Fathers Celebrating Daughters

*Useful stuff to read and think about at home …*

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*Compiled by Jane Bennett for Fathers Celebrating Daughters*

I have daughters and I don’t want you to feel sorry for me

Christopher Scanlon, The Age, July 16, 2014



You would think that the arrival of a baby is an occasion for unalloyed joy. And it is — unless of course the newborn happens to be a girl.

I know from experience. Since the birth of my second daughter six weeks ago, I’ve had a steady stream of pity come my way.

And it comes from everywhere: the local café owner, Facebook, even customer service reps feel the need to commiserate. Both men and women, from those who already shoulder the seemingly onerous burden of having daughters to those who can only empathise from afar have weighed in on my sorry predicament .

The notes of sorrow are almost always well-intentioned and meant as a joke. But the regularity and ease in which they are made may indicate how little our attitudes about daughters have changed in, say, 4000 years.

The type of commiserations clichés can be neatly broken down into five categories.

1. ‘You’re in trouble now’

The barista at my local café turned from his cooing of my newborn daughter to give me a ‘you-poor-bastard’ look. And then he added ‘You're in trouble now, mate'.

While the premise that girls and women are trouble and men are their hapless victims has spawned — and sustained — over a decade’s worth of episodes of The Two Ronnies, it’s also about as funny as, well, The Two Ronnies.

And underlying it is a whole series of not-so-harmless images of girls and women as manipulative beings who take delight in emotionally blackmailing men, manipulating them for money and anything else they can get their grubby mits on.

2. ‘You’re outnumbered now’

This one is a Facebook favourite. And it’s as clichéd and regressive as a commercial radio segment on the ‘Battle of the Sexes’.

It was bad enough when it was only my wife I had to contend with. Now she’s gone and amassed an army of her species to challenge my manly authority. Before I know it they’ll be littering my Man Cave with throw rugs and matching cushions.

The implication underneath this (no doubt well meaning) status update is that women are so incomprehensible and difficult that we will live in a state of perpetual conflict. And oh yes, for some unknown reason I’ll never get to use the bathroom. Ever again.

3. ‘Are you going to try again so you can get your boy?’

I’ve been asked this one — or variations of it —half a dozen times. Even the Medibank customer service representative asked my wife one week after she’d given birth whether we were going back for a third to see if she could give me a son.

Let’s just repeat that. My wife Kasey’s role in life is apparently to give me a son. Not her. Just me. And she’d better get to it quick smart to make amends for the daughter she’s just burdened me with.

Apparently having brought two healthy daughters into the world doesn’t really cut it in the reproductive stakes. Daughters are kind of like the complimentary gift on a Wheel of Fortune for the losers who can’t figure out the phrase ‘s \_ x \_ s t    b \_ l l s h \_ t’.

4. ‘You’ll have to buy a shotgun’

Before my first daughter was out of nappies I was told that I’d have to get my hands on a shotgun to keep boys away from her when she’s older.

As her father, it’s assumed that I have to spend my every waking hour policing her nascent sexuality.

Not only is this more than a little creepy, it sustains the idea that women’s virginity is to be guarded by a man. They are not capable or entitled to make their own decisions about their bodies or the sexuality so it is Father’s — with a capital ‘F’ — responsibility until such time as he hands her on to another man.

With two daughters I’ll now have to stock up on twice the ammunition.

5. ‘You won’t be letting her do…’

Another variation on the advice to buy a shotgun, this response means that I’m in charge not just of my daughters’ virginity but their entire lives. Apparently, this extends right into adulthood.

For instance, when the maternal health nurse checking the symmetry of the creases on my daughter’s bottom during her four-week check up noted they were perfectly even, my wife Kasey quipped ‘That’ll be great for her career as a Victoria's Secret model’.

The nurse looked at me and said, ‘I bet dad would have something to say about that?!’

What do I have to say about it? Um, not much really. Sure I can think of careers with greater longevity and opportunity. And I’d prefer she choose a career where she’s valued for more than her cup size. But it’s not up to me.

It’s not really my place to tell a 20-something adult what she should be doing with her life. My job as a father is to raise daughters who are capable of making their own decisions rather than insisting that they forever obey my decision.

The strangest thing about all this advice about girls being trouble is that it just doesn’t add up. When you look at the statistics about who’s likely to die younger, be incarcerated, be involved in criminal activity or violence, it’s boys.

No doubt there are equivalent lame comments reserved for parents of boys, but it just goes to show that our attempts to squeeze girls and boys into gender stereotypes starts from the moment they’re born and never stops.

Words From a Father to His Daughter (From the Makeup Aisle)

Dr Kelly Flanagan

Dear Little One,

As I write this, I’m sitting in the makeup aisle of our local Target store. A friend recently texted me from a different makeup aisle and told me it felt like one of the most oppressive places in the world. I wanted to find out what he meant. And now that I’m sitting here, I’m beginning to agree with him. Words have power, and the words on display in this aisle have a deep power. Words and phrases like:

Affordably gorgeous,

Infallible,

Flawless finish,

Brilliant strength,

Liquid power,

Go nude,

Age defying,

Instant age rewind,

Choose your dream,

Nearly naked, and

Natural beauty.

When you have a daughter you start to realize she’s just as strong as everyone else in the house—a force to be reckoned with, a soul on fire with the same life and gifts and passions as any man. But sitting in this store aisle, you also begin to realize most people won’t see her that way. They’ll see her as a pretty face and a body to enjoy. And they’ll tell her she has to look a certain way to have any worth or influence.

But words do have power and maybe, just maybe, the words of a father can begin to compete with the words of the world. Maybe a father’s words can deliver his daughter through this gauntlet of institutionalized shame and into a deep, unshakeable sense of her own worthiness and beauty.

A father’s words aren’t different words, but they are words with a radically different meaning:

Brilliant strength. May your strength be not in your fingernails but in your heart. May you discern in your center who you are, and then may you fearfully but tenaciously live it out in the world.

Choose your dream. But not from a department store shelf. Find the still-quiet place within you. A real dream has been planted there. Discover what you want to do in the world. And when you have chosen, may you faithfully pursue it, with integrity and with hope.

Naked. The world wants you to take your clothes off. Please keep them on. But take your gloves off. Pull no punches. Say what is in your heart. Be vulnerable. Embrace risk. Love a world that barely knows what it means to love itself. Do so nakedly. Openly. With abandon.

Infallible. May you be constantly, infallibly aware that infallibility doesn’t exist. It’s an illusion created by people interested in your wallet. If you choose to seek perfection, may it be in an infallible grace—for yourself, and for everyone around you.

Age defying. Your skin will wrinkle and your youth will fade, but your soul is ageless. It will always know how to play and how to enjoy and how to revel in this one-chance life. May you always defiantly resist the aging of your spirit.

Flawless finish. Your finish has nothing to do with how your face looks today and everything to do with how your life looks on your last day. May your years be a preparation for that day. May you be aged by grace, may you grow in wisdom, and may your love become big enough to embrace all people. May your flawless finish be a peaceful embrace of the end and the unknown that follows, and may it thus be a gift to everyone who cherishes you.

Little One, you love everything pink and frilly and I will surely understand if someday makeup is important to you. But I pray three words will remain more important to you—the last three words you say every night, when I ask the question: “Where are you the most beautiful?” Three words so bright no concealer can cover them.

Where are you the most beautiful?

On the inside.

From my heart to yours,

Daddy

—————

Like thelast letter I wrote to my daughter, I wrote this first for her and the day I’ll eventually read it to her. But I also wrote it for every woman who needs to hear the words of a father. Women, no one else can define your beauty for you. But they’ll try.

My daughter is four years-old now. If her awakening to the makeup aisle comes at the typical age, I figure we have about five years to radically alter the arc of history and the subjugation-by-image of the female gender. We’ve got a lot of work to do. And it begins in the heart of each and every woman.

Sexualization of girls is linked to common mental health problems in girls and women – eating disorders, low self-esteem and depression:

AN APA TASK FORCE REPORTS

Psychologists call for replacing sexualized images of girls in media and advertising with positive ones

WASHINGTON, DC—A report of the American Psychological Association (APA) released today (February 19th 2007) found evidence that the proliferation of sexualized images of girls and young women in advertising, merchandising, and media is harmful to girls’ self-image and healthy development.

To complete the report, the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls studied published research on the content and effects of virtually every form of media, including television, music videos, music lyrics, magazines, movies, video games and the Internet.  They also examined recent advertising campaigns and merchandising of products aimed toward girls.

Sexualization was defined by the task force as occurring when a person’s value comes only from her/his sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics, and when a person is sexually objectified, e.g., made into a thing for another’s sexual use.

Examples of the sexualization of girls in all forms of media including visual media and other forms of media such as music lyrics abound.  And, according to the report, have likely increased in number as “new media” have been created and access to media has become omnipresent.  The influence and attitudes of parents, siblings, and friends can also add to the pressures of sexualization.

“The consequences of the sexualization of girls in media today are very real and are likely to be a negative influence on girls’ healthy development,” says Eileen L. Zurbriggen, PhD, chair of the APA Task Force and associate professor of psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. “We have ample evidence to conclude that sexualization has negative effects in a variety of domains, including cognitive functioning, physical and mental health, and healthy sexual development.”

Research evidence shows that the sexualization of girls negatively affects girls and young women across a variety of health domains:

Cognitive and Emotional Consequences: Sexualization and objectification undermine a person’s confidence in and comfort with her own body, leading to emotional and self-image problems, such as shame and anxiety.

Mental and Physical Health: Research links sexualization with three of the most common mental health problems diagnosed in girls and women—eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression or depressed mood.

Sexual Development: Research suggests that the sexualization of girls has negative consequences on girls’ ability to develop a healthy sexual self-image.

According to the task force report, parents can play a major role in contributing to the sexualization of their daughters or can play a protective and educative role. The APA report calls on parents, school officials, and all health professionals to be alert for the potential impact of sexualization on girls and young women. Schools, the APA says, should teach media literacy skills to all students and should include information on the negative effects of the sexualization of girls in media literacy and sex education programs.

“As a society, we need to replace all of these sexualized images with ones showing girls in positive settings—ones that show the uniqueness and competence of girls,” states Dr. Zurbriggen. “The goal should be to deliver messages to all adolescents—boys and girls—that lead to healthy sexual development.”

Full text of the Executive Summary, Report, and tips on “What Parents Can Do” are available at: apa.org

# Strong dads: strong daughters

Dr Meg Meeker, from Strong Fathers- strong daughters - 10 secrets every Father should know



Men, good men: We need you. We - mothers, daughters, and sisters - need your help to raise healthy young women. We need every ounce of masculine courage and wit you own, because fathers, more than anyone else, set the course for a daughter's life. Your daughter needs the best of who you are: your strength, your courage, your intelligence, and your fearlessness. She needs your empathy, assertiveness, and self confidence. She needs you.

Our daughters need the support that only fathers can provide, and if you are willing to guide your daughter, to stand between her and a toxic culture, to take her to a healthier place, your rewards will be unmatched. You will experience the love and adoration that can come only from a daughter. You will feel a pride, satisfaction, and joy that you can know nowhere else.

After more than twenty years of listening to daughters - and doling out antibiotics, anti-depressants, and stimulants to girls who have gone without a father's love - I know just how important fathers are. I have listened hour after hour to young girls describe how they vomit in junior high bathrooms to keep their weight down. I have listened to fourteen-year-old girls tell me they have to provide fellatio - which disgusts them - in order to keep their boyfriends. I've watched girls drop off varsity tennis teams, flunk out of school, and carve initials or tattoo cult figures onto their bodies - all to see if their dads will notice.

And I have watched daughters talk to fathers. When you come in the room, they change. Everything about them changes: their eyes, their mouths, their gestures, their body language. Daughters are never lukewarm in the presence of their fathers. They might take their mothers for granted, but not you. They light up - or they cry. They watch you intensely. They hang on your words. They hope for your attention, and they wait for it in frustration - or in despair. They need a gesture of approval, a nod of encouragement, or even simple eye contact to let them know you care and are willing to help.

When she's in your company, your daughter tries harder to excel. When you teach her, she learns more rapidly. When you guide her, she gains confidence. If you fully understood just how profoundly you can influence your daughter's life, you would be terrified, overwhelmed, or both. Boyfriends, brothers, even husbands can't shape her character the way you do. You will influence her entire life because she gives you an authority she gives no other man. Many fathers (particularly of teen girls) assume they have little influence over their daughters - certainly less influence than their daughters' peers or pop culture - and think their daughters need to figure out life on their own. But your daughter faces a world markedly different from the one you did growing up: it's less friendly, morally unmoored, and even outright dangerous.

Don't think you can't fight her "peers" or the power of pop culture. Exactly the opposite is true. Yes, the four Ms-MTV, music, movies, and magazines - are enormous influences that shape what girls think about themselves, what clothes they wear, and even the grades they get. But their influence doesn't come close to the influence of a father. A lot of research has been done on this - and fathers always come out on top. The effects of loving, caring fathers on their daughters' lives can be measured in girls of all ages.

Young Girls

* Toddlers securely attached to fathers are better at solving problems.
* Six-month-old babies score higher on tests of mental development if their
dads are involved in their lives.
* With dads present in the home, kids manage school stress better.
* Girls whose fathers provide warmth and control achieve higher academic
success.
* Girls who are close to their fathers exhibit less anxiety and withdrawn
behaviors.

Older Girls

* Girls with doting fathers are more assertive.
* Daughters who perceive that their fathers care a lot about them, who feel
connected to their fathers, have significantly fewer suicide attempts and
fewer instances of body dissatisfaction, depression, low self-esteem,
substance use, and unhealthy weight.
* Girls with involved fathers are twice as likely to stay in school.
A daughter's self-esteem is best predicted by her father's physical
affection.
* Girls with fathers who are involved in their lives have higher quantitative
and verbal skills and higher intellectual functioning.
* Girls with good fathers are less likely to flaunt themselves to seek male
attention.
* Fathers help daughters become more competent, more achievement-oriented, and more successful.
* A daughter from a middle-class family has a fivefold lower risk of
out-of-wedlock pregnancy if her father lives at home.

Dads are important.

Rules for Fathers with

Adolescent Daughters

Jeanne and Don Ellium, from *Raising a Teenager*

1) Never laugh at or tease girls about their appearance: weight, height, hair (colour, texture, style), appetite, physical strength, and so on. Girls at this age are extremely vulnerable to critical comments and teasing innuendoes that carry even a hint of judgement or disapproval. Tell her she is beautiful often, in addition to strong, witty, intelligent, funny, thoughtful, sensitive, and so on.

2) Continue to find events, activities, and interests that you both to share and enjoy doing together. A girl needs her father's attention more than ever now, and fathers must insist on remaining active participants in their daughters' busy schedules. Reach for her hand, rather than your wallet, whenever trouble brews between you. Sit down and listen without saying a word.

Talking about periods and celebrating menarche (first period)

Jane Bennett, see *A Blessing Not a Curse*

During puberty and adolescence:

* Girls are very sensitive to the messages they receive from their fathers about their physical changes
* Girls are more comfortable and positive about menstruation and ‘becoming a woman’ when they receive acknowledgement and recognition from their dad
* Recall your own experiences and feelings around puberty/during adolescence - to share with your daughter or just to remember and empathise
* Notice and examine your own thoughts and feelings about menstruation
* Use this opportunity to learn more about the menstrual cycle, the changes of puberty, hormones and their effects, fertility and reproduction
* There are some great clips about dads explaining menstruation/puberty to their daughters – just Google it

There is some evidence to suggest that in cultures where men more commonly talk with their daughters about menstruation and congratulate them on their menarche (for instance in Iran, Western Europe and parts of Sth America) girls feel more positive about ‘growing up’, less embarrassed and that it’s all normal and natural.

There are myriad ways families can celebrate menarche at home and, while a dad’s role at this time will differ from a mother’s (and will vary from family to family), it’s nonetheless very important. A positive, open and respectful response from the Masculine - and dads are the Main Man here - will do all sorts of good.

If a dad bows to a cultural norm of silence this can be interpreted by a girl feeling vulnerable and uncertain as a sign of disapproval and distancing as this taboo descends upon her.

* A simple ‘Congratulations!’ or ‘Congratulations, I’m proud of you’ sends a powerful message.
* Bring her flowers or a gift.
* As a family share a cake or favourite meal, raise a toast at dinnertime
* A special father/daughter dinner out together, or some other outing that is meaningful to you both within a couple of months of menarche – hiking, camping, an adventure – marking new rights, responsibilities and capacities. You don’t have to talk about periods per se. Though you can.
* Be willing to buy menstrual products. Familiarise yourself with the options and ask your daughter if she needs you to buy them for her when you go shopping. And for your wife too if you aren’t already!

With these or other strategies the message is that ‘this is a good/healthy/positive thing/I’m proud of you and I’m right here with you as you go through these changes’.

Why dads need to talk about sex

[Matty Silver](http://www.theage.com.au/lifestyle/by/Matty-Silver), The Age, September 1, 2015

This coming Sunday, September 6, will be Father's Day – a special day for people to show their appreciation for fathers, stepfathers, or other father figures.

But what does it take to be a good father – especially when your young children have grown into teenagers? Maybe it's time to think about what gift you can give them instead of them giving one to you? A proper sex education can be a tremendous gift. There is no part of your kids' lives where you are needed more than in teaching them sexuality, especially when it comes to boys. For example, they need to know that masturbation is OK – they will do it anyway – but your reassurance can help them to do it without guilt or shame.

You probably received little sex education from your parents when you were young. Therefore it's important that you should try to be different. Research from around the world shows that children of parents who talk about sex positively and acknowledge the pleasures instead of giving negative messages, are more likely to wait until later to have sex.

An article posted recently on the online Women's Weekly magazine explains that these days many teenagers are learning about sex from the internet. The information they receive is a dangerous mix of misinformation and distorted images of sexuality. Teenage girls especially are under more pressure than ever. Oral sex has become the norm for many – they believe it's not real sex because you don't lose your virginity and you don't get pregnant!

Today's teenagers, especially boys, grow up watching porn from a very early age. Sexual curiosity is healthy but they too often see hard-core images that give them unrealistic expectations of sex. For both boys and girls, porn has become their primary sex educator and trying to keep them away from internet porn is practically impossible. Parents may think their children don't view it, but in reality most do.

Sexually experienced adults usually understand that porn is a fantasy performed by professionals with unrealistic porn-star bodies, but most teenagers don't realise this. Porn leaves out what they really should know about sex – that goes hand in hand with intimacy and showing emotions, laughing, talking and feeling close.

Anal sex has become a standard part of heterosexual porn and is usually performed as a brutal act without any lubrication or care. Another trend in mainstream porn is for a scene to end, with men ejaculating on a woman's face or slapping women during sex and calling them bitches. Teenagers should be told that's not normal sex and definitely not cool!

So what can you do as a parent to assist your children to receive better information? There are an enormous number of helpful books available at the Family Planning website such as 500+ Questions Kids Have About Sex by Lyndall Caldwell and Gaye Dell and Let's Talk About Sex by Robie H. Harris and Michael Emberley.

Melbourne comedian Nelly Thomas has produced an excellent DVD for parents and their older teenage children called The Talk. And Victorian psychologist Sarah Calleja has created Parents, Tweens and Sex an engaging, safe and enjoyable app to support parents to educate their tweens (10-13 year olds). Another resource is this excellent for parents: It's time we talked.

However, there are many parents who are ill-equipped to talk about sexual issues with their children, feeling uncomfortable and embarrassed. Quite frankly they don't have the knowledge either, because things have changed dramatically since they were young. That's why it's essential to have comprehensive and age-appropriate sex education in all Australian schools, which unfortunately is not the case yet.

For example in the Netherlands it's the law that all primary and high school students receive sex and relationship education. The Dutch believe that young people are curious about sexuality and have the right to accurate and comprehensive information

Britain's Family Planning Association (FPA) recently developed a high-quality brilliant online resource to help primary schools deliver sex and relationship education, called Growing Up with Yasmine and Tom which easily could be used in Australian schools. There are several organisations in Australia that specialise in teaching sex education, such as the Youth Wellbeing project and HUSHeducation.

Perhaps it's time for Australian fathers to stand up and insist that the schools their children attend, provide up-to-date relationship and sex education that will help them become healthy, well-adjusted and happy adults.

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How online porn is warping the behaviour of boys with girls

Allison Pearson, The Age Tuesday Apr 28, 2015

We need to educate and embolden our daughters to fight back against pornography, which is warping the behaviour of boys.

Scientists for the Journal of Adolescent Health were surprised to see a 7 per cent spike in only five years among girls aged 11 to 13 reporting emotional issues. Boys remained fairly stable while girls faced "unique pressures".

Sometimes you hear a story that is so awful, it refuses to leave your mind, no matter how fervently you beg it to go away. I was told one such story recently by a family doctor. Readers of a squeamish disposition, look away now.

I was having dinner with a group of women when the conversation moved on to how we could raise happy, well-balanced sons and daughters who are capable of forming meaningful relationships when internet pornography has changed the landscape of adolescence beyond recognition.

A couple of the women said they had forced themselves to have toe-curlingly embarrassing conversations with their teenagers on the subject. "I want my son to know that, despite what he might see on his laptop, there are things you don't expect a girl to do on a first date, or a fifth date, or probably never," said Jo.

A GP, let's call her Sue, said: "I'm afraid things are much worse than people suspect." In recent years, Sue had treated growing numbers of teenage girls with internal injuries caused by frequent anal sex; not, as Sue found out, because they wanted to, or because they enjoyed it, but because a boy expected them to. "I'll spare you the gruesome details," said Sue, "but these girls are very young and slight and their bodies are simply not designed for that."

Her patients were deeply ashamed at presenting with such injuries. They had lied to their mums about it and felt they couldn't confide in anyone else, which only added to their distress. When Sue questioned them further, they said they were humiliated by the experience but they had simply not felt they could say no. Anal sex was standard among teenagers now, even though the girls knew it hurt.

There was stunned silence around that table, although I think some of us may have let out involuntary cries of dismay and disbelief. Sue's surgery isn't in the brutalised inner-city but in a  leafy suburb. The girls presenting with incontinence were often under the age of consent and from loving, stable homes. Just the sort of kids who, two generations ago, would have been enjoying riding and ballet lessons, and still looking forward to their first kiss, not being coerced into violent sex by some kid who picked up his ideas about physical intimacy from a dogging video on his mobile.

The harm is not just physical. According to a recent study, the number of schoolgirls at risk of emotional problems has risen sharply. Scientists for the Journal of Adolescent Health were surprised to see a 7 per cent spike in only five years among girls aged 11 to 13 reporting emotional issues. Boys remained fairly stable while girls faced "unique pressures". Researchers said the causes could include the drive to achieve an unrealistic body shape, perpetuated by social media and an increasing sexualisation of young women.

Girls have always starved themselves to be more lovable, or maybe to have less of themselves to hate. What is new and dangerous is the ability to post selfies, then wait for approval to come flooding in. You don't have to spend long with an insecure teenage girl (is there any other kind?) to work out that her happiness is tremulously yoked to the getting of Likes or little lovehearts on Facebook or Instagram. Take that female insecurity, warp and magnify it in the internet Hall of Mirrors, add a longing to be "fit" and popular, then stir into an ubiquitous porn culture and you have a hellish recipe for sad, abused girls.

It explains why more than four in 10 girls between 13 and 17 in England say they have been coerced into sex acts, according to one of the largest European polls on teenage experiences. Research by the universities of Bristol and Central Lancashire  concluded that a fifth of girls had suffered violence or intimidation from teenage boyfriends, a high proportion of whom regularly viewed pornography, with one in five harbouring "extremely negative attitudes towards women".

The end result is what Sue sees as a GP. Young girls – children, really – who abase themselves to pass for normal in a grim, pornified culture. According to another study of British teenagers, most youngsters' first experience of anal sex occurred within a relationship, but it was "rarely under circumstances of mutual exploration of sexual pleasure". Instead, it was boys who pushed the girls to try it, with boys reporting that they felt "expected" to take that role. Moreover, both genders expected males to find pleasure in the act whereas females were mostly expected to "endure the negative aspects such as pain or a damaged reputation".

You don't need to be of the Mary Whitehouse conservative persuasion to feel that something has gone catastrophically awry here. I'm still recovering from a tutor at my daughter's sixth-form college telling me he thought that at least a third of the girls in her year were depressed or self-harming.

Mature women can generally make up their own minds about what they are prepared to do in bed. That is a private matter among consenting adults, although I don't know a single woman who thinks that a man insisting on anal sex is anything other than a depersonalising act of aggression. For inexperienced teenage girls it's a different matter.

However embarrassing it may be, we need to educate and embolden our daughters to fight back against pornography, which is warping the behaviour of boys who are supposed to be their lovers, not their abusers. Anything that hurts and humiliates you is never OK. I suggest that future sex education classes begin with this joke: "I asked my wife to try anal sex. 'Sure,' she said: 'You first.'"

PS: I texted my own teenager for her view. She texted back: ''A lot of truth in this. I think dubious consent is the greatest problem of my generation.''

You Want a Critical Thinker

Rosalyn Wiseman, *Queen bees and Wannabes*

Technology and how it is used in the media is constantly changing our world. It either empowers your daughter to be more engaged, curious, and thoughtful about her world or it turns her into a thoughtless consumer of ideas and products. Don’t waste this opportunity to teach your daughter to be a critical thinker – it’s the only way she’ll grow up to be a competent person capable of reaching her full potential.

Sample Technology Contract

A tangible way to install your family values in your daughter is to create a family technology contract. Start by sitting around the kitchen table and asking her what your values are and how they would look when using technology. Here’s a sample Family Agreement to get you started.

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| We, the Edwards family, believe our family values include integrity and compassion. Every member of the family understands that our use of technology must reflect our values. Therefore, we recognise that the following are in direct contradiction to our values.* Using someone’s password and identity without his/her consent.
* Spreading gossip
* Making or forwarding sexually suggestive photographs
* Sending viruses
* Participating in internet polling
* Creating or participating in insulting websites and blogs.
* Using Facebook, MySpace, Xanga, LiveJournal, YouTube, or any other website with the purpose of creating, viewing, or participating in the humiliation of others.

If any family member is found acting in violation of this contract, the following will occur:* First violation: Computer or mobile phone privileges ended for \_\_\_ amount of time.
* Second violation: Computer and mobile phone privileges ended for \_\_\_ amount of time.
* Third violation: One of the person’s most valued privileges is taken away. (remember, an iPod is a privilege and so is participating in team sports – not matter how good your child is.)

While we understand that any of us can make a mistake, we believe that living according to these values is critically important.Signed on this day \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of this year \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Child\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Parent(s)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

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[Consent: Not actually that complicated](http://rockstardinosaurpirateprincess.com/2015/03/02/consent-not-actually-that-complicated/)

[Rockstar Dinosaur Pirate Princess](http://rockstardinosaurpirateprincess.com/author/emmelinemay/), [March 2, 2015](http://rockstardinosaurpirateprincess.com/2015/03/02/consent-not-actually-that-complicated/)

A short one today as my life is currently very complicated and conspiring against my preference to spend all of my days working out what to blog. But do you know what isn’t complicated?

Consent.

It’s been much discussed recently; what with college campuses bringing in Affirmative Consent rules, and with the film of the book that managed to make lack of consent look sexy raking it in at the box office. You may not know this, but in the UK we more or less have something similar to ‘affirmative consent’ already. It’s how Ched Evans was convicted while his co-defendant was not – and is along the lines of whether the defendant had a reasonable belief that the alleged victim consented. From the court documents it appears that while the jury felt that it was reasonable to believe that the victim had consented to intercourse with the co-defendant, it was not reasonable to believe that she’d consented to intercourse with some random dude that turned up halfway through (Evans). The issue in the UK isn’t traditionally in the way it’s dealt with in court, but in the way it has been investigated – new guidance was recently issued to try to improve this.

It seems like every time an article is written about consent, or a move made towards increasing the onus on the initiator of the sex to ensure that the person they are trying to have sex with, you know, actually WANTS to have sex with them, there are a wave of comments and criticisms.

It seems a lot of people really, REALLY don’t get what ‘consent’ means. From the famous “not everybody needs to be asked prior to each insertion” to the student that (allegedly) thought he’d surprise his partner with some non-consensual BDSM to that fucking song to almost every damn comment on any article by anyone that suggests that yes means yes; it seems people really have a problem understanding that before you have sex with someone, and that’s every time you have sex with them, make sure they want to have sex with you. This goes for men, women, everyone. Whoever you are initiating sexytimes with, just make sure they are actually genuinely up for it. That’s it. It’s not hard. Really.

If you’re still struggling, just imagine instead of initiating sex, you’re making them a cup of tea.

You say “hey, would you like a cup of tea?” and they go “omg fuck yes, I would fucking LOVE a cup of tea! Thank you!\*” then you know they want a cup of tea.

If you say “hey, would you like a cup of tea?” and they um and ahh and say, “I’m not really sure…” then you can make them a cup of tea or not, but be aware that they might not drink it, and if they don’t drink it then – this is the important bit –  don’t make them drink it. You can’t blame them for you going to the effort of making the tea on the off-chance they wanted it; you just have to deal with them not drinking it. Just because you made it doesn’t mean you are entitled to watch them drink it.

If they say “No thank you” then don’t make them tea. At all. Don’t make them tea, don’t make them drink tea, don’t get annoyed at them for not wanting tea. They just don’t want tea, ok?

They might say “Yes please, that’s kind of you” and then when the tea arrives they actually don’t want the tea at all. Sure, that’s kind of annoying as you’ve gone to the effort of making the tea, but they remain under no obligation to drink the tea. They did want tea, now they don’t. Sometimes people change their mind in the time it takes to boil that kettle, brew the tea and add the milk. And it’s ok for people to change their mind, and you are still not entitled to watch them drink it even though you went to the trouble of making it.

If they are unconscious, don’t make them tea. Unconscious people don’t want tea and can’t answer the question “do you want tea” because they are unconscious.

Ok, maybe they were conscious when you asked them if they wanted tea, and they said yes, but in the time it took you to boil that kettle, brew the tea and add the milk they are now unconscious. You should just put the tea down, make sure the unconscious person is safe, and  – this is the important bit – don’t make them drink the tea. They said yes then, sure, but unconscious people don’t want tea.

If someone said yes to tea, started drinking it, and then passed out before they’d finished it, don’t keep on pouring it down their throat. Take the tea away and make sure they are safe.  Because unconscious people don’t want tea. Trust me on this.

If someone said “yes” to tea around your house last Saturday, that doesn’t mean that they want you to make them tea all the time. They don’t want you to come around unexpectedly to their place and make them tea and force them to drink it going “BUT YOU WANTED TEA LAST WEEK”, or to wake up to find you pouring tea down their throat going “BUT YOU WANTED TEA LAST NIGHT”.

Do you think this is a stupid analogy? Yes, you all know this already  – of course you wouldn’t force feed someone tea because they said yes to a cup last week. Of COURSE you wouldn’t pour tea down the throat of an unconcious person because they said yes to tea 5 minutes ago when they were conscious. But if you can understand how completely ludicrous it is to force people to have tea when they don’t want tea, and you are able to understand when people don’t want tea, then how hard is it to understand when it comes to sex?

Whether it’s tea or sex, Consent Is Everything.

And on that note, I am going to make myself a cup of tea.

\*I actually said this word for word to a friend in the early hours of Sunday morning after a warehouse party. Tea. It’s fucking brilliant.

Father's Day: Dads and Their

Teen Daughters

Leon Hoffman, June 10, 2011 in Beyond Freud

Dads may not appreciate their importance for their teen daughters

How does a great day between a dad and his teenage daughter suddenly turn on a dime? One great day can end in screaming and yelling, and the good feelings recede as a distant [memory](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/memory). [Understanding](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/empathy) that something might be going on beneath the surface of his teenage-daughter's outburst can help a dad respond in a more effective manner. Hint: Try not to over-react in the heat of an argumentative explosion.

A father once described how he had spent a great Father's Day at a baseball game with his 14-year-old daughter. As soon as they arrived home, he made a funny face and said to her, "...and don't forget that you have that exam tomorrow." A torrent of [rage](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/anger) followed, with slamming doors and shouting: "You are the most disgusting person I know!" "Can't you loosen up a bit?" She went to her room weeping and called one of her friends. Dad became angry and confused. How did those pleasant feelings from the afternoon evaporate?

This 14-year-old truly loved being with her dad. She actually purchased the tickets with her own money. We could surmise that as soon as they got home, particularly in the presence of mom, she felt [guilty](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/guilt) about her wishes to be alone with dad and had to turn off her own pleasant feelings of liking to be alone with dad. She turned off those feelings by creating an opposite set of feelings--hatred and criticism. She moved away from him and turned to her friends. Dads and young teen-age have to confront two facts: Both need to psychologically adapt to the physical development of the girl's [childhood](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/child-development) body, on its way to becoming a mature woman's body, and both need to understand that she will begin to develop grown-up-like independent relationships, which may be totally secret from dad.

Dads may not realize their continuing importance in their daughter's lives, particularly in the midst of such a screaming battle. Dads are important protectors for their teen-age daughters, helping them develop their [self-esteem](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/self-esteem) during this vulnerable period of life. Dads can react to sons as replicas of themselves; they can remember being boys and they can imagine their sons growing up to become like them. In contrast, they relate to their daughters in more complex ways. Dads may have a hard time imagining how their daughters will turn out and may not realize that a young feminine girl will want to incorporate [personality](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/personality) traits from both dad and mom. It is easier for a dad to non-verbally communicate to his son: "You can become like me." But, he may have a hard time communicating that very same message to his daughter: that she can become like him and still become a feminine woman.

A father may have a difficult time communicating these positive feelings to his daughter when he is uncomfortable with her developing [sexuality](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/sex). He may not realize the source of his discomfort; he only knows that he is constantly being provoked by his daughter to reject her, to fight with her, or to ignore her. That's a contrast to the closeness he felt before she approached [puberty](http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/adolescence). A dad should ask himself: "Why do I feel that way?" This may allow him to understand her reactions and it may allow him to modify his reactions to his daughter.

The greater the dad's comfort in relating to his daughter both as a girl with a girl's body as well as a whole person, the more comfortable he can be during the onset of her sexual development. Mom's comfort with her own sense of self as a woman helps a girl develop comfort as a developing woman. In addition, dad's comfort with his daughter as a girl and as a person helps her experience and accept herself in a more positive way as well. A father can communicate, again not directly, how he, a man, feels, thinks, and acts. This allows the daughter an opportunity to integrate her father's values, needs, and aspirations for herself--as well as begin to imagine relating to the opposite sex.

A father should try to react with equanimity when provoked by a tempestuous daughter. What is most crucial, is that a father should communicate that he accepts her fully as a human being as well as a developing woman. He can communicate both his own sense of competency as a man as well as permit her to identify with him. Our best hope for our children is to communicate to them a sense that we are who we are and we will try our best with ourselves and with them. And with a little luck, things will work out pretty well.

A father’s role from ages thirteen to seventeen

Jeanne Elium and Don Elium, *Raising a Daughter*

‘When fathers and daughters fail to maintain their connection through the transition into the teen years, many fall into the cultural trap of “dipping into Dad’s pocket.” Daughters, looking for any kind of sign their father still cares, begin asking for money. Dad, feeling guilty because he abandoned his daughter, “shells out,” hoping to make up for it. Gordan Clay, creator of “Father and Teenage Daughter Rite of Passage” weekends, constantly sees this dynamic. “Fathers get scared when their daughters begin to mature, so they retreat behind their ability to buy things. Fathers look back on their daughters’ adolescence as a time of their asking for money, tantrums, and brooding if they didn’t give it. The women I see are enraged, because Dad withdrew just at the time when they needed his closeness the most.” Between thirteen and seventeen, fathers must find a way to say to their daughters, “You are now a young woman of whom I am proud. I enjoy our closeness, and I support you in finding your way in this world. I am here for you.”

One key to staying connected with their daughters is for fathers to broaden their understanding of their own sexuality. Traditionally, the focus of male sexuality has been event-oriented – intercourse and climax. A man’s full sexuality is his *being* and his way of relating to the world. Sexual energy has many forms, some of which are care, affection, closeness, and creativity. For men this understanding must be learned. “I tell fahers,” continues Gordan Clay, “When you hug your daughter, if it feels uncomfortable, continue. If it feels wrong, stop! Most men know exactly what I am saying and what I mean.” Pgs. 104-5

A further technical note on the sometimes tricky matter of physical affection and girls

Nigel Latta, *Fathers Raising Daughters*

‘When I was about to start writing this book, a man popped into my office one day. He was walking past, saw my name on the door, and decided to come in and ask if I’d sign a copy of one of my books for his wife …

As I was signing this man’s book, I asked him about the kinds of issues he’d like to see in a book for dads of daughters. The very first thing that he said was that he’d like some idea about when it wasn’t OK to cuddle girls anymore.

‘How old are they>’ I asked.

‘Seven and nine.’

‘What do you want to know about all that. Then?’

‘Well, you know, you hear all this stuff about fathers being accused of molesting their daughters, so you don’t want to do anything that could be taken the wrong way. Especially once they start to hit puberty and they probably start to feel a bit awkward as well.

‘So you want to know when’s a good time to stop the physical affection?’ I asked. I really liked this guy even though I’d just met him. He was a great dad. I had no scientific basis on which to make that judgment, no evidence at all other than a gut feeling. Sometimes you just know.

He nodded. ‘Yeah.’

‘Never.’

He laughed, and it was a good sound. The sound of someone who knows he’s doing the very thing he was put here on the ground to do. He was a dad.

‘You never stop doing that stuff,’ I said. ‘You might need to pay a little closer attention to her signals when puberty kicks off, but if you’re sensitive to all that then you’ll know when to give her a cuddle and when to let her be. You never stop, though, because she’ll always need it.’

‘But what about all you hear about sexual abuse?’

‘I’ve spent the past 20 years working with kids who’ve been sexually abused, and with the men who do it, and in all that time I have never once had a case where a good dad’s honest intentions were misunderstood. Kids know whether something’s OK or not. If you’re doing a bad thing, they know. The opposite is true, too: if you’re a good dad giving your daughter a hug, she’s going to know that.’

‘But what about all those cases you see on telly?’

I shrugged. ‘I’m not saying that doesn’t happen. I’ve met dads who have been accused of doing things I don’t believe they’ve done, but in every one of these cases it was in the the liddle of a nasty custody dispute where the only person the child ever allegedly disclosed anything to was the embittered ex-partner. Those cases are very rare, though, because when kids disclose someone’s been

doing bad stuff to them it's usually very clear who that person is and what they've been doing.'

'So I keep giving my girls hugs then?' he said.

I nodded. 'As many as you've got in you.'

'Phew,' he said, obviously relieved.

Phew indeed.

You have to wonder what the hell we’ve come to when good dads worry about when they should stop giving their daughters hugs. How did we all get to such a sorry state?

Phew in bloody deed.’ Pgs. 34-36

Useful, fun, enlightening stuff

Clips:

♀ **Celebration Day for Girls** 2 min clip, highlights of the workshop.

♀ **Celebrating Your First Period** animation: The Dugdale Trust for Women & Girls

♀ **The Sexy Lie** Ted Talk by Caroline Heldman about objectification

♀ Laci Green’s frank video series about sexuality

♀ **Love Your Vagina** song www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgEXRKIZRvc

♀ **Her First Period** The Frantics - a caring Dad supports his daughter

♀ **The power of vulnerability** and **Listening to Shame**, Brene Brown Ted Talks.

♀ Always # **Like a Girl** ad

♀ Dove self-esteem fund ad/videos on youtube:, ‘Dove evolution’: make up and hair stylists plus photoshop, ‘Beauty pressure’: the onslaught of ads ‘talk to your daughter before the beauty industry does’ and many more, Also from www.dove.ca, in Resources: ‘Fabricating Beauty’ clip - this isn’t an ad. Scary and enlightening!

♀ French and Saunders on contraception: http://youtu.be/CIrd34dQTzY Hilarious!

♀ Search: ‘fathers and daughters first period’

Books:

Angelo, F., Pritchard, H., Stewart, R. ( 2003) **Secret Girls Business**

Bennett, Jane (2002) **A Blessing Not a Curse**

Bennett, Jane (2008) **The Pill: Are You Sure It’s for You?**

Bennett, Jane (2010) **Girltopia – A world of real conversations for real girls**

Biddulph, S. (2016) **10 Things Girls Need Most**

Brizendine, Louann (2007) **The Female Brain**

Latta, Nigel, (2010) **Fathers Raising Daughters**

Sax, Leonard (2006) **Why Gender Matters**

Solter, Aletha (2006) **Raising Drug-Free Kids**

Wiseman, Rosalind (2002, 2009) **Queen Bees and Wannabees**

Websites:

www.dadsanddaughters.com

www.cybersmart.gov.au/Teens.aspx

www.lovegoodbadugly.co

www.ramonamag.com

www.sexedrescue.com

Download:

**Talk Soon Talk Often: a guide for parents talking to their kids about sex**. Free from WADept of Health