

DATES IN THE BIG OUTDOORS: DADS WITH DAUGHTERS

Fathers Take Their Daughters On Dates In The Great Outdoors While Teaching Them To Hunt, Fish, And Have Fun In The Wild

Daddy-daughter dates can't start too soon when it comes to instilling a love for the outdoors, according to Kurt Trotter of Las Vegas, [Nev.](#) Years ago he strapped a car seat to the rails of his ATV in order to include his babies in frequent family outdoor off-road adventures. His kids were eager to get their hunting license at the earliest possible age—a rights of passage for all the Trotter kids. When they turned twelve he'd hand them the hunter's safety study guide saying, "Here's the book. Start studying."

Trotter confides that his daughters enjoy hunting and outdoor activity even more than his sons. When asked how others might duplicate Trotter's success in raising daughters who embrace the dirt, discomfort and challenges that frequently accompany and may deter outdoor activity, he says simply, "Invite them and make it fun. Don't make it a job. Don't make them do anything they aren't comfortable doing."

Some specific things fathers do in raising outdoor-centric daughters is to first model the behavior. Dads are especially adept at doing this because they don't generally show fear of the outdoors—a bug doesn't freak them out—and they're not afraid to sweat and get dirty. Dads can teach their daughters by example that they can tackle a challenge.

Recalling a long-ago hunting trip in cold, rainy Cottonwood Creek near Adaven (that's Nevada spelled backwards and, yes, it's a real place), [Nev.](#), Trotter's daughter, Sydney Trotter Caskey, relates, "I was about thirteen years old. We woke up at 3 a.m. to take a quad ride part-way up the mountain and then hiked the rest to be at a good vantage point before watering time in the morning. It was pretty dark out and we had to use headlamps to see. There were no trails to follow. We were on the mountain and hiking around all day until I got my deer that evening—a 3x4 buck."

Matthew Rasband, in Houston, [Texas](#) recounts an experience he had in teaching his own two daughters to be tuff, like Dad, "The first really difficult hike I took my daughters on was to climb an 11,000' tall peak in Wyoming. Although one of my daughters still had to be carried on my back, the other was able to hike the entire way

herself. Coming from sea level, the elevation change made it a very difficult climb. There were many times she wanted to give up, but she stuck with it, climbed the mountain, and felt empowered by doing hard things. She loved the view and learned to appreciate how a hike can be hard, but worth it when the summit is reached.”

Second, dads can make it inviting and fun by smiling, joking and being playful with their daughters during outdoor excursions. Science asserts that one of dads’ specific jobs in raising healthy children is to play with them. Pediatrician, Dr. Michael Yogman, says that the way dads encourage rough and tumble play is unique and helps kids explore and set boundaries in their world.

Caskey, now a grown and married woman, attributes her adult love for the outdoors to her dad, saying, “My dad helped me learn to love the outdoors by showing me how beautiful and grand it could be. He showed me the wildlife that thrived in conditions that did not seem very hospitable. It did not matter what the weather was like, he always showed me the fun that could be had.”

And third, don’t pressure but let the girls “own it” for themselves. “Near Elko, Nev., while hunting,” Caskey recalls, “I discovered how beautiful the stars are at night. It was wonderful being away from all of the pollution of the big city. Another thing that made it fun was that I spotted my own antelope. My dad inadvertently taught me to love the outdoors on the countless outings he would take us on by talking about how there is still so much world out there for us to discover. He taught us that we are free to explore and the earth is open and full of exciting things everywhere. He would take us on day-trips up into the desert mountains to find horned toad lizards or arrowheads. We would come home having unearthed fossils and witnessed a scorpion fighting a black widow (something you couldn’t just look up on YouTube back then). Being out in nature became magical. I want my children to be able to enjoy exploring the land as I have my whole life thanks to my Dad putting that magic in my heart.”

Outdoor activities don’t need to be far from home or expensive. Simply getting girls outside helps them connect to nature. “Working in the yard gives a special appreciation for nature and the outdoors. While many of my neighbors hire people to do their yards, we do our own. I think this is an important example to them of how it is important to care for nature,” says Rasband. This increased sensitivity to nature is essential in creating our next generation of outdoor enthusiasts and a worthwhile endeavor for every parent.

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