6 TIPS FOR MEN AT HOME

The days of June Cleaver and Carol Brady may be long gone, but we’re still far from achieving gender equality. Women still do the majority of domestic work. Even women who work outside the home do 40 percent more childcare and 30 percent more housework than their husbands.¹

Yet research shows that everyone benefits when men lean in for equality—starting with men themselves. Men who are active fathers and caregivers enjoy better health.² Couples who share responsibilities have stronger marriages and more sex.³ Children with involved fathers are happier, healthier, and more successful.⁴

TIP 1  BE A 50/50 PARTNER

TIP 2 BE AN ACTIVE FATHER

TIP 3 CLOSE THE WAGE GAP AT HOME

TIP 4 CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES

TIP 5 HELP YOUR DAUGHTER LEAD

TIP 6 DON’T TELL YOUR SON TO “MAN UP!”

1

BE A 50/50 PARTNER

SITUATION
Running a house and raising children is hard work, and women still do most of it. This means many women don’t get the support they need at home, and women who work outside the home often end up with two full-time jobs. More women than ever are primary or co-breadwinners, yet only 9 percent of couples in dual-income marriages say that they share childcare, housework, and breadwinning evenly.⁵

SOLUTION
Approach the responsibilities of child care and housework as real partners. Commit to do your fair share of daily chores, and make sure work is split evenly. Don’t wait to be asked—step up when you see dishes in the sink or laundry piling up.

DID YOU KNOW?
When men share household responsibilities, their wives are happier and their marriages are stronger. Not only does marital satisfaction go up, but couples have more sex—“choreplay” is real!⁶
2
BE AN ACTIVE FATHER

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. This is true at every income level and regardless of how involved mothers are. When fathers participate in their lives, daughters have higher self-esteem and are more willing to try new things and sons are better equipped to cope with stress and less likely to fight. What’s more, teenagers who feel close to their fathers end up in healthier, happier marriages.

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

DID YOU KNOW?
Fathers who participate in caregiving are more patient, empathetic, and flexible and enjoy greater job satisfaction. Fatherhood is also linked to lower blood pressure, lower rates of cardiovascular disease, and a longer life.

3
CLOSE THE WAGE GAP AT HOME

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.

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. Equally as important, show your kids what 50/50 looks like. Seeing parents divvy up dishes and laundry shapes children’s gender attitudes and career aspirations.

DID YOU KNOW?
Fathers who do more household chores are more likely to raise daughters who believe they have a broader range of career options.
4

CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES

SITUATION

Kids’ beliefs about themselves and others are shaped by the world around them, and girls are often sent the wrong messages. Traditional girls’ toys focus on appearance and caretaking, while boys’ toys focus on competition and spatial skills. Children’s books are twice as likely to feature a male character in the lead role. Kids are exposed to an average of eight hours of media every day, and women are underrepresented or sexualized in much of that media.

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?

Of the top one hundred U.S. films in 2013, women accounted for only 30 percent of all speaking characters and only 15 percent of protagonists.

5

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. 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. These factors take a toll on girls. Between elementary school and high school, girls’ self-esteem drops 3.5 times more than boys. By middle school, girls are less interested in leading than boys — a trend that continues into adulthood.

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!
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. Movies, video games, and comic books bombard boys with stories of men who are strong, aggressive, and in charge but rarely vulnerable or nurturing. Boys often emulate these oversimplified characters. As a father, you can model a more complete definition of manhood.

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. Model gender equality for your son by supporting the women in your life and celebrating their achievements.

DID YOU KNOW?
Equality begets equality: Boys who grow up in more equal homes are more likely to create equal homes as adults.22

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN.

In for equality? Pass it on with #LeanInTogether
Men, post a photo or video to your favorite social media channels showing how or why you lean in for equality, and, women, celebrate a man who leans in with you!

Additional Resources
Want to learn more about the benefits of leaning in for equality together? Find informative videos, activities, articles, and more at leanintogether.org/resources
REFERENCES


7 For a thorough review, see Lamb, The Role of the Father in Child Development; Sarkadi et al., “Fathers’ Involvement and Children’s Developmental Outcomes,” pp. 153–58; and Allen and Daly, The Effects of Father Involvement.


12 Institute for Social Research, Time, Money, and Who Does the Laundry, University of Michigan, Research Update (2007); and Gender Pay Gap Starts at Home as Boys Earn More for Household Chores, survey by PktMny, 2013.

REFERENCES


17 Martha M. Lauzen, It’s a Man’s (Celluloid) World: On-Screen Representations of Female Characters in the Top 100 Films of 2013 (2014).


