



7 TIPS FOR PARENTS

#LeanInTogether

7 TIPS FOR PARENTS

Children should feel supported when they both lead and nurture, and this means pushing back against age-old expectations that women should be caring and men should be in charge.

Changing these stereotypes starts at home. When parents have 50/50 partnerships, children grow up with more egalitarian views and can envision more possibilities for themselves. Telling children “You can do anything” is not nearly as effective as showing them they can!

By making small changes that create more equal homes, we can raise a generation of women and men who can be anything they want to be.

TIP 1 MODEL EQUALITY AT HOME

TIP 2 MOMS, LET GO OF PERFECT

TIP 3 DADS, BE ACTIVE FATHERS

TIP 4 CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES

TIP 5 CLOSE THE KID WAGE GAP

TIP 6 HELP YOUR DAUGHTER LEAD

TIP 7 DON'T TELL YOUR SON TO “MAN UP!”

1 MODEL EQUALITY AT HOME

SITUATION

Almost 65 percent of couples rely on dual incomes, but only 9 percent share child care, housework, and breadwinning equally.¹ Yet research shows that splitting responsibilities more evenly benefits children. Fathers who do more household chores are more likely to raise daughters who believe they have a broader range of career options,² and parents who share in decision making are more likely to raise sons who support gender equality.³

SOLUTION

Approach child care and housework as real partners. Split household chores and child care fairly, and talk openly about how—and why—you share responsibilities.

DID YOU KNOW?

Equality begets equality: Kids who grow up in more equal homes are more likely to embrace beliefs that help them create equal homes as adults.⁴

2

MOMS, LET GO OF PERFECT

SITUATION

The amount of time parents spend with their children has little impact on kids' success. However, when parents are stressed, sleep deprived, guilty, or anxious, it negatively impacts their children.⁵ Mothers often fall into this trap by holding themselves to an unattainable standard and taking on the lion's share of child care themselves.⁶

SOLUTION

Let go of the pressure to be a “perfect” mother and the guilt that you don't spend enough time with your kids (in fact, today's parents spend significantly more time with their children than their counterparts in the 1970s).⁸ Take a collaborative approach to parenting and avoid the urge to micromanage your partner when he does things his own way. Kids benefit when both parents are active and engaged (see tip 3!).

DID YOU KNOW?

Given one wish, a majority of kids wouldn't ask for more time with their parents; they'd wish their parents were less tired and less stressed.⁷

3

DADS, BE ACTIVE FATHERS

SITUATION

There's simply no substitute for hands-on fathering. Children with involved fathers have higher self-esteem, better cognitive and social skills, fewer behavioral problems, and higher academic achievement.⁹ This is true at every income level and regardless of how involved mothers are. When fathers participate in their lives, daughters are more willing to try new things and sons are better equipped to cope with stress and less likely to fight.¹⁰ What's more, teenagers who feel close to their fathers end up in healthier, happier marriages.¹¹

SOLUTION

Be an active dad. Help with homework, read books with your kids, and talk about their daily experiences and dreams. You don't have to be perfect—you just have to be engaged.

DID YOU KNOW?

Women and men who remember having loving, supportive fathers have high life satisfaction and self-esteem.¹²

4

CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES

SITUATION

Kids' beliefs about themselves and others are shaped by the world around them, and they are often sent the wrong messages. Traditional girls' toys focus on appearance and caretaking, while boys' toys focus on competition and spatial skills.¹³ Kids are exposed to an average of eight hours of media every day, and in much of that media, women are underrepresented or sexualized¹⁴ and men are portrayed as competitive and aggressive.¹⁵

SOLUTION

Make sure your kids play with a variety of toys so they develop a range of cognitive and social skills. Be thoughtful about what your kids read and watch and talk openly with them about the messages the media sends about women and men.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the 2014 holiday season, the top three toys for girls were dolls, while Legos and trucks topped the list for boys.¹⁶

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Use our "Movie Night" activity (available at leanintogether.org/movie-night.pdf) to explore how female and male characters are portrayed in films with your kids. You'll also find movies, books, and TV shows that send the right messages to kids at commonsensemedia.org/lean-in-together.

5

CLOSE THE KID WAGE GAP

SITUATION

The wage gap starts earlier than you think. Parents often place greater value on the chores boys typically do (like taking out the trash) than on chores that girls usually do (like setting the table). As a result, boys spend less time on household chores but make more money than girls.¹⁷

SOLUTION

Give your children equal chores and equal allowance. If your son and daughter take turns setting the table and taking out the trash, they'll grow up knowing that women and men can—and should—split work evenly.

DID YOU KNOW?

Girls between the ages of five and twelve spend two more hours a week on chores than boys the same age.¹⁸

6

HELP YOUR DAUGHTER LEAD

SITUATION

Despite our best intentions, girls are often discouraged from being leaders. As early as middle school, parents place a higher value on leadership for boys than for girls.¹⁹ Girls are often labeled “bossy” or “know-it-all” when they speak up or take the lead, and they’re called on less in class and interrupted more than boys.²⁰ These factors take a toll on girls. Between elementary school and high school, girls’ self-esteem drops 3.5 times more than boys’.²¹ By middle school, girls are less interested in leading than boys—a trend that continues into adulthood.²²

SOLUTION

Celebrate your daughter’s efforts to lead. Help her set goals and break them down into small, achievable steps. Encourage her to reach outside of her comfort zone to build confidence. Just as she practices soccer or piano, she can practice small acts of assertiveness like ordering at restaurants or shaking hands when she meets new people. Get your daughter into sports or other organized activities where she’ll learn to collaborate, speak up, mess up—and try again.

DID YOU KNOW?

Your daughter’s not “bossy” — she has executive leadership skills!

7

DON'T TELL YOUR SON TO "MAN UP!"

SITUATION

As important as it is to teach your daughter to lead, it is equally important to teach your son to respect his feelings and care for others. Boys are bombarded with stories of men who are strong, stoic, and in charge but rarely vulnerable or nurturing. Boys often emulate these oversimplified characters, and it negatively impacts their well-being. Parents can counteract the impact of these stereotypes by staying emotionally close to their sons. Fathers in particular can model a more complete picture of manhood.²³

SOLUTION

Teach your son to value intelligence and thoughtfulness over toughness. Encourage him to respect his own feelings and have empathy for others. Avoid language like "man up" or "be a man," which can be as damaging to boys as words like "bossy" and "know-it-all" can be for girls.

DID YOU KNOW?

76 percent of men and 84 percent of women in one survey admitted to using phrases like "man up" and "be a man."²⁴

LET'S #LEANINTOGETHER

These tips are provided as part of #LeanInTogether, a public awareness campaign from LeanIn.Org focused on men's important role in reaching gender equality.

One of the core messages of #LeanInTogether is that we can't reach true equality until we celebrate women as leaders and men as nurturers. When women and men lean in at work and at home, everyone benefits. Children with involved fathers are happier, healthier,

and more successful. Couples that share responsibilities have stronger marriages. Diverse teams produce greater results. Companies with more women in leadership roles perform better. Show the world you're in for equality by posting on social media with #LeanInTogether.

REFERENCES

- 1 U.S. Census Bureau, "Table FG1 Married Couple Family Groups, by Labor Force Status of Both Spouses, and Race and Hispanic Origin of the Reference Person," America's Families and Living Arrangements, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (2014), <https://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2014FG.html>; and Scott S. Hall and Shelley M. MacDermid, "A Typology of Dual Earner Marriages Based on Work and Family Arrangements," *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 30, no. 3 (2009): 220.
- 2 Alyssa Croft et al., "The Second Shift Reflected in the Second Generation: Do Parents' Gender Roles at Home Predict Children's Aspirations?," *Psychological Science* 25, no. 7 (2014): 1418–28.
- 3 Ruti Galia Levtoy, "Pathways to Gender-Equitable Men: Findings from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey in Eight Countries," *Men and Masculinities* 17, no. 5 (2014): 467–501.
- 4 Croft et al., "The Second Shift"; Ruti Galia Levtoy, "Pathways to Gender-Equitable Men"; and Dalton Conley and Karen Albright, *The Effect of Maternal Labor Market Participation on Adult Siblings' Outcomes: Does Having a Working Mother Lead to Increased Gender Equality in the Family?* (2004), New York University, https://files.nyu.edu/dc66/public/pdf/maternal_employment.pdf.
- 5 Melissa A. Milkie, Kei M. Nomaguchi, and Kathleen E. Denny, "Does the Amount of Time Mothers Spend with Children or Adolescents Matter?," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 77, no. 2 (2015): 355–72; and Brigid Schulte, "Making Time for Kids? Study Says Quality Trumps Quantity," *The Washington Post*, March 28, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/making-time-for-kids-study-says-quality-trumps-quantity/2015/03/28/10813192-d378-11e4-8fce-3941fc548f1c_story.html.
- 6 Linda Rose Ennis, ed., *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood* (Toronto: Demeter Press, 2014); and Sharon Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).
- 7 Ellen Galinsky, *Ask the Children: The Breakthrough Study That Reveals How to Succeed at Work and Parenting* (New York: Quill, 2000).
- 8 Suzanne M. Bianchi, John P. Robinson, and Melissa A. Milkie, *The Changing Rhythms of American Family Life* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).
- 9 For a thorough review, see Michael E. Lamb, *The Role of the Father in Child Development* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010); Anna Sarkadi et al., "Fathers' Involvement and Children's Developmental Outcomes: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies," *Acta Paediatrica* 97, no. 2 (2008): 153–58; and Sarah Allen and Kerry Daly, *The Effects of Father Involvement: An Updated Research Summary of the Evidence* (2007), Father Involvement Research Alliance, http://www.fira.ca/cms/documents/29/Effects_of_Father_Involvement.pdf.
- 10 Eirini Flouri, *Fathering and Child Outcomes* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005); Kyle D. Pruett, *Fatherhood: Why Father Care Is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child* (New York: Broadway Books, 2001); Beth M. Erickson, *Longing for Dad: Father Loss and Its Impact* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1998); Allen and Daly, *The Effects of Father Involvement*; Redmas, Promundo, and EME, *Program P: A Manual for Engaging Men in Fatherhood, Caregiving, and Maternal and Child Health* (2013), <http://www.men-care.org/data/Final%20Program%20P%20-%20Single%20Page.pdf>; and Promundo, *IMAGES: The International Men and Gender Equality Survey, Background and Key Headlines* (2015), <http://promundo.org.br/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/02/IMAGES-Final-Background-and-Key-Headlines.pdf>.
- 11 Eirini Flouri and Ann Buchanan, "What Predicts Good Relationships with Parents in Adolescence and Partners in Adult Life: Findings from the 1958 British Cohort," *Journal of Family Psychology* 16, no. 2 (2002): 186–98.
- 12 For a review see Kate Fogarty and Garret D. Evans, "The Hidden Benefits of Being an Involved Father," University of Florida, <http://www.cfuf.org/Filestream.aspx?FileID=14>.
- 13 Judith E. Owen Blakemore and Rene E. Centers, "Characteristics of Boys' and Girls' Toys," *Sex Roles* 53 nos. 9–10 (2005): 619–33.
- 14 The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, *Generation M2* (2010), <http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/8010.pdf>; and Geena Davis Institute, Research Facts, <http://www.seejane.org/research/index.php>.
- 15 For reviews see Megan Vokey, Bruce Tefft, and Chris Tysiaczny, "An Analysis of Hyper-Masculinity in Magazine Advertisements," *Sex Roles* 68 nos. 9–10 (2013): 562–76; Susan G. Kahlenberg and Michelle M. Hein, "Progression on Nickelodeon? Gender-Role Stereotypes in Toy Commercials," *Sex Roles* 62 nos. 11–12 (2010): 830–47; Lynn Mikel Brown, Sharon Lamb, and Mark B. Tappan, *Packaging Boyhood: Saving Our Sons from Superheroes, Slackers, and Other Media Stereotypes* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009); and Jennifer J. Pike and Nancy A. Jennings, "The Effects of Commercials on Children's Perceptions of Gender Appropriate Toy Use," *Sex Roles* 52, nos. 1–2 (2005): 83–91.

REFERENCES

- 16 National Retail Federation, “Barbie Dethroned in NRF’s Top Toys Survey as Disney’s Frozen Takes the Crown,” November 24, 2014, <https://nrf.com/media/press-releases/barbie-dethroned-nrfs-top-toys-survey-disneys-frozen-takes-the-crown>.
- 17 Institute for Social Research, *Time, Money, and Who Does the Laundry*, University of Michigan, Research Update (2007), <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/61984/chores.pdf;jsessionid=078CC6AA26FE5BDFB6482CE63BB0F4F1>]; and “Gender Pay Gap Starts at Home as Boys Earn More for Household Chores,” survey by PktMny, 2013, <http://www.gohenry.co.uk/blog/gender-pay-gap/>.
- 18 Institute for Social Research, *Time, Money, and Who Does the Laundry*, University of Michigan, Research Update (2007), <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/61984/chores.pdf;jsessionid=078CC6AA26FE5BDFB6482CE63BB0F4F1>.
- 19 Kathleen Mullan Harris and J. Richard Udry, *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)*, 1994–2008, ICPSR21600–v14, Chapel Hill, NC: Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill/Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/21600>.
- 20 American Association of University Women, *How Schools Shortchange Girls* (1992), <http://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/how-schools-shortchange-girls-executive-summary.pdf>; Myra Sadker and David M. Sadker, *Failing at Fairness: How American’s Schools Cheat Girls* (New York: Scribner’s, 1994); and Elizabeth J. Whitt et al., “Women’s Perceptions of a ‘Chilly Climate’ and Cognitive Outcomes in College: Additional Evidence,” *Journal of College Student Development* 40, no. 2 (1999): 163–77.
- 21 American Association of University Women, *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America* (1991), <http://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/shortchanging-girls-shortchanging-america-executive-summary.pdf>.
- 22 Deborah Marlino and Fiona Wilson, *Teen Girls on Business: Are They Being Empowered?*, The Committee of 200, Simmons College School of Management (April 2003), http://www.simmons.edu/som/docs/centers/TGOB_report_full.pdf.
- 23 For a review see Judy Y. Chu, *When Boys Become Boys: Development, Relationships, and Masculinity* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); and Niobe Way, *Deep Secrets: Boys, Friendships, and the Crisis of Connection* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
- 24 She Knows Media, “Male Gender Perceptions & Stereotype Survey,” (March 2015), <http://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/1078225/boys-and-gender-stereotypes/>.