

How Are You Using Your Super Power?

Contributed by the dads @ fathers.com
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Do you ever wonder what your kids could become if they really believed they could do anything? As a father, you have great power in the words you speak to them.

In everyday life, you can plant an idea in the mind of a family member, then see how that affects his or her actions. The power of suggestion is strong -- like a father's super power -- and we should use it for our children's benefit.

In some contexts, this has been described the "Pygmalion Effect," or a self-fulfilling prophecy -- the phenomenon where people (and especially children) will often live up to what significant people in their lives expect them to be.

In one example, a grade school mixed up the records of high-achieving students and low-achieving students, so some lower-achieving students were labeled as "gifted" and placed in more advanced groups. It didn't take long before the lower-achieving students made dramatic improvement. More was expected of them, and they rose to the occasion.

In the same way, we have great power to influence our children's thoughts and behavior with our words and attitudes toward them.

Unfortunately, too many fathers use the power of suggestion in negative ways. A dad might say, "You can try that, son, but I'm not sure you're cut out for it." Or, "Why do you complain about everything I ask you to do?" "I knew you couldn't do that." "How many times do I have to tell you ...?" If you make comments like that, you're giving your kids every opportunity to take a pessimistic outlook -- especially when they are probably hearing other negative messages in day-to-day life.

But if you're intentional, you can use this power for good. If you believe in them and communicate that they are world-changers, they'll probably live up to that level.

How can you do that? Praise your kids often. Notice what they do well. Assume the best of them. Go a little overboard with positive encouragement about anything they want to try. Tell them, "I saw how you helped that other girl, and I'm proud of you." Point out skills and gifts you notice in them, and then go a step further and cast a vision of how that gift could turn into a life's calling. When they want to try something new, help them find ways to make it happen. Use words to bless and challenge your children to greatness.

- ACTION POINTS**
- Praise your child's qualities in front of others -- his peers, other adults, and other family members.
 - Talk through goals and aspirations your child may have for the coming months. Coach her to keep them realistic, but also pledge your support to help her accomplish those things and more.
 - Pay close attention to everyday comments you make to your children. Instead of focusing on what you don't want them to do, make positive statements about what you do want to see from them.
 - Show lavish amounts of affection for your child every day. Let him know through words and actions that you are rooting for him to reach for the stars.
 - Express your love for your children in words. Tell them, "No matter what you do, you're special to me. You don't have to earn my love."

Recommended Resources:

- Praising Boys Well: 100 Tips for Parents and Teachers by Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer
- Praising Girls Well: 100 Tips for Parents and Teachers by Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer
- Championship Fathering by Carey Casey