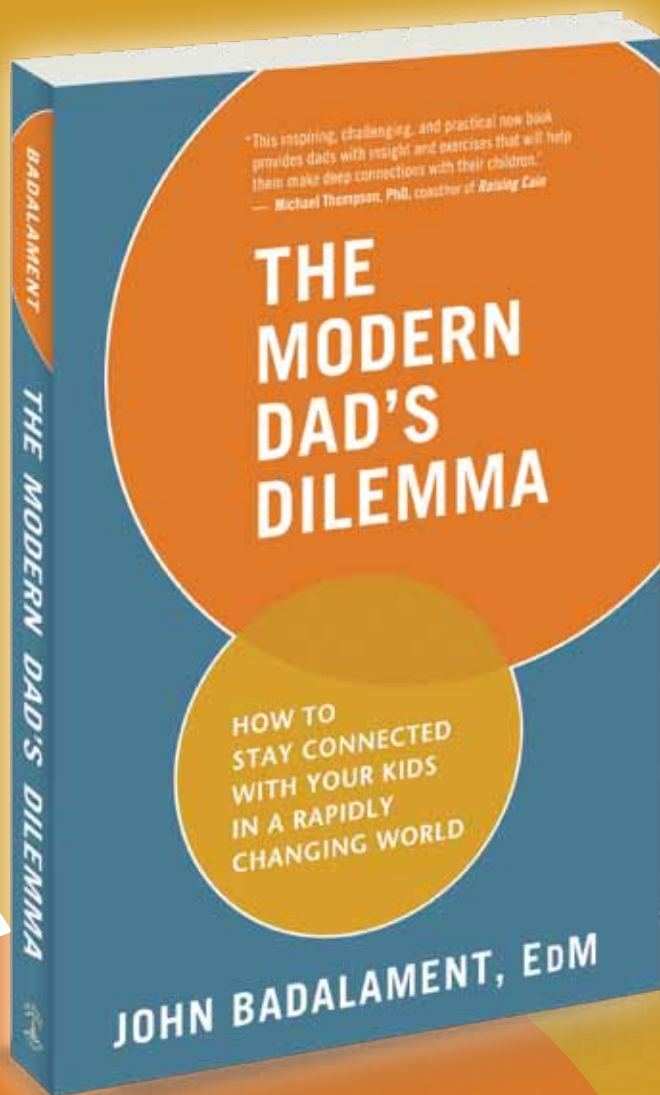


# THE MODERN DAD'S DILEMMA

## How to Stay Connected with Your Kids in a Rapidly Changing World



More is expected of dads today than ever before. Drawing on his experience working with thousands of dads and families, John Badalament delivers a hands-on approach to meeting the everyday challenges of modern fatherhood.

Told through the stories of a diverse group of fifteen real dads who have attended Badalament's pioneering workshops, *The Modern Dad's Dilemma* is filled with practical information, road-tested activities, and key skills dads can put to use right away.

"John Badalament is hands down the most innovative voice in helping men from all walks of life become the fathers they want to be. This book has the power to change your life and, more important, your children's lives."

— TERRENCE REAL, author of *The New Rules of Marriage*

"John's ability to connect and convey his message to parents and professionals is superb. All parents, both mothers and fathers alike should hear what John Badalament has to say about what our children need."

— JANIS SANTOS, National Head Start Association, Board of Directors

"This book will help you build healthy and prosperous relationships with your children."

— CHRIS SANDERS, former NFL wide receiver for the Tennessee Titans



JOHN BADALAMENT, EDM, is the author of *The Modern Dad's Dilemma* and director of the acclaimed PBS documentary *All Men are Sons: Exploring the Legacy of Fatherhood*. John's work has been featured on NPR, in *Men's Health*, and in the *Los Angeles Times*. A graduate of Harvard's Graduate School of Education, John consults with schools, parent groups, and organizations about modern fatherhood. Visit his website at [www.moderndads.net](http://www.moderndads.net).



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**The Modern Dads Quiz**  
**How Well Do You Know Your Children?**

- 1. What recent accomplishment is your child most proud of?**
- 2. Name one of your child's big disappointments this year.**
- 3. What are your child's current prized possessions?**
- 4. What is your child's favorite food?**
- 5. Can you name your child's teachers?**
- 6. Name two things your child did at school in the past two weeks.**
- 7. What is most challenging about school for your child?**
- 8. What does your child like about school?**
- 9. What does your child like to do in his/her spare time?**
10. Which TV shows, music, movies, actors/characters, and athletes are popular with your child and his/her friends?
11. What are his/her three favorite websites?
12. Does your child belong to any social networking websites (MySpace, Facebook, Club Penguin, etc.)?
13. What causes your child the greatest stress?
14. Who are your child's close friends, and why does he/she like them?
15. Who are your child's heroes and role models?
16. What would your child like to be when he/she grows up?
17. What is something that really upsets your child?
18. What does your child like to do with you?
19. What does your child love about you?

# **The Relationship Check Up - Seniors**

*From The Modern Dad's Dilemma by John Badalament • [www.moderndads.net](http://www.moderndads.net)*

First, take 10-15 minutes to respond to each question below ON YOUR OWN. Next, come together as PARENT & CHILD and share your responses one at a time, in order.

## **The Questions**

1. Positive qualities that I bring to our relationship are...
2. Positive qualities that YOU bring to the relationship are:
3. Ways that I sometimes make our relationship difficult are:
4. Ways that YOU sometimes make our relationship difficult are:
5. One way I can strengthen our relationship is:
6. One way that YOU can strengthen our relationship is:
7. A subject I find difficult to talk about with you is...
8. A subject I think YOU find difficult to talk about with me is...
9. One of MY greatest fears is:
10. I think one of YOUR greatest fears is:
11. I think one of the best things YOU'VE done for me is:
12. I think one of the best things I have done for you is:
13. A way that I think we're similar is...
14. A way that I think we're different is...
15. In the next few months I would like us to...

# **THE RELATIONSHIP CHECK UP - Prep**

*From The Modern Dad's Dilemma by John Badalament • [www.moderndads.net](http://www.moderndads.net)*

First, take 10-15 minutes to respond to each question below ON YOUR OWN. Next, come together as PARENT & CHILD and share your responses one at a time, in order.

## **THE QUESTIONS**

### **ABOUT OUR LIVES...**

1. A really important friend to me is \_\_\_\_\_ because...
2. I think my friends like me because I'm...
3. Recently, my friends have been talking a lot about...
4. Two things I like about school/work are...
5. If I could change one thing at school/work it would be...

### **ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP...**

6. Two things I like about myself are...
7. Two things I like about you are...
8. Something I'm very good at is...
9. Something I think you're very good at is...
10. Something I wish I was better at is...
11. Two things that we do together that I really enjoy are...
12. One thing I would like to do together with you is...
13. I hope that we always...

## Practical Ways *Men* Can Be the best Dads They Can Be

**1. Create a vision for fatherhood.** Just like a company has a mission, modern dads need a vision for fatherhood, a Dad's Vision Statement. Twenty years from now, what do you hope your child says – and doesn't say – about your relationship? By asking this question, you can be more deliberate in how you choose to spend your time, what priorities you set, and what needs changing in your life.

**2. Be the bridge between your own father and your children.** Modern dads must sort through their family legacy, particularly the relationship with own dad, to determine the gifts they want to pass on to their own children, as well as the liabilities they must watch out for. To move toward realize your vision, you must understand the legacy you carry. How will you keep what's positive and stop unhealthy intergenerational cycles?

**3. Establish a ritual dad time.**

One great way to make sure you're spending quality time with your child regularly is to create a Ritual Dad Time. This in no way should replace daily family rituals like sharing meals, walking to school, reading at night, etc. Rather, this is a special, once per month, one-on-one time with dad. Think of it as the father-child equivalent of a couple's "date-night."

**4. Know your children.** - Dads today should strive to be experts about their kids - everything from their daily schedule, to the best way to get them to sleep, to what trends are popular with their age group. This sends kids a clear message that they are important and in the process deepens your bond. Beyond focus and attention, knowing requires being a skilled listener and resisting the urge to fix, lecture, or give unsolicited advice.

**5. Be known by your children.** Tell stories about yourself when you were your child's age. Think of the pressures you faced, what you did for fun, challenges you overcame, who you had a crush on, etc. Letting your children know more about what you think and feel on a regular basis is essential to building a healthy connection.

**6. Take care of yourself.** Live the life you want your children to lead. Go for regular checkups, and listen to your doctors. One reason men die five years earlier than women is because we don't go to the doctor as often as we should. A study out of the Johns Hopkins Children's Center recently found that a majority of boys 15-19 years old believed that going to the doctor was a sign of weakness. Dads need to model differently.

**7. Don't go it alone.** It's critical that you make time to talk with other parents. One of the most important and available resources to dads is...other dads! Get together informally with a couple of other dads on a monthly basis and talk about fathering. What's been going well? What parenting challenges are you currently facing? Keep it simple. Or, seek out a parenting group in the community or start a dad's group at your child's school.

## Practical Ways *Women* Can Support Men in Being the Best Dad They Can Be

The chances of a dad succeeding at being intimately involved in his kids' lives are much better if his wife, partner, or co-parent is behind the mission. For a dad to know his child, the mother has to allow dad in. To that end, here are some ways to do that:

**1. Try letting go.** Does he dress the baby in mismatched clothes? Forget to plug in the humidifier in her room at bedtime? Leave the jackets at home? Let it go. Either he learns on his own that your system works better, or he invents a system of his own. By harping on him to do it "right" (meaning your way), you're undermining his confidence in being an equal parent.

**2. See him as your equal.** Even if scheduling demands mean that he doesn't have as much time with the kids as you do, try to give him the information he needs to be up to speed. If you're doing more than you think you should (see next bullet), don't let resentment get in the way of him attending a parent-teacher conference your certain he doesn't have on his calendar.

**3. Speak up for what you want.** If dad isn't living up to certain realistic expectations, put it on the table in a healthy way. Instead of complaining, or just angrily doing something yourself, you can say, 'It's really important to me that you spend time with our children or share in the discipline.' Said more simply: don't nag, ask.

**4. Understand the legacy of your own father.** Your expectations for how your husband, partner or co-parent fathers are influenced to some degree by the father you grew up with (or without). Simple as it may sound, try to stay aware of the fact that *he is not your father*, for better and for worse. This requires some understanding on your part about what you got and didn't get from your own father.

**John Badalament, Ed.M.** is a writer, filmmaker, educator and international speaker. He is the author of the newly released *Modern Dads Dilemma* and director of the acclaimed film for PBS, *All Men Are Sons*. John's work focuses on educating, filming and writing about the critical role that dads/dad-figures play in children's lives. He has been featured on *ABC News*, *National Public Radio* and in *Men's Health* magazine, *The Boston Globe*, *Rocky Mountain News*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Our Children*, the magazine of the *National PTA*. John is a graduate of Harvard's Graduate School of Education. Currently, he speaks and trains professionals in a variety of settings, including: schools, parent groups, mental health agencies, corrections facilities, religious groups and companies. He is also finishing work on his new documentary film entitled, *Gender Traps: How Marriage Problems Start In Kindergarten*.

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