"Five Things a Father Can Do Today to Reconnect with His Kids"

by Jim Burns, Ph.D.

Fathers, adolescence is a critical time for your children's development. Studies indicate that when fathers are connected to their kids, they fare substantially better as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood. Though they may not seem to act like it much of the time, dads, your kids need you to be involved in their lives! It all boils down to you intentionally investing in building relationships with your kids. Here are five ideas for reconnecting with your kids – which you can begin implementing today!

1) **Communicate with your kids.** Sure, you don't always want to talk and neither do your kids. Yet, you cannot have a solid, growing relationship (with anyone!) without communicating. Find a time when distractions can be held to a minimum and have a conversation with your teenager. Don't just talk about what your interested in. Talk about anything and everything. Ask your kids about their interests, opinions and feelings. Ask open-ended questions that can't be answered yes or no. (Note: if you have not had a history of talking with your kids, getting started may seem a bit awkward to both you and your kids. Don't let this get in your way. Share with your kids what you are trying to do (build stronger relationships / reconnect) and start slowly with reasonable expectations. Just keep at it!)

2) **Listen.** Listening is the language of love. Through listening, you demonstrate that you value your kids. Many parents find it difficult to actively listen. Yet, when you take the time to really pay attention, show empathy and listen – you are taking a key step in reconnecting with your kids. When kids know that their fathers will really listen (instead of immediately "correcting") they will be more willing to talk. As noted above, good communication results in stronger relationships.

3) **Display affection.** Even though teenagers are in the process of becoming adults and separating from their parents, they still need the affection of their fathers. In fact, sexual promiscuity in teenage girls can often be traced back to a desire for (and lack of) affection from their fathers. Dads, be sure to offer your kids genuine affection through loving words, affirmation, encouragement, small gifts and appropriate touch. (For ideas on physical affection, download our free tip sheet, ***"Keeping in Touch with Your Kids"***. Click ***here*** to download this tip sheet.)

4) **Play.** Play is necessary for a close-knit family. There is nothing like play to bring about family togetherness and communication. Play builds family memories, reduces family stress and produces support and affirmation. Dads, understand that play doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as simple as taking your child out to get an ice cream cone or throwing a Frisbee around in the yard.

5) **Be there for your kids.** Fathers, one of the most valuable contributions you can make today in effort to reconnect with your kids is to simply "be there;" involved in their lives. Your presence is a powerful affirmation and sign of caring towards your kids. Your presence provides

kids with a greater sense of security than almost any other quality parents can offer. Sometimes, this means being willing to make some tough choices; like choosing to be a your daughter's volleyball match instead of being at another business meeting. But, the value of being involved in your kids' lives is more valuable than a bigger paycheck.