pointless to expose these feelings to scrutiny. The possibility of re-creating these youthful arguments and feelings of rejection and embarrassment is nil, but in the back of your mind you don't want to take the chance. The pain of those early experiences subconsciously subverts logical analysis.

In other words, it is impossible to let go of all the rage, shame, and resentment your father's parenting built up in you unless you take conscious hold of it. You can only let go of the past and live in the present when you possess all the things you discover in that reflection. Only then can you react to your son in the present without the past intruding on how you speak to and act toward him.

Fatherhood means dependability in the face of temptations. It means fair and informed leadership that is sensitive to the good of the

family and of its individual members. It means readiness to share and execute legitimate parental authority. It means willingness to reflect on both experience and some basic concepts in order to develop material and social wisdom. And it means sharing all this with our children.

Just as we need to be aware of our genetic heritage for medical reasons, we need to recognize the patterns and problems that are passed down from one father to the next. Realistically, most of us can't obtain much information about the men in our family beyond our grandfathers, although it would be useful to profile our great-grandfather and his father and grandfather. If we could see six or seven generations of fathers and examine their parenting behaviours with their sons, a clear pattern would quickly emerge.

This pattern would be extraordinarily useful to you as a father in that it would allow you to identify tendencies and traits that have been passed down through the generations and that might be harming your son. The most obvious generational fathering problem is physical abuse, and we see it recurring with alarming regularity in certain families. More subtle problems, however, are also passed down through the generations, and the more we are aware of them, the easier we can avoid them.

A little knowledge goes a long way toward breaking the fathering pattern in your family. Ideally, you will pass on the knowledge to your son of the fathering flaws handed down from one generation to the next, and this knowledge will enable your son to avoid slipping into the same behavioural patterns. It also will help him to better understand you, just as it will help you to better understand your

father. This understanding can dissipate the resentment, bitterness, and anger that lingers long after a father is gone. In certain ways, it is more difficult to be a father today, especially a father to boys. The challenges now seem far more formidable than years ago. Back then, boys had good role models.

Just as significantly, we have become a much more cynical society. In the past, our cultural and religious institutions inculcated ideals in our boys. Now, irony and sarcasm dominate the messages kids receive. Many boys are heavily influenced by rap music, popular movies and television shows, and commercials. Because they are less likely to be religious or to join and stay with scouts, boys are vulnerable to the cynical tenor of the times we live in. Everyone from late-night talk show hosts to disk jockeys to singers takes on a hip, jaded persona. As a result, boys resist sincerity, generosity, and kindness because they are decidedly unhip.

Neighbourhoods used to be places where boys learned good values, and if they got out of line, a neighbour - usually a male - would immediately put them in their place. The tight-knit nature of most communities meant that parents would know immediately if their son had done something wrong, and more likely than not, dad would punish him for his transgression. Now neighbourhoods tend to be less tight-knit and more transient; it is quite possible that the next-door neighbours don't even know what your son looks like.

Finally, most parents aren't at home as much as they were in the past. This is due in part to the changing world of work; people simply have to work harder and longer in more competitive industries. In a global world, professional people not only must be

on the road more, but that road also often stretches into countries on the other side of the earth from their homes. When both parents work, this deepens the moral vacuum. Kids are being raised by nannies and au-pairs who may be unwilling or unable to communicate good values to children. While this hurts the moral development of both girls and boys, boys are especially vulnerable. Whether or not women work, they tend to invest more time and effort in parenting, modelling behaviours and values for their daughters. In addition, when both parents are working, a female authority figure - often a grandmother or another female relative - becomes the substitute caregiver, leaving boys without a consistent male presence.

All these trends and events make it imperative that men be more conscious and involved as fathers than in the past. To face these challenges effectively, you must make the effort to understand how your own father's parenting has affected your fathering style, and you also must be aware of the dos and don'ts as your son moves through his developmental stages.

Becoming Practical



Chapter Three

When kids enter your life, you don't have to earn their respect. As their dad, you have it. From the moment they set their eyes on you, they admire you and see you as a bastion of strength and authority, and, unless you show them otherwise, of courage and heroism. You might not feel like a hero but my exhortation to that you should live like you are a hero. Be the man they want you to be; it is, more often than not, the man you want to be - and can be.

Fathers today have a special challenge, because it's hard to provide moral leadership in a society that has disassembled traditional moral values, indeed in some cases turned them on their head. But really moral leadership relies on the same virtue it always has, and that's moral courage - which means having the intestinal fortitude to do, say, and believe what you know to be right. A sense of right and wrong comes from a well formed conscience that doesn't make up its own rules; but that conforms itself to eternal truth. Having a strong moral conscience, a firm idea of what is right and wrong, is part of being a man and that sense of right and wrong and moral leadership is woven into your DNA and written on your heart. You might reject that idea of eternal truth, but it doesn't reject you; you are subject to it all the same. As St. Paul reminds us, God's law is written on our hearts

One of the first qualities your children see in you is that you're tough - strong enough to take on the world on their behalf. Sometimes, especially in the teenage years, that strength will be tested, because they'll want to find out just how tough you are, just how much you care. Children need you to be calm when they are agitated, strong when they are weak, confident when they are fearful. That, in many ways, is what being a dad is all about. When

kids are acting up, a strong, quiet dad is usually much more capable of dealing with the problem than emotion-laden mom.

Women have more hormonal fluctuations than men do; they are also more likely to take things personally; and they are more easily driven to emotional reactions.

Children with stable, involved fathers:

- Have much higher levels of self-control, confidence, and sociability
- Are far less likely to engage in risky behaviours as adolescents
- Are far less likely to have behavioural or psychological problems
- Are far less likely to be delinquent (*this is especially true in low income families*)
- Do better on cognitive tests and get better grades
- Are more likely to become young adults with higher levels of economic and educational achievement, career success, occupational competency, and psychological well-being
- Studies suggest that fathers who are involved, nurturing, and playful with their infants have children with higher IQs, as well as better linguistic and cognitive capacities

Many boys grow up with fathers who, for one reason or another, have terrible tempers. Some men rage at their families and this is terrifying for kids. If you had a father who raged, you know what I mean. When the yelling started, you might have run to hide in your

room or a closet - or, if you were older, you might have confronted him, challenging him to stop, and borne the misery of facing him.

We all know children are mimics. But when it comes to dad, there's more to it than that. They study you every moment you're around, your body language and your tone of voice. They hang on your words. They need to know what you think and feel about them. Your good moments count - and so do your bad ones. For dads this can be scary. But your influence for good is enormous.

Clearly, when you as a father engage with your children, teach them, hug them, play with them, and support them, the message they receive is that they matter. When children feel that they matter to their fathers, their world feels safer, more secure; they feel protected. Social science and medical research can give us reams of statistics about how kids prosper in a family with a mother and a father, but I've also seen it, every day, for more than thirty years of working with children and their parents.

Daughters who grow up without their fathers are more likely to feel unsafe and seek comfort from other, older men, who often use them and then abandon them. Fatherless girls can grow up too fast. They often pursue serial boyfriends, seeking security and affirmation. Instead, they often suffer lasting scars of insecurity, abuse, depression, and disease. As a father, if you care about your daughter, you cannot leave her; you have a necessary role to protect her and show her what a man is supposed to be.

Fatherless sons are more likely to feel anxiety and are at greater risk for depression; if they're the eldest in the family, they will often

take on burdens that their father was meant to bear, and it can be too much for them. Giving sons too many burdens too soon, which can happen in fatherless families, means that they are children who miss out on childhood, and the many benefits that come from it. They too need protection; and they also need an ideal of manhood to aspire to.

Children will confide in their mothers, but they speak more carefully to their fathers, and the tone is usually more reserved. There are many reasons for this - and some of them are physical: dad is big and imposing and has a deep voice. But there are deeper reasons too. Many young children see mom as a permanent fixture in their lives. They believe that their mothers have to love them and stay with them. That's why many children can be so cruel to their mothers, because they assume mom will never leave; a mother's love is non-negotiable.

But many children don't feel that way about dad; they feel they have to earn their father's love. So they try harder to behave around dad. They don't want to get on his bad side and risk losing him. As a father, you might be totally committed; you might have a cheerful, generous, welcoming personality. But your children will still think they need to earn your respect and love. And that's a good thing, because when children respect their fathers, it makes for a healthier home life. Children tend to behave better when dad's at home - respecting his authority and wanting to keep in his good graces.

Children and teenagers are fundamentally egocentric. They want the attention of their parents - and they really aren't as concerned about a parent's well-being as most parents believe they are. Kids tend to

think of their own happiness, not their parents', and this is normal. And above all, they want the safety of a happy home where mom is there to help and dad is there to protect.

Children don't care if their parents are stuck in an unhappy marriage. They don't think of their parents as husband and wife, but as mom and dad. Mom and dad might be "*happier*" after a divorce (*though that's often not the case*) but their children aren't; they usually feel that the bottom has dropped from their worlds. They are confused, angry, and anxious. Many of them grieve as if one of their parents had died. With fathers, sons want a role model of what it means to be a man; daughters want their father's affection because it builds their self-esteem.

Many fathers are intimidated by their responsibilities; they fear, if they have daughters, that they know nothing about how to raise girls; with sons, they might feel handicapped if they themselves didn't have a good father as a role model. Many fathers are perfectionists; they feel that if they're not excellent, they're terrible; and if they think they're terrible, they tend to withdraw from the family.

Dads can find daughters a special challenge because they feel they don't understand them. But you don't have to understand your daughter to be a good father to her. You just have to be there for her, to protect her, to guide her, to set rules for her, and to affirm her self-worth by loving her.

If I could teach dads one thing, it is this: whether you are a first time father, a single dad, or a stepfather, being a great dad will come

naturally if you let it, if you're open to it, if you try, and if you keep trying when things get hard or after you make a mistake.

All of us want our children to do well, to have friends, to be liked by their peers. But sometimes we put too much focus on the wrong things. It's great to have a son who is a starter on the baseball team or who excels in chemistry, or a daughter who gets straight A's or who has a wicked spike in volleyball. But it's also not a bad thing if your son sits on the bench but still loves the game or your daughter gets straight B's if that's the best she can do.

What really matters is not these accomplishments, but building character in our kids, because character is about who they really are - not just as basketball players or as students, but as people. Growing in character is something dads help kids do, and your leadership is essential when it comes to helping kids avoid bad peer pressure.

When you hold your new-born son, he feels safe. When you hum a tune at bedtime he feels content. Throughout his early life he needs to know that you love him. Yes, young children are more strongly attached to their mothers than their fathers, but that's just a developmental stage. In the long term, no one can take your place in your son's imagination or your daughter's heart. When children hit pre-puberty, their attention often turns from their mother to their father, with boys needing to learn what it is to be a man and girls needing to know what they should expect from a man. Boys need a father's affirmation of their masculinity; girls need their fathers to confirm that they are loved and valued. The trick for dads is to never assume that your children know that they are loved and

valued. Communicating your love for your child is so extremely important.

When a daughter grows up knowing that her dad loves her, she's going places in life, because she knows she is valuable, significant, worth loving, and worth fighting for; and with boys it is much the same. Teach him that he is loved and he will grow into a man with self-confidence, who can make his way in the world and love others.

Unless you tell your children what you believe about them - *what you think their talents are, what their character is like, what you expect of them* - you might be surprised what they think. Whether your son or daughter is three years old or forty-three years old, the need for dad's affirmation is always there.

From a very young age, girls are taught to consider motherhood to be the most noble, giving, and fulfilling role of a lifetime. Boys and young men, however, receive different messages and images of fatherhood. Boys are told that they should not play with dolls. If they play house, they are to be the "*father*" who goes to work while the girl is the mother who stays home and cares for the children. Young men are told that having a child will "*tie them down.*" The wise father helps the next generation of boys embrace the joys of fatherhood by teaching his sons about the rewards of caring for and nurturing a child. This can be done by being an active father, who spends time with and enjoys his own children. A father should feel comfortable displaying physical affection for his sons, as well as his daughters. And a father should tell his sons, as well as his daughters, how happy he is to have his children in his life. All

children will then learn that parenthood is the most noble, giving, and fulfilling activity of a lifetime.

Academic research has shown us that kids who have good communication with their fathers are much less likely to have trouble with drugs, alcohol, or depression. It seems as though dads have a unique power to boost their children's sense of self-worth, of being grounded, and of belonging, which acts as a shield not just against drugs, alcohol, and depression, but also (*and what is often related*) teenage sexual activity.

One of the fundamental rules of raising great kids is to understand and accept one truth: God is good for kids. Whether you are religious or not, children are more God-minded than most adults, and take security from the idea of a divinely ordered world. Honesty is enormously important for children - and if you want your children's trust, you need to be honest with them.

When talking to your children, you might want to think CAR, which stands for **correction**, **affirmation**, and **respect** - the three essential things that dads need to communicate. When you master these, talking with your children gets a lot easier.

From the first moment you hold your baby daughter, she will crave your attention, and as she grows older she will hang on your every word - *even a simple "good morning"* - and be constantly aware of your presence or absence. One of the most precious things about kids is this: time, for them, is magical; its quality and length can change depending on circumstances. When you give them a little bit of meaningful time and attention, that time expands in their minds.

This means that if you spend five minutes a day in conversation with your daughter, she will grow up feeling that you were always there for her, ready to talk with her and share her day. A couple of hours a week fishing, playing basketball, or working on a model airplane with your son will fill him with a sense of joy that he got to spend time with you. These are the memories your children will carry with them for life.

The best fathers give their sons advice, structure, and love. Their eagerness and ability to be involved in their sons' lives and to develop emotionally intimate connections with them seal a bond that lasts a lifetime. They are types of fathers most sons dream about but never have. Instead, they end up with nightmare fathers who misuse their inherent power.

Also by Boaz Adhengo



www.adhengo.mzizzi.com



This book is made available for free download due to the generous donations of many who appreciate reading from Boaz Adhengo. You too can make a donation using the M-PESA method.

Mr. Boaz Adhengo is President to Creative Arts Society of Kenya, a leadership coach, business for arts consultant, venture capitalist and a cultural policy strategist. Having published thirty five books, he manages the Adhengo Boaz & Associates consulting group and is co-founder of the Buruburu Basketball Ministry, Inc.

He has been recently ordained as a Life Coach Minister by the Christian Leaders Ministries, Michigan, U.S.A.

