

## Ten Friendly Warnings

**Some friendly warnings** I share with you about your coming years as a dad:

1. Never think you've blown it so badly that your child will be adversely affected forever. Kids are resilient. I'm not suggesting you ignore your mistakes, just keep things in perspective.
2. Don't forget your wife probably has a great handle on what your child needs. Trust her intuition.
3. Don't think these days are forever. They only feel that way. One day soon you'll wake up and wonder how this baby got to be 9 years old. Enjoy today. Drink it in. Be grateful for all of it.
4. Don't become so caught up in surviving these early years that you forget to keep the end in mind. Your goal as a dad is to help your daughter become an adult—and then step out of the way. This realization becomes especially important as your child enters the toddler years; your wife will need some long-term perspective and hope.
5. Don't yield to the temptation to escape the challenges of home by taking up a time-consuming hobby or becoming a workaholic. Right now, and for the next 18 or so years, your child and your wife need you. Put them first . . . you'll have time later to indulge in that hobby.
6. Don't believe the lie that kids just need "quality time" and that you can delay investing in your son's life until he's older. Build into that child every day. Let me repeat: Every day.
7. Don't miss the milestones. If I could do it over again, I'd bring home ice cream more often and do more to celebrate my children's accomplishments and special occasions.
8. Don't be impatient with your child. It's a common mistake to expect more than is age-appropriate, especially from a first-born. Have patience, Dad, in her ability to understand and to behave.
9. Don't let this baby define you. Some guys pin their entire existence and self-worth on how they perform as a dad. Bad idea: You'll mess up a lot and you'll constantly feel inadequate. Why ruin your self-esteem by making "dad" your only role in life? Besides, while you are now a dad, you are also still many other things: a husband, an employee (or employer), a son, a brother . . .

10. Don't think you can accomplish this fatherhood thing alone. I've learned a lot from other dads. I've tried to be a student of other men, seeing how they handle certain ages and challenges. I've belonged to several small groups where we could share common frustrations and joys about being a dad. I've read lots of books about being a good father. And I've tried to incorporate something helpful into my life from every- thing I've learned.

***And, a few other things:***

1. You can't adequately prepare for any of this – but try anyway.
2. You'll learn some things about being a dad pretty quickly. It may be that you'll never learn other lessons. That's okay.
3. Your wife is new to parenting, too (probably), so grow in this journey together, and remember that she's dealing with changes and challenges right alongside you.
4. Babies are usually pretty easy – at first. Enjoy those early days!
5. You can live on less sleep than you ever imagined.
6. Your child didn't read any books about being a good kid, and quite possibly will surprise you a lot in the coming years. Go with that.
7. The demands of your job will continue to grow, just as your family needs you more than ever. Decide now which will get the best of your time and energy – make sure your priorities are in order. Today.
8. Find at least a few other dads, with more parenting experience, from whom you can learn.
9. Yes, be a friend to your child, but never forget that he or she only has one dad – so be the adult, always.
10. Don't forget the long game. Although it is a long way off, be thinking now of how you want your child to be when he or she is an adult. Parent toward that end.