

DADS & DAUGHTERS

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I'M A DAD. HOW DO I SHOW AFFECTION TO MY PUBESCENT DAUGHTER?

Prior to the onset of puberty, dads are often free flowing with their expression of love and affection for their 'little girl'. Dads will rarely hold back from wrapping their daughters in their arms and showing love and affection to them. However, when puberty begins this affection can begin to withdraw and a father's interactions with his daughter can become more 'functional' – becoming more about what needs 'doing' in life and not them just 'being' together.

A daughter going through puberty often feels like a foreign and uncomfortable process for a father. As their 'little girl' begins developing into their 'woman's body' it is not uncommon for a father to become uncomfortable and unsure as to how to be a dad to their pubescent and developing daughter! I wonder why?

This discomfort is commonly felt in the expression of affection. A father can begin to question:

- Can I still cuddle my little girl?
- What if I touch her in the wrong place accidentally?
- She is becoming a woman now; do I keep showing her affection?
- How do I physically be with my daughter?
- How do I talk to her about this 'girl stuff'?
- Do I still have a part to play in my daughter's life?

This questioning and discomfort can result in a lot of confused feelings for the father and they can tend to withdraw from being a dad to their daughter: physical withdrawal and sometimes emotional withdrawal. The love is no less felt by the father, but the confusion and lack of confidence begins to take over.

With this withdrawal of the previously free flowing affection, daughters also become confused and can develop feelings of:

- What have I done wrong?
- Why is my dad rejecting me?
- Why does he not love me any more?
- What do I need to do for my dad to love me again?
- Where else can I get the love from?

Rejection, hurt, sadness, anger and/or resentment can soon form the foundation of father-daughter exchanges.

Clearly puberty is a big time for father and daughter. Is it possible for this to be a supportive and loving time for both, rather than a confusing and uncomfortable time?

Whether you are a dad with a pubescent daughter or a dad whose daughter will one day reach puberty, your daughter will always enjoy a relationship built on the foundation of not holding back the expression of love. Cuddles, hand holding, unimposing expressions of love and affection will always be appreciated when expressed in a way of treating your daughter with the love and respect that she deserves. This love does not ask her to 'do' and allows her to 'be' the beauty-full woman that she is developing to be. You encourage her to be responsible and to be herself in the world.

YOUR ROLE AS DAD IS SO VERY IMPORTANT

You as the dad are the first relationship your daughter has with any male. You set the benchmark of what she will accept in her future relationships. Your key is to treat her to know without doubt the level of love that she deserves. Your daughter will accept no less than the way you treat her. Offer your daughter minimal or imposing love and affection and this is what she will accept in her future. Offer her true, respectful and unimposing love and this will be her benchmark for what she will accept in her future.

A dad's role is very important to their daughter though puberty and this is not a time to withdraw but to offer a standard that your daughter will never accept anything less than what you have offered to her.

The key is to continue expressing the free flow of love and unimposing affection from when she was born until forever!



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