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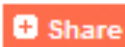
# This Fathers Day, Be There For Your Kids

Friday, June 17, 2011

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## WAGNER COLLEGE NEWS SERVICE

“Any fellow can make a baby — but it takes a father to make a son or daughter.” “If that’s not already in ‘Bartlett’s Quotations,’ it should be,” quipped Miles Groth, a psychology professor at Wagner College, in a recent conversation about fathers and Fathers Day.

Groth, who has made a special study of the impact of fathers on their children, says there has never been more evidence of the deep psychological connection between dads and kids — and, conversely, the damage done to children by the father’s absence has never been more clear.

“One of the strongest early indications of the psychological bond between father and child is the phenomenon called engrossment,” Groth said. “It’s like a switch that turns on in the father’s brain when he first holds his newborn child, that total absorption of the father in his baby. It’s very powerful.”

Similarly, Groth says, the phenomenon of father hunger in both sons and daughters is extremely well-documented.

“Children long for the guiding, supportive influence of their fathers,” Groth said. “With it, they stand a better chance of growing up strong and whole. Without that influence ... Well, we’ve seen that pretty graphically in our society.

“The missing father is a very strong predictor of less success in school, more likelihood of being in the criminal justice system — overall, a poorer sense of well-being.”

Groth says that his message to fathers this year for Fathers Day is simple: Be there — but remember that presence is more than proximity.

“To absent fathers I would say, do whatever is in your power to become present in your children’s lives,” Groth said. “Show up. You have no idea how much your children need you just to be there.”

And for fathers fortunate enough to be living with their children, Groth reminds us that “presence is as much a state of mind as a geographic fact.

“Children learn respect and love from you — for others, and for themselves. Give them the best that you have.”

Wagner College is a U.S. News & World Report Top 25 regional university on Staten Island in New York City.