



# 7 TIPS FOR PARENTS

[#LeanInTogether](#)

# 7 TIPS FOR PARENTS

Children should feel supported when they both lead and nurture, and this means pushing back against age-old expectations that women should be caring and men should be in charge.

Changing these stereotypes starts at home. When parents have 50/50 partnerships, children grow up with more egalitarian views and can envision more possibilities for themselves. Telling children “You can do anything” is not nearly as effective as showing them they can!

By making small changes that create more equal homes, we can raise a generation of women and men who can be anything they want to be.

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**TIP 1** MODEL EQUALITY AT HOME

**TIP 2** MOMS, LET GO OF PERFECT

**TIP 3** DADS, BE ACTIVE FATHERS

**TIP 4** CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES

**TIP 5** CLOSE THE KID WAGE GAP

**TIP 6** HELP YOUR DAUGHTER LEAD

**TIP 7** DON'T TELL YOUR SON TO “MAN UP!”

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## 1 MODEL EQUALITY AT HOME

### SITUATION

Almost 65 percent of couples rely on dual incomes, but only 9 percent share child care, housework, and breadwinning equally.<sup>1</sup> Yet research shows that splitting responsibilities more evenly benefits children. Fathers who do more household chores are more likely to raise daughters who believe they have a broader range of career options,<sup>2</sup> and parents who share in decision making are more likely to raise sons who support gender equality.<sup>3</sup>

### SOLUTION

Approach child care and housework as real partners. Split household chores and child care fairly, and talk openly about how—and why—you share responsibilities.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

Equality begets equality: Kids who grow up in more equal homes are more likely to embrace beliefs that help them create equal homes as adults.<sup>4</sup>

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## 2

# MOMS, LET GO OF PERFECT

### SITUATION

The amount of time parents spend with their children has little impact on kids' success. However, when parents are stressed, sleep deprived, guilty, or anxious, it negatively impacts their children.<sup>5</sup> Mothers often fall into this trap by holding themselves to an unattainable standard and taking on the lion's share of child care themselves.<sup>6</sup>

### SOLUTION

Let go of the pressure to be a “perfect” mother and the guilt that you don't spend enough time with your kids (in fact, today's parents spend significantly more time with their children than their counterparts in the 1970s).<sup>8</sup> Take a collaborative approach to parenting and avoid the urge to micromanage your partner when he does things his own way. Kids benefit when both parents are active and engaged (see tip 3!).

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### DID YOU KNOW?

Given one wish, a majority of kids wouldn't ask for more time with their parents; they'd wish their parents were less tired and less stressed.<sup>7</sup>

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## 3

# DADS, BE ACTIVE FATHERS

### 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.<sup>9</sup> This is true at every income level and regardless of how involved mothers are. When fathers participate in their lives, daughters are more willing to try new things and sons are better equipped to cope with stress and less likely to fight.<sup>10</sup> What's more, teenagers who feel close to their fathers end up in healthier, happier marriages.<sup>11</sup>

### SOLUTION

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

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### DID YOU KNOW?

Women and men who remember having loving, supportive fathers have high life satisfaction and self-esteem.<sup>12</sup>

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# 4

## CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES

### SITUATION

Kids' beliefs about themselves and others are shaped by the world around them, and they are often sent the wrong messages. Traditional girls' toys focus on appearance and caretaking, while boys' toys focus on competition and spatial skills.<sup>13</sup> Kids are exposed to an average of eight hours of media every day, and in much of that media, women are underrepresented or sexualized<sup>14</sup> and men are portrayed as competitive and aggressive.<sup>15</sup>

### 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.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

During the 2014 holiday season, the top three toys for girls were dolls, while Legos and trucks topped the list for boys.<sup>16</sup>

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### FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Use our "Movie Night" activity (available at [leanintogether.org/movie-night.pdf](http://leanintogether.org/movie-night.pdf)) to explore how female and male characters are portrayed in films with your kids. You'll also find movies, books, and TV shows that send the right messages to kids at [commonsensemedia.org/lean-in-together](http://commonsensemedia.org/lean-in-together).

## 5

# CLOSE THE KID WAGE GAP

### 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.<sup>17</sup>

### 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.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

Girls between the ages of five and twelve spend two more hours a week on chores than boys the same age.<sup>18</sup>

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## 6

# 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> These factors take a toll on girls. Between elementary school and high school, girls’ self-esteem drops 3.5 times more than boys’.<sup>21</sup> By middle school, girls are less interested in leading than boys—a trend that continues into adulthood.<sup>22</sup>

### 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.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

Your daughter’s not “bossy” — she has executive leadership skills!

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# 7

## 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. Boys are bombarded with stories of men who are strong, stoic, and in charge but rarely vulnerable or nurturing. Boys often emulate these oversimplified characters, and it negatively impacts their well-being. Parents can counteract the impact of these stereotypes by staying emotionally close to their sons. Fathers in particular can model a more complete picture of manhood.<sup>23</sup>

### 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.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

76 percent of men and 84 percent of women in one survey admitted to using phrases like "man up" and "be a man."<sup>24</sup>

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## LET'S #LEANINTOGETHER

**These tips are provided as part of #LeanInTogether, a public awareness campaign from LeanIn.Org focused on men's important role in reaching gender equality.**

One of the core messages of #LeanInTogether is that we can't reach true equality until we celebrate women as leaders and men as nurturers. When women and men lean in at work and at home, everyone benefits. Children with involved fathers are happier, healthier,

and more successful. Couples that share responsibilities have stronger marriages. Diverse teams produce greater results. Companies with more women in leadership roles perform better. Show the world you're in for equality by posting on social media with #LeanInTogether.

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