

## Because We're Dads:

# Reaching and Mobilizing Father's to Promote Gender Equality

## Five Things Dads Can do to Advance Gender Equality (Mid Elementary School - Middle School)

Gender equality is everyone's issue. All of us have a gender and all of us are impacted by gender inequality (although to different degrees and the impact is different). Furthermore, gender equality benefits all of us. We all have a role to play. Dads have particular opportunities and roles to help achieve gender equality. While recognizing that dads also benefit in significant ways as a result of gender inequality:

- most dads are relieved of the "2nd shift",
- the standard for being perceived as a "good dad" is much lower than the standard for being perceived as a "good mom",
- our society continues to place higher values on dads (particularly white, middle-aged and middle-class dads) than on moms, etc.);

dads also benefit from gender equality:

- Better leave opportunities for being at home,
- Being supported to stay home and developing our caring capacities,
- Increased health and wellness benefits.

Here are five things dads can do to help promote gender equality with your children:

**1) Read to/with your child.** Middle school children often still enjoy being read to and reading alongside their parents. Continue reading to and alongside your child. As you read, begin exploring what they're learning from what you are reading in terms of messages about gender and equality.

**2) Play Legos.** Legos are a great toy for boys and girls: interactive, creative, flexible. They are also very gendered. It's easy, however, to replace the "girl" heads and features with the "boy" bodies and help your children to develop story lines and play opportunities that break down gender stereotypes.

**3) Play outside gender stereotypes.** Dads often play with their children in increasingly gendered ways as their children get older. Dads tend to be more comfortable being more rough with their sons than their daughters and tend to engage in less physical play with their daughters as their daughters get older. *Your child notices!* And this may not be their wish. There is value to both sons and daughters in roughhousing or wrestling with an adult. This is a great way for children to learn, in very physical way, lessons about setting and listening to boundaries.

**4) Critique your movies and shows.** Your child is now old enough to start having opinions (likely strong ones) about what they watch and what you watch as a family. As you support them to develop their own tastes, it's important for you (especially as a dad) to help them to critique what they're watching in terms of the values that are inherent in these shows and the degree to which these values model your values, and the values of gender equality.

**5) Encourage friendships.** In middle-elementary school, some boys begin getting the message that it is no longer "cool" to have girls as friends. Encourage your children to have friendships with children of all genders. Model this by you having friendships with other adults of all genders.

**6) Take Action.** There are all kinds of events in your community that promote gender equality in some fashion (Take Back the Night Rally, DV Awareness Rallies, Women's Equality Month events, etc.). By late elementary school and certainly in middle school, your child(ren) are old enough to join you in attending. Show your support for these efforts by showing up and bringing your kid(s).

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There are a lot of other ways that Dads can be active in raising our children to promote gender equality. Join the “Because We’re Dads” campaign to connect with other dads, and to access additional resources and tools. You can also check with your local domestic violence agency to see if they offer their own version of “Because We’re Dads.” [Click here to find your local domestic violence agency.](#)

Follow Because We’re Dads on Facebook, or [access the website \(tools and resources are added regularly\)](#)

### **Books:**

- *Guy Stuff: The Body Book for Boys* by Dr Cara Natterson
- *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* by Francesca Cavallo & Elena Favilli
- *The Best Man* By Richard Peck
- *Stories for Boys Who Dare to Be Different: True Tales of Amazing Boys Who Changed the World Without Killing Dragons* By Ben Brooks, Illustrated by Quinton Winton
- *Stories for Kids who Dare to be Different: True Tales of Amazing People Who Stood Up and Stood Out* by Ben Brooks, Illustrated by Quinton Winton
- *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl: Squirrel Meets World* by Shannon Hale and Dean Hale