



How do I help support my 8-year old daughter's conception of herself and her worth in a world continually objectifying women in the media?

In this day and age media and messaging are EVERYWHERE, and on some level, we're all consumers of these messages consciously and unconsciously. Talking to your child about her observations of media and messaging can help make the representations that they consume unknowingly become conscious and identifiable.

Listen to what she talks about after watching a movie, TV show or commercial. Does she ask for the things she sees? If so, ask her why they're important and what they'll do for her. Does she think wearing a particular brand of clothing or using a specific soap will make her a better person? Don't judge her answers, but listen for the anxieties or concerns behind them. Remind her that she doesn't need particular products to be loved and cared for.

Caregivers can also talk with children about how they see themselves to get a feel for what concepts the child's self-image and self-esteem are tied to. (Objectification isn't limited to women, either, although it's more prominent. Boys/men in the media are most often expected to be bold, strong, invulnerable, and so on. Listen to sons' talk, as well. They may worry they don't live up to those images.)

When boys in my classroom help with tasks like collecting the tablets or moving chairs I always find myself praising how strong they are – what else can I say that's not based on stereotypically male qualities?

Often we find ourselves falling into praise that just rolls off the tongue. Taking a moment to be intentional about your praise can help children deepen their understanding of their quality of being.

What this means is that whether the child who helped move chairs is strong or not, he still made the compassionate choice to do a job that supports his classroom community. You could offer that you observed him invest his time and energy in helping his classroom: "Thanks so much for helping out, Michael! I really appreciate it," for example. This kind of comment is not gender-specific, so it can also work if girls try to help with "boy-like" duties or vice versa. Carol Dweck, a psychologist who writes about "mindset," reminds us that offering praise not connected to a fixed trait (e.g., you're strong, or you're pretty) helps children to tap into a healthier mindset around their strivings.

My husband stays home and cares for our children while I go to work. Our friends call him the “Manny” and joke that he is on Daddy Daycare. This attitude makes us feel like we’re doing something wrong or weird. Should I be home with my kids instead?

More and more these days couples are finding unique ways to make childcare work, so your friends are a little behind the times. Increasingly, parents are sharing childcare duties. While you and your husband might feel better letting friends know their joking is making you feel uncomfortable, the real and only relevant question is what’s best for your children. That’s when their basic needs are met, and their psychological and developmental needs are attended to.

This question works itself out when you make a checklist: Are your children safe when left with dad? Do they get fed, clothed, bathed? Do they enjoy their time with dad and feel connected? You can reasonably insert any caregiver into this checklist. In a world that’s increasingly busy, families learn to juggle and make it work in unique and resilient ways.

(It’s also important to note that a father’s caring for his children isn’t “manning” or “babysitting,” which implies that he’s not a primary caregiver; it’s parenting.)

How can I make sure that my daughter gets enough exposure to STEM? I’ve tried to get her interested in some of the science content I’ve found online, but the closest she’ll come to interest is making slime!

One of the most basic tenets of helping someone along a road is “start where they are.” It seems like your daughter is interested in making slime. Often children connect to content in a more meaningful way when their natural curiosity is involved. If you can set up a slime test kitchen and shift your mindset from “achievement” to “exploration” your daughter will likely connect with you, to the content of what she is learning, and to feeling excited rather than forced to do something she may not be ready for.

Help her experiment and explore at her own pace and see what she comes up with. Today it’s slime, tomorrow it’s microbiology! Or baking. [JPA](#)

