

Building Relationships One Child At A Time

by *Mary Ackerman*

(NAPSA)—Men are from Mars and women are from Venus, which means their children are a mix of two different worlds.

Understanding and relating to your children is no easy feat, but there are many ways you can build a healthy relationship with them.

The MVPParents.com Report, a survey of parents commissioned by Coors Brewing Company in partnership with Search Institute, found moms are 23 percent more likely to admit to having an open and honest relationship with their children. Moms are also 12 percent more likely to have regular discussions with their children about school and friends.

But while well-informed moms do the talking, dads do the walking.

Sixty-one percent of dads said they are more comfortable taking part in their teens' hobbies or helping them with homework than engaging in conversations. Participating in these activities not only plays a significant role in child development, but is also a great way to start much-needed conversations.

Moms are 27 percent more likely to know where their children are and what they're doing at all times. Why? Because moms tend to set and enforce more boundaries for their children. However, the Report showed dads also play their part in implementing family rules, from curfews to not drinking alcohol.

A child's development can suffer if parents aren't on the same page. The following everyday parenting ideas can help parents understand and work through their different parenting styles.

Idea #1: Embrace your differences

Spend time talking with each other about parenting styles—what has worked and what has not worked in getting through to a child. Making this conscious step can reduce time when par-



ents are trying to get through to their children.

Idea #2: Set boundaries

Parents should schedule planned conversations to talk through expectations and boundaries on the front end. Invite children to give their input on setting the expectations and rules, making them feel like they are part of the team. The result is more consistent enforcement...no matter which parent is on duty.

Idea #3: Open-door policy

Keep an open line of communication with your kids. An integral component of healthy child development is having an open and honest relationship with both parents. A strong, cohesive parenting team provides stability in a child's life and helps children make responsible life decisions.

Idea #4: "Role" call

To be more involved in your children's lives, switch roles every now and again. Moms, spend more time helping with your child's daily activities. Dads, be more conscious about having conversations with your children. If you feel like you've lost track of your children's lives, spend more one-on-one time with them.

Mary Ackerman is the director of External Relations for Search Institute and author of the book "Conversations on the Go." Adults looking for more tips to help raise responsible children can go to MVPParents.com.