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NATIONAL CENTER FOR FATHERING

DIVORCED? A Special Message for You

CHALLENGING IDEAS FOR ACTION-ORIENTED DADS

What's New ...

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This week's message is especially for divorced dads, but every dad faces relationship barriers of some kind, and all dads can learn from the simple truths mentioned below.

Not long ago, we heard from a divorced dad whom we'll call Mike. He's been through some very difficult trials and has made some mistakes that really became roadblocks for a relationship with his daughter. But recently Mike's daughter made contact with him indicating she wants to be part of his life. The problem is, Mike feels paralyzed. He can't forgive himself for the sins of his past.

All dads face challenges, whether they are divorced, married, single, new dads, stepfathers, dads of teenagers, dads in prison, dads who travel a lot for work, and so on. Some dads are fighting just to see their children. Others might not see their kids for months at a time because of some unavoidable arrangement of work responsibilities, where the mother lives, or other factors. And some do see their children, but may feel paralyzed because of fractured relationships, unhealthy patterns they have established through the years, feelings of inadequacy, or big mistakes their children have made, and they don't know how to make things better. Some dads, like Mike, can't seem to shake their own painful memories and mistakes.

To Think About ...

When you've hit a barrier to connecting with your children and hope is in short supply, there are no quick-and-easy solutions. But in the long run, you will benefit from taking a few simple truths to heart—and acting on them:

1. Though the challenges are daunting, **your child still needs you to be her dad**. She knows that she will always have a connection to you. She needs you to be strong—strong in patience, courage and love.
2. **There is still time**. Don't be deceived into thinking there's no hope. There is always tomorrow. We always have reasons to hope and be optimistic. If you can't see your kids, your past isn't pretty, you've been treated unjustly by the system, or whatever, it's important to have hope that the future can be better.

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3. If your circumstances or other people are making it difficult for you to be a good father, **don't give up**. Just like with Mike's daughter, things do change. Kids grow up and start putting things together; many times they want to know their dad in a deeper way. Believe that your opportunity will come, live with integrity today, make healthy decisions, and be ready for that day. It would be a shame if you did something now that might jeopardize that opportunity.
 4. **Be willing to start fresh** and put the past behind you. Ask for forgiveness, when appropriate, and strive to better the relationship from here forward.