**Value Your Daughter's Opinions**

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Do you expect more out of your son or your daughter?

I got to know Nicole Gallagher over the phone when she was a behind-the-scenes producer for the ABC News program American Agenda. They were working on a piece that focused on fathering.

From our first conversation, I knew this woman had a high sense of self-esteem and a healthy drive to be the best at what she does. She graduated magna cum laude from Harvard, and I was genuinely impressed by her sincerity and her competence as a TV producer. She knows what makes for a good story.

As we talked, I had to ask, "Nicole, tell me about your father."

"My dad believes in me," she said. "He listens to me and has always valued my opinions." Nicole said that one of the things she values most in their relationship is their fondness and ability to talk to each other.

This young woman had her act together.

Dad, it struck me, like I hope it's striking you: Our daughters need us to value their opinions. We need to see them as persons of high potential and limitless futures.

Is that any more important for daughters than for sons? Not at all; boys need it too. But the fact is, even though we may credit our daughters with a high level of esteem and competence-and even though people in the 90's are supposedly progressive and politically correct-there are many people who still tend to assume less of girls than boys.

I'm not saying we should force our daughters into Master's degree programs or try to mold them into superwomen. But we must listen to them, believe in them and, indeed, expect them to reach for the stars in their chosen field. That includes becoming the mothers of the next generation; teaching in our schools; working in the world of art, science, business or behind the scenes for ABC's World News Tonight, like Nicole Gallagher.

Dad, follow the example of Christopher Gallagher: talk to her often, value her opinions, express your love often, and she will grow up with a rock-solid confidence that she can make it in a very tough world.