# **5 Things Single Dads Should Do Consistently**

By Matt Haviland

As a father, I try to operate with the ever-present knowledge that my words matter and often more than I realize. Of course, that isn't easy; we all say careless and insensitive things sometimes. And often, the challenges increase when you add the strong emotions and frustrations of being a single dad.

My last article described five things to avoid, and [you can read that here](https://fathers.com/blog/your-situation/single-dad/single-dads-consistent-words-5-things-to-avoid-2/). Now let's look at more positive habits we can pursue—**5 things to do that will help us be more affirming and encouraging** for our kids and more peaceful with our exes and others.

## Be prepared ahead of time.

The most effective strategy is to prepare yourself for potential conflict or frustration in everyday life so you aren't caught off guard by a tense situation. Your efforts to guard your heart, mind, and emotions will advantageously benefit your kids and your relationship with them. Dad, set the bar and take a few moments to plan what this may look like. Though you may not succeed here every time, I assure you, your efforts will not go unnoticed by your children.

## Make it a constant pursuit.

As dads, our positive words to our kids should be continual, consistent, and delivered in a variety of ways—through notes, journals, texts, and in-person comments and conversations. Researchers Pitts and Socha state:

***Positive communication is not the absence of negative verbal and nonverbal communication but rather the presence of positive, enhancing, and facilitative talk and gestures. Positive communication is also not about naïvely attending to only good things, but rather, it is about applying and studying communication that allows us to thrive in the full spectrum of life experiences.***

Dad, even in some of your child's most difficult experiences, your words carry great weight through the notes you write, the journals you keep, the in-person conversations you initiate, and the text messages you send.

## Love the unlovable.

Supporting your child's relationship with their mother— even when it feels like the last thing you want to do or can do—is foundational to raising emotionally healthy children. Can you show honor and respect to someone even when it isn't reciprocated? Can you do it for the sake of your kids? As much as possible, your kids need both parents, and each of you brings unique contributions to the kids' lives as mom and dad.

## Ask questions.

Let's say your son or daughter returns to your house and is let down by something their mom did or said. Although you might be tempted to pile on with criticism, simple questions can help draw your child into a deeper conversation and create an opportunity for you to begin talking through the healing. Try questions like:

"Why do you think she said that?"

"Do you believe that's true?"

"How did that make you feel?"

"How will you respond?"

## Stay calm, cool, and collected.

This one affects all the others. It will require some preparation and daily efforts to grow in this area, and is a key part of being able to show love and ask thoughtful questions. We are all better dads when we're calm and not giving in to strong emotions and other inconsistent factors.

**Dad, keep a positive outlook on your fathering**. Embrace your opportunities to invest in your kids with affirmation and encouragement. Your consistently positive words will reap healthy outcomes as you raise consistent and confident kids.

Read the original article and others articles here: https://fathers.com/blog/consistency/5-things-single-dads-should-do-consistently/

BIO: Matt Haviland is the Men's Center Director for Alpha Grand Rapids (AGR), which operates two centers: Alpha Women's Center and Alpha Men's Center. He is married to his amazing wife, Christy, and is the father of a wonderful teenage daughter. He and Christy are currently in the adoption process as well. Matt has been working with fathers since 2008 through various organizations and partnerships. He joined the team at Alpha Grand Rapids at the beginning of 2021, shortly before the new Men's Center facility was completed and opened as one of the first standalone buildings solely serving fathers in the United States. As Men's Center Director, Matt empowers staff members and volunteers to walk alongside fathers and equip them to be the best man, partner, and father possible. He is deeply passionate about discipling men and understands how valuable fathers are to their families and communities. A native of Grand Rapids, MI, Matt enjoys family time, reading, playing golf, and almost all outdoor recreation.

Matt Haviland is also the author of [A Father's Walk: A Christian-Based Resource for Single Fathers](https://www.amazon.com/FatherS-Walk-Christian-Based-Resource-Fathers-ebook/dp/B0792KF4VZ/ref%3Dsr_1_2?keywords=matt+haviland&qid=1578686120&s=books&sr=1-2) and the co-author of [The Daddy Gap](https://www.westbowpress.com/en/bookstore/bookdetails/602638-The-Daddy-Gap). For more information, email Matt at afatherswalk@gmail.com.