



Reach Your Target Market

Secure this ad spot!

Contact us for special one-time ad rates.

natural awakenings



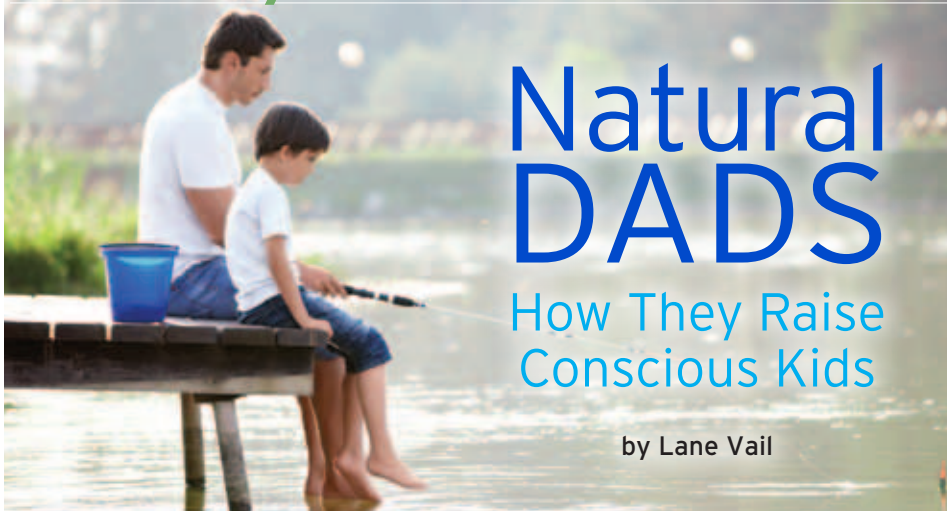
Reach Your Target Market

Secure this ad spot!

Contact us for special one-time ad rates.

natural awakenings

healthykids



Natural DADS

How They Raise Conscious Kids

by Lane Vail

Fathers are more involved in their children's lives than ever before, embracing their roles of leader, nurturer and protector, and they're reaping extraordinary benefits. According to a 2014 study published in the *Academy of Management Perspectives*, fathers that spend more time with their kids are both happier at home and more satisfied at work. Today, many mindful dads engaged in a natural lifestyle apply that same health consciousness to their parenting.

Support Mama. Natural fathering begins during pregnancy, with an informed birth plan. "Support whatever birthing decision the woman feels will provide her the most comfort and relaxation," advises Dr. John Douillard, an ayurvedic chiropractor and author of six books, including *Perfect Health for Kids*. Hold her hand, rub her back, advocate for her rights and after the birth, support her efforts to breastfeed whenever, wherever and however long she wants.

"Fathers should recognize that the burden of care is clearly on the mother for at least the first year, so her opinions and wishes deserve special consideration and respect," says Ben Hewitt, father of two, home unschooler and author of *The Nourishing Homestead*.

Embrace physical closeness. Bonding through nurturing touch is powerful and rewarding for father and child. A recent study published in the *Journal of Perinatal Education* found that fathers that practiced infant massage experienced significant stress release and bonding with their offspring. Wearing a baby or toddler

in a sling, wrap or carrier is another comforting way to spend time together.

Co-sleeping helps foster a more natural sleep rhythm with a nocturnally hungry baby, while also offering another way to connect. "Any stress my family may have experienced during the day dissipated when we reconnected at nighttime," Hewitt attests. "Looking back, I can't imagine having missed out on that opportunity to be so close with my kids."

Feed healthy habits. Natural dads are educated about both naturopathic and Western medicine to make informed choices regarding prevention and intervention. Douillard applies the ayurvedic principle of seasonal eating in order to bolster the immune systems of his six children and clients. Cooling foods like fruits and vegetables in summer prevent overheating; warming foods like soups, nuts and meats in winter lubricate mucus membranes and facilitate fat and protein storage; light foods like leafy greens in spring detoxify the body. His experience is that when kids with robust immunity catch the occasional malady, its severity and duration are reduced, and natural herbs often provide a gentle first step toward recovery.

Douillard treats colds with a spoonful of equal parts turmeric and honey mixed into a paste. "Turmeric is a powerful anti-inflammatory and antiviral herb that also helps liquefy mucus in the respiratory tract," he says. For tummy troubles, he suggests offering kids an herbal tea of cumin, coriander or fennel.

Above all, parents must exemplify good health habits. "Eat better, exercise

When dads are calm and present, they become a calming presence.

~Hal Runkel

regularly, change your diet with the local season and your kids will follow along," says Douillard.

Impart green morals. Earth-conscious parents teach their children how to leave a faint ecological footprint by supporting local eco-friendly companies, reducing the presence of toxic chemicals in the home and consuming and wasting less. However, wagging a finger and imploring kids to be eco-friendly is not enough; model helpful behaviors and illustrate the implications of their choices. "Instead of saying, 'You should recycle,' show kids online pictures of the giant flotillas of plastics polluting the oceans," says Hewitt. Maintain an experiential dialogue about respecting, preserving and enjoying nature.

Encourage adventure and resourcefulness. "Historically," says Hewitt, "children learned alongside their parents and community, immersed in their environment, an arrangement that allowed them continual opportunities to prove their own resourcefulness." All dads, like homeschoolers, will find satisfying fun in sharing problem-solving, hands-on projects with their kids, like building a debris shelter in the woods, planting a garden, or using repurposed materials to engineer something with form and function. Learning doesn't have to be a hierarchical activity, wherein dads teach children, says Hewitt. "The opportunity to learn and explore together is powerful."

Play. Hewitt encourages dads to look for opportunities to relieve kids of their often overwhelming and scattered schedules. "It's incredibly important for kids and adults to set aside time for free play and exploration," he says.

"Go outside with them," says Douillard. "Make up games, goof off, run around, roll around and just be with them. It makes a world of difference in their lives."

Lane Vail is a freelance writer in South Carolina and blogger at Discovering Homemaking.com.



Cool Daddy

by Lane Vail

In terms of discipline, natural fathering is neither tough nor timid, punishing nor permissive. The mindful dad is calm, connected and capable. He's able to harness introspection and observe himself as he parents, because he focuses more on managing his own behavior than that of his kids.

"Fathering is a leadership role, not a management role," says Hal Runkel, a licensed marriage and family therapist and author of the bestseller *ScreamFree Parenting*. "If I manage myself with calmness and clarity, I can lead my children to learn to manage themselves."

Runkel says the first step is "committing to cool." Find an anxiety- or anger-managing technique that feels natural, such as meditation, yoga, deep breathing, visualization, prayer or counting beads on a bracelet, and call on that skill to maintain coolness when challenged by a child, advises Runkel.

It's a misconception that emotions need to be released or they will consume us, he says. "Emotions just are; it's the thoughts about emotions that drive us crazy." Learning to name, tame and befriend feelings through introspection and mindful exercises allows space for calm conversations with children to emerge.

"We fathers have a special responsibility to lead with calm because we are physically imposing in children's eyes," he says. "The approachable dad has teachable kids, and he lets natural and logical consequences do the teaching."



Reach Your Target Market

Secure this ad spot!

Contact us for special one-time ad rates.

natural
awakenings