

In this lesson we'll be going back in time to discuss how to help children of any age come to have a positive view of their body, gender, and sexuality ("Affirming"). Families with kids of all ages need this, including kids who already identify as transgender.

Three key elements to creating this healthy family culture:

1. Be open
2. Attentive
3. Respectful

Open means that you don't hide developmentally appropriate things about sexuality from your child. Find opportunities to have open conversations in daily life, even if they're awkward or inconvenient.

Attentive means you shower your child with loving, positive attention. Showing your child love through attention and affirmation helps them develop a healthy trust for you and appreciation for themselves.

Respectful means you treat yourself, your child, and others, especially in your family, with respect. Positive communication about others can teach your child that every sort of person is valuable and loved.

Three big topics you should address with kids of all ages:

1. **Positivity about Male & Female Design:** You get to teach your children a positive message about the design of humans as male and female. They don't know it automatically, so they need to hear from you that being a boy or man is a great thing, and that being a girl or woman is a great thing. Men and women come in all shapes and sizes and with all sorts of interests and strengths.

2. **Anatomy & Body Safety:** From the earliest ages, it's appropriate to teach children about all their body parts, including their own genitals, and the body parts of the opposite sex. They should also know that these body parts are not for other people to touch, or for anyone to joke about. They should know that they can always say "no" if they feel uncomfortable with how someone is touching them.

3. **Sexuality & Sexual Relationships:** Of course, another important part of helping your child come to have a mature understanding of their body, gender, and sexuality includes having the dreaded "talk." In reality, it's best for your child—and actually easiest for you—to have "the talk" over lots of conversations and years, rather than saving it all for one terrible conversation. In these conversations, mostly stick to asking questions of your children. This method can develop their minds, and it helps you understand what they're thinking.

Here are some tips for dads and moms as they raise boys and girls. A lot of things are the same, but there are some specific things to keep in mind.

DADS RAISING SONS:

1. From day one, you are your son's main model of masculinity. You have the wonderful opportunity to model the most positive aspects of masculinity.
2. Spend time with your son. This could be normal activities of life, like meals, projects, or errands. Or it could be special activities.

3. Challenge your son in appropriate ways, but always follow up with extra affirmation.
4. Treat women with utmost respect and love.

MOMS RAISING SONS:

1. Show love and attentive care to your son, but don't be overly protective.
2. Empathize with your son's struggles or pain without treating him like a victim.
3. The way you treat and talk about your son's dad is a big part of what he may internalize about being a man. Encourage your son's relationship with his father by complimenting the father when possible.
4. Don't look to your son for emotional support that you lack from your own partner.

DADS RAISING DAUGHTERS:

1. Dads can sometimes be emotionally insensitive to their daughters without even realizing it. To avoid this issue, you should carefully listen to your daughter.
2. Spend special time with your daughter.
3. Affirm, affirm, affirm. At young ages, many girls already feel insecure. A father's approval and encouragement can go a long way though.
4. She will know if you disrespect women. Just like with sons, daughters learn a lot from their dads about what it's like to be a woman and what men think and say about women.

MOMS RAISING DAUGHTERS:

1. Just like being a man, being a woman comes with all sorts of personalities and strengths. Whatever kind of woman you are, be the best that you can be.
2. Be honest about struggles that women have.
3. Spend time with your daughter learning what she loves and doing it with her.
4. Your daughter will learn a lot about men and manhood from your words and actions. Treat her father with respect and praise manly qualities about him.

References:

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