

## Moms and Dads:

### 5 Things Women Can Do to Get Men More Involved

#### Treat him as a partner, not a helper

Letting your partner know that you can't do everything will go a long way towards getting him into action. But don't ask for "help." That only reinforces the view that he's your "assistant" and bears less responsibility around the house. A well-timed "your arm's not broken, do it yourself" should be a helpful reminder that you're in this parenting thing together.

#### Adjust your standards

There are lot of ways to change diapers, play, teach, and entertain the children, and yours isn't always right. Being more flexible will encourage your partner to get more involved in housework and with the kids. This may be hard at first, but remember: no child ever suffered a long-term trauma by having a diaper put on a bit looser than her mother would like.

#### Praise him

Men don't like doing things that make them feel incompetent. At the same time, most men love compliments. So tell him what a great job he's doing and ask him to do the same thing again—even if it's not exactly the way that you would have done it. Sweet-talk soothes; nagging only irritates.

#### Don't be a gatekeeper

Too many women keep such tight control over the household that they don't leave their partner enough space to participate. Other women act as though dads are either uninterested or incompetent. Men get the message loud and clear and many find it easier to just back off. Female parenting role models are plentiful, as are resources, from women's magazines to breastfeeding guides. But good male role models are rare, as is information specifically designed to help men prepare for fatherhood. So even if you know how to stop the baby from crying, let your partner figure it out for himself. Confidence with kids comes only with practice.

If you're divorced, remember that your kids need their father as much as they need you, so do everything you can to support their relationship with each other. He may be an ex-husband but he'll never be an ex-father.

#### Redefine work

In many families couples neglect to give parenting the same weight as other domestic chores. So when your partner is wrestling with the baby while you're making dinner, things might not seem equal. Sure, he's having more fun, but he's also making a very important contribution to the household. Still, just to make sure that everyone gets to have fun, switch responsibilities once in a while—let him make dinner while you do some wrestling.

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