

Parenting Toddlers

Words Leanne Allen

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Are you pushing your partner away?

Last month I shared with you some basic information about parenting toddlers. This month, I thought I would talk about why Mum sometimes exclude Dads.

As a psychologist I often see couples for relationship counselling. One of the issues that arise on a regular basis is the issue of parenting.

There are a few common themes that arise, these are:

1. Different parenting styles (one is 'easy' on the child, the other is not)
2. Behaviour challenges of the child and how to deal with them effectively
3. 'Spoiling' the child with gifts (one parent wants to buy, the other doesn't)
4. Time spent with the child
5. Mum 'not allowing' dad to do anything

All of these issues are important and need to be worked on, because parents that parent together are far more effective than parents that parent against each other (and believe me, your toddler knows who to go to for the biscuit!)

However today I am going to talk about the fifth point, because it is something that is very common and it usually sounds like this:

Her: 'My partner just will not do anything with the kids, it drives me crazy'

Him: 'Every time I do something it is not good enough; I try and she just does not like the way I do things, so what's the point'

Does this sound familiar? Read on. This issue often starts from the birth of the child. Many women feel that their partners can't do as good a job as they can, or they feel so nervous about being a parent, (particularly first time mums), that they

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want to do it all themselves. Apart from breast feeding, a father is just as capable as a mother at looking after children, if given the opportunity.

Or perhaps dad feels nervous about the tiny new bundle and just lets mum do it all. And hence the problem has started. If dad is left feeling worried, devalued, left out or not good enough, he will not bond effectively with the child. As well, many dads go back to work and cannot spend the time with the child. That is OK, but that also means that it is MORE important for dad to spend time with the child when he comes home.

for mums

So if you are Mum in this situation, what are some things you can do?

1. Don't give up.
2. Assess the situation slowly. Is it really that bad to allow your partner to do things his way now and then? After all there are many ways to do the same job.
3. What will it mean to you, your partner, your relationship, and your child, if dad is given more space to participate?
4. Ask for help and accept it when it is given, even if you don't like the way the task was done.
5. Be patient. The way you speak to your partner will influence his reaction and response to what it is you are asking of him.
6. Go out, leave your child with their dad, even if it is for 30 minutes and you will probably all begin to feel more confident.

Remember that as a woman, you are more likely to have discussed parenting with your mother, with your female friends and colleagues and read magazines that are aimed at women. As a man, well I could be wrong but I don't know of any parenting magazines that are aimed at men. Typically men do not sit down and talk parenting tips with each other! So it is up to you to talk about it with your partner.

If you are finding yourself getting all worked up or frustrated about what you have just read, it may be because there is some truth to it. So take a deep breath, read it again and know that everything is fixable and can start with simple steps.

for dads

So if you are Dad in this situation, what are some things you can do?

1. Don't give up.
2. Reassure your partner calmly that you can do it and you want to do it. The best way to gain confidence is through practice.
3. Talk to her about the burden of doing it all alone and that you are there to help her with your child. Make sure you talk to her in a calm voice.
4. Ask her for advice if you are unsure; don't just say 'I can't do it', because parenting does not come naturally. Even for women! We all have to learn what to do.
5. Offer her some time out with the girls or on her own, when you will look after the child.
6. Have fun with your child, if you are not sure how, speak to other fathers', read, remember what you did as a child, or ask your child if they are old enough, they will tell you!



And remember there are many psychologists and parenting experts in all areas of the country, so if you need some help you can use Google to find someone near you, or the Find a Psychologist site.



Leanne Allen (BA Psych) is the principle psychologist at Reconnect Psychology and Coaching Services. See her Website. She has trained in Sandplay Therapy, NLP (Neuro-linguistic programming) and CBT Cognitive behavioural therapy) and just completed training as a life coach. Her approach is to look forward whilst releasing the trauma of the past. If you would like to talk to Leanne or arrange an appointment in person or via Skype, you can reach her on 1300 132 252. Please feel free to leave a comment on the Facebook page.