

## INSIGHTS

### A Mother's Day message for Dads



Mother's Day is a sensitive topic to write about. While it is a day of joy and delight for many families, it can also be a day of difficulty, and even pain, trauma, or sadness for many others. Many of us have farewelled a mother, experienced a relationship rupture with our mum, or experienced other challenges. And so many mums, this Mother's Day, will be grappling with co-parenting, separation or divorce, or an inability to be with their children in loving and meaningful ways.

There are two other challenges that Mother's Day brings:

First, even on the day when Mum should be feeling loved on by everyone, the overwhelming load of cooking, cleaning, and even thinking about what the kids should "surprise her with" still falls to too many mums. This is not how it ought to be. And second, one day of bliss (if it works out that way at all) is nice, but what about the other 364 days of the year?

So this is a Mother's Day Insights with a difference. This is for the dads, the co-parents, the partners, the ex's, and anyone else who wants to make sure that the Mum of the house gets the love and respect she deserves, not just on Mother's Day, but on all of the days.

Mum, pass this on to your partner and others who matter. This is not for you this time. It's for them to read, memorise, and live.

#### Help mum develop a sense of time affluence

Have you noticed how often Mum is flustered? How often it seems like there's not enough time? And what time there is floats through the day like confetti, with just a minute here or there... and then the never ending demand that she get back into the rat race?

Recent research tells us our happiness goes up as our rushing goes down. It's called "time affluence" and it means that we slow our lives down so that it literally feels like we have more time, even if we don't.

How can partners do this? Help Mum build a sense of time affluence (or abundance if you prefer) by going for a walk rather than driving – and not walking for exercise. Create it by having a "yoyo" night (You're On Your Own) where the kids sort themselves out with leftovers or cheese toasties. Create a system where Mum doesn't have to feel obliged to do everything for everyone every time. Step back. Slow down. Or at least, let Mum do that a little more.

#### Be open to mum's influence

Have you noticed how Mum is always the one who steps back and let's everyone else decide? What would it be like if we were more inclined to look to Mum when decisions are being made and say, "Would you like to decide this one?"

# parenting \* ideas

It's true that sometimes Mum is tired of making decisions. Perhaps she doesn't want to. But studies show that even in our modern 2022, Mum is often voiceless. Everyone else gets what they want while Mum serves and does what she's told. If everyone could stop being a bossy boots and let Mum have a clearer, louder voice, not by yelling, but by seeking her counsel and inviting her opinions, it might make life nicer for all, especially Mum.

## Ask how you can help

If everyone said, "Mum, how can I help?" or if partners said, "Honey, what do you need?" it might make Mum's day.

You know what's bigger? Help without asking. It shouldn't be up to Mum to have to tell everyone how to help and when to help and hassle them for not helping already. Do it without needing to be asked. This means remembering to empty the garbage or run the bins to the street, cleaning the kitchen, putting a load of washing on... you know, all that stuff that the cleaning fairy usually does.

## Drop your agenda and help her with hers

It's easy to get caught up in our own agenda and forget that the woman we're brushing our teeth next to in the bathroom is a real person with hopes, dreams, and desires. Recognise her perspective and elevate her by treating her so well that your children will know how the most important person in your life ought to be treated. That way, when they're bigger (or even now), your kids have no doubt how they ought to treat their partner when they are old enough – and how they should expect to be treated.

The greatest compliment any dad could ever hear is "You always treated mum like she was the most wonderful woman in the world."

Bring that approach to every interaction. Make mum's day – every day.

(And a quick bonus tip: Do the leg work to make sure Mum actually has a nice Mother's Day and that she doesn't end up cooking, cleaning, or choosing her own gifts!)



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