

Love Is not Enough

D. Keith Denton

More than a dozen studies have shown that even well-educated mothers with ample money after the divorce often provide too little supervision, discipline and household order. Moms are often to be too submissive to their own children. It would be nice for divorced or single dad if that job was equally shared with your ex but it usually isn't. What the saying, if, "if, and, and but's were candy we would all have a Merry Christmas". It is a tough job but somebody got to do it and that primarily falls on the dad shoulders. So what happens if the dad get a divorce> the short answer is nothing, you still have that responsibility, even if you only see your kid a few times a year. Being a dad is not about the volume of time spent, it is about attitude and connections.

Divorce Does Not Mean Part-Time

It should go without saying that your kids need to know you love but there has to be more. It's not enough to care for your kid. Divorced dads don't always get to see their kids like normal married dads. You know the kind of full time dad who works a lot, are not of town a lot and always seem distracted by work. You see even "full-time" dads are not really "full-time". With our 24/7 culture where both mom and dad work. Kids today are often put into every conceivable activity so they, "won't miss anything". A strong case could be made that what kids need is not more activities but real one on one face

to face time with both mom and dad. But regardless, today kids rarely have any parent that is full time.

So what has really changed, even before a divorce you only saw your kid's part time. What not changed is that kids still not only need your love and attention but also discipline. Discipline is as much a part of raising good kids as time and love. It comes down to knowing what to do and what not to do. Nothing has changed it is still a matter of priorities. Raising a good kid, married, separated or single means focusing on what's important and not getting distracted by those little details and pressures that can distract you before or after a divorce. For newly minted single dads, it is not about worrying about little stuff like cooking (there are microwaves for that) cleaning the house, separating the whites and darks, painting your walls or watering the plants.

For women it is not about getting back at the ex. Studies show that 40 percent of moms have actively interfered with the dad's visitation. It is not about anger. Joan Berlin Kelly writes in *Surviving the Breakup* that half, that's one out of every two mothers see no value in their children's dad having contact with their children. stuff is setting aside time, showing love and applying discipline. It means taking your responsibilities seriously, but not yourself. But that is not true. Dads are important.

Study after study involving teenagers and young adults show that those kids who have close relationships with their dads are less likely to become clinically depressed, to develop eating disorders, and to develop anxiety disorders. Research highlights that kids who remain close to both parents are less stressed by divorce. There are studies show that children who are able to keep a close relationship with their father also

tended to be more socially mature and to have fewer problems related to dating and sex. It is to a mom's benefit financial to encourage ex-hubby involvement. Dads who are connected to their kids are more likely to keep up with their obligations, financial and otherwise. So both moms and dads are important. The relationship has changed but not the basic need for the roles.

Don't Be A Disneyland Dad

"Disneyland Dads" are mutation that normally only exist after a divorce. Every time I see those Disney commercials, I always smile. You know the ones where the kids scream when they realize the parents are taking them to Disney World. Well, I wanted to give my daughter something to smile about after her mother and I got a divorce. Well, that might not really be true. You see that is what I told myself. I didn't see her as much and I felt like I was second fiddle to her mom. I was the discipline one, her mom was the fun one. So if I am being totally honest I especially wanted her to have a good time so she would like to be with me. I knew I would not be as popular as her mom but at least wanted her to have some things she enjoyed about being with me.

Normally, I am not one of those people who just throw money around. When you have struggled as much as I had paying bills, it leaves you frugal. That sounds better than "cheap" or "tight" doesn't it? But for the first time in my life, I used the phrase, "spare no expense", set up a trip to Florida. It was to be our first trip alone with just me and her. I was worried she would be bored and especially miss her mom. It was much later, years later that I realized that four or five year old children will not remember any trips you take. They will not remember how much you did.

Nearing the end of our trip, I asked my daughter what she had enjoyed the most, Disney World, Discovery Cove, SeaWorld, or Universal Studios. She thought a moment, smiled up at me and said, "Stomping in the mud puddles." Shocked, I said, "What?!" She said, "You remember when it was raining a couple of days ago and we were walking across the parking lot going to SeaWorld?" I said, "Yes!" She said, "You let me stomp in those puddles of rain on the parking lot. "That was So much fun!!" I cannot express in words the sheer shock that I felt. Keep it simple, I could have saved thousands of dollars and simply turned on the hose in the back yard. Next time, I had thought of expensive trips I tried to think sampler. I got a host, turned it on in the back yard and let her stop until she was covered in mud.

Stay Connected Not Broke

One of the biggest fears from Dad's is wondering when they will see their kids. In about nine of ten divorce cases involving children, the mother is awarded sole or primary custody. Usually, the Dad leaves the home and is awarded visitation rights. Dad gets to "visit" their kids about 50 days a year unless joint physical custody is agreed upon. It is hard for a "visiting" parent to feel effective.

The key is to find ways to **stay connected**. The more you hug your children, the happier they will be as adults. To maintain strong relationships with your kids you have to be creative and put in an effort. You want to create a comfortable home not a weekend resort. It's not easy or fun for kids to juggle all their "stuff" between homes. So make this part easy for them and have their "stuff" at this home too. Your home will

not only need your kid's school supplies and clothing but also those things that make a house a home. Your home needs to have their favorite books, games, toys.

Discipline and Responsibilities

Both homes have to have **rules, chores and consequences**. You will need to establish boundaries for work, set aside one-on-one time with the family, and for you. Have routines help kids feel safe. Most kids will push against routines but that's normal and you will need to not be trying to always make it a Disneyland environment. Remember when you went to Disneyland, you still had to be the boss. Bosses sometimes must discipline. At least a dozen studies have consistently shown that even well-educated mothers with ample money after the divorce often provide too little supervision, discipline and household order. Research points out that these moms are often too submissive to their own children. It would be nice for you if responsibilities for discipline were equally shared but it usually isn't the case. It is a tough job but somebody got to do it or you're going to have problems. Kids may not like you being the one to do it but someone who needs to shoulder that job. It is usually the dad-single or it doesn't get done.

If you're looking for a pat on the back or immediate phrase for expecting a lot from your kids, get in line. But if you want to do the right thing take a listen of a true story Chelsea writes about her dad. M

She says, most of her elementary, middle school and high school years were spent arguing and rebelling against his authoritative style of parenting. It wasn't until my senior year in high school that I finally saw his motives. While she was growing up her

dad was always the coach of my teams and worked in the same school district that I attended. He was much harder on her than the other players and that infuriated her when I was young.

Now in her early twenties she feels it was the best thing that he ever did for her. One particular example of this would have been at her High School Softball Tournament. She was a standout as a freshman and he was the head coach. She started in center field and lead off the batting order. Late in the game she took a large lead at 3rd base and the catcher picked her off as she dove back to the bag. Before she could even get up my father, who was the 3rd base coach, he was in her face screaming to give him pushups right there on the field. Of course she did, then he threw his glove at her and told her she had better sprint to centerfield or else she would be sitting the bench the rest of the season.

Three years later she was a senior in High School and they were projected to go to the state tournament. Her father stayed after practice every day with her to hit me groundballs at shortstop until it was too dark to see. During the semifinal game in the bottom of the last inning her team was winning with two outs and runners were in scoring position. A groundball was hit to her left and she made the last out to send them to state. Her father called it "Poetic Justice" for how hard she had worked including being o the only players to stay after practice consistently.

Work ethic was one thing her felt particularly strong about and she definitely inherited his drive. Chelsea went on to play college softball and he attended every single game he could even though he was enduring grueling cancer treatments. He

passed in February of 2011 but she says she will always remember how he taught me to work hard, no matter what the circumstances are. You should take two things from this true story. First all kids are different and being a hard ass is not the only way to deal with your kids nor is it always the best. Secondly, he was demanding of his daughter but also notice how much he was there for her. Rules without relationships never work. He set high expectations but was there for her. His connection with her as well as his expectation is what makes it work.

Simply doling out punishment without being a part of her life would never work. You don't have to be there all the time. Full time dads are not there full time. But when you are there you have to be all in. Surprisingly I have seen many part time dads that are better dads than they ever were when they were married. Amy Muntz Fisch is a Director of Children's Evaluations for a mental health organization. She says her ex-military Seal Dad definitely wasn't a diaper bag kind of dad, but he was more than capable. So what was his secret? When he spent time with her, she truly knew he was, "in the moment". Despite always been busy he took the time to make sure he stayed connected and interacted with her. With Skype, Facebook, family websites and tons of other internet tools there is no reason for, "not being there".

If you want help, go to my website dkeithdenton.com and click on the Single Dads and Parenting tab. You will find some useful free tools including questionnaires you can adapt to your situation to help you focus on staying connected to your kids and even tools to help you improve your relationship with your ex. There are also tools called "Pareto List" that can help you better manage your time so your quality time with

your kids does not slip through the cracks. Check it out and get started because love is not enough.