



TRISH ALLISON

**DEI**

**Parent**

**Guidebooks**

*How to Teach Girls  
They're Just as  
Worthy as Boys*

# How to Teach Girls They're Just as Worthy as Boys

DEI for Parents

Trish Allison

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**HOW TO TEACH GIRLS THEY'RE JUST AS WORTHY  
AS BOYS**

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Written by Trish Allison.

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***“Gender equality begins at home, and families are  
on the front lines of change.” - UN Women***

# Introduction

The progress that's being made to ensure women can excel in their chosen field is absolutely fantastic and crucial. Equally important however is equipping a generation of girls with the confidence needed to grow, without intimidation, toward the opportunities that are finally becoming available to them.

It's up to us as adults to make sure girls experience new and more equitable gender norms as they grow toward their full potential.

To help, it's imperative to maintain *ongoing* gender awareness and to be open to girls' choices in learning and development as they grow.

*"It takes time to acquire a habit and parents need to be patient with their children. Keep repeating these habits every day so the child inculcates it more promptly. Sometimes, parents are not aware what habits they should teach their children."*<sup>1</sup>

This guidebook provides practical, day-to-day tips to help parents teach sustainable gender-equality habits to girls. Here are some examples: how to help her discover and explore her interests, how to build her confidence about her social worth, how to help her make connections to like-minded people, and how to help her find the right role model.

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you're reading:

- Tips apply to *all* combinations of the modern family.
- Tips are written for parents of elementary-school children but there's a wide spectrum of maturity at every age. Some 6-year-olds are mature way beyond their years and some 10-year-olds are learning at a different pace than their peers. That said, keep in mind that tips are intended as suggestions *only*; you know your child better than anyone.

- Tips are *not* intended for a single teaching moment. Instead, they're structured to be carried out in manageable chunks throughout the entire length of your girl's growing-up years.
- The chapters themselves are not organized in a straight line. That is, they're intended as a non-linear collection of building blocks to increase girls' gender-equality confidence. For example, you might need to help your girl find a suitable role model *before* you're ready to explain 'consent.' That's perfectly fine. There's no prescribed order.
- The content *inside* each chapter *is* linear; the step-by-step instructions are meant to be carried out in order. For example, when you're helping your girl find a suitable role model, it's crucial that you help her understand why role models are important and how she can learn from them *before* you guide her toward resources for finding one.
- While there's no one-size-fits-all solution for raising equality-minded girls, this guidebook provides suggestions for scenarios that you can tailor to fit your own situation. The ultimate goal is to help you raise a confident, resilient woman.
- Many of the tips assume that you and your girl already share a fairly solid foundation of mutual communication. The tips are doable without this foundation, but they'll be much harder to implement successfully without it.
- You'll find a 'self-discovery' technique used throughout. This is because simply telling your girl she needs to be more confident isn't nearly as effective as guiding her toward 'discovering' confidence on her own. For example, you'll find suggestions for guiding your girl toward options for discovering her passion on her own. This strategy will give her the ownership and confidence

she needs to continue exploring what *she* loves, instead of pursuing a skill because that's what she thinks you want.

Finally, as history has shown us, the movement towards equality for girls and women is slow and long and arduous.

The good news? We can leverage that hard-won knowledge by preparing girls for the future that centuries of courageous women before us envisioned. Let's start implementing step-by-step strategies to achieve their goals.



# **Chapter 1: Help her Understand Where She Fits into Girl's and Women's Rights**

There's no need to be a hardened feminist here. This chapter is solely intended for you to get an accurate understanding of where your girl thinks she fits in the gender-equality movement. Getting this information is vital for you to get the full benefit from this guidebook.

Once you feel like you have a solid understanding of where your girl and her peers stand on women's rights issues, use that information to shape the strategies and language you use to implement the rest of the suggestions in this book.

Use the backdrop of girl's and women's rights to bolster your stance. This will make more sense (and sound less cumbersome!) as you keep reading.

## **Step 1. Listen to her perspective**

This first step is to measure your girl's understanding of women's rights. Maybe she's already well-versed in all aspects of current and past movements.

Or maybe she knows very little about it and you're starting with a blank slate. Either way, you'll never know until you ask.

Ask her opinion of some hot-button gender-equality issues. Women's marches? Arranged marriage? Female politicians? Equal pay? Women in STEM fields?

Or you could ask her opinion of some of the young girl activists like Greta Thunberg (climate change), Emma Gonzalez (Parkland, FL School shootings), Marley Diaz (#1000blackgirlbooks), and Malala (women's and girl's education).

Does she know who they are? Does she think they're making a difference? Too young? Admirable? No opinion?

What are her peers saying? What does she agree or disagree with? Try to listen to her answers without interjecting *your* opinion.

Ask her if she heard anything in the news about women's rights that made her stop in her tracks. Was there anything that really stuck out to her that she can share with you? Anything she wants to ask you about?

If she's too young to understand current news issues, modify your discussion to more age-appropriate subjects.

Also, if she asks a question and you don't know the answer, admit that you don't know and Google the question together. Talk about the results.

The whole point of this step is to get an accurate understanding of where your girl and her peers think they fit in the women's rights picture.

Shape your approach to the rest of the chapters in this book based on her opinions.

## **Step 2. Talk about the progress women are making**

This step is intended to let the wheels in your girl's head turn while you're talking.

You don't have to give a history of the women's movement here. Just sharing examples of the latest progress is enough.

Google 'timeline of feminism - Wikipedia.' You can pick and choose the milestones that are age appropriate. Or you could go to your favorite news source if you want to share something more immediate than Wikipedia.

As you're learning, keep in mind that gender-equality progress has unfortunately taken a two steps forward, one step back approach.

*"From getting more girls into school to reducing deaths in childbirth, improvements have been made. But equality remains a long way off, with millions of girls and women's lives still scarred by discrimination, poverty and violence.<sup>2</sup>"*

Despite the slow progress, there's still hope for speeding things up. Try not to say anything outwardly negative. The goal here is to instill a sense of 'we *can* do this!' into your girl's thinking. Avoid saying anything that might dampen that hope.

However...

If she asks you anything *directly* like "*Have changes to women's rights been accepted right away?*" answer her honestly but try to spin it in a positive light.

Maybe instead of dwelling on the fact that progress has been painfully slow, say something like:

*"...important progress has been made, but there's a lot more work to do. That's where your generation can really make a difference. The world is finally ready!"*

She absolutely needs to know that you're telling her the truth, but it doesn't have to be all gloom and doom.

Be honest with her in your own way. She knows you and needs to trust what you say.

*"Children learn how to communicate by watching their parents. If parents communicate openly and effectively, chances are that their children will, too. Good communication skills will benefit children for their entire lives."*<sup>2</sup>

**Honest communication is the single best parenting tool there is.**

Your conversation about the remaining progress that women need to make towards gender parity is a perfect segue into a conversation about the importance of staying vigilant.

Explain to her that the more she thinks about gender inequality, the more examples she'll start seeing all around her.

Encourage her to remember the examples she comes across and share them with you. Let her know that you're *really* interested in whatever she discovers.

If she has questions about anything you've discussed so far or something you haven't discussed, take time to respond thoroughly.

Tell her if she has more questions, she can absolutely come to you. Try to remember that you are her primary source for the truth.

### **Step 3. Equate women's rights ideals to specific examples from her world**

Bring the conversation back to her world. Talk about specific examples of how she's affected by the growing awareness of women's rights.

Encourage her to contribute her own ideas so she feels like she's an important part of the women's rights challenge (which she absolutely is!) and how changes in her own life can make a difference.

Ask her what changes (within reason) she'd like to see at home. Chores? Allowance? Language?

Talk about which changes are doable now and which ones you'll consider implementing moving forward. Let her know that *her* concerns are *your* concerns.

It's important for her to know that you are considering her wishes seriously. The rest of the suggestions in this book are all based on the trust you build with your girl.

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### **More Resources**

- [Our children won't be feminists](#) (video)
- [Kids describe feminism to an illustrator](#) (video)
- [Girls explain what it means to be a feminist](#)



## Chapter 2: Define ‘Gender Bias’ Together and Give Her Specific Options for Responding to It

Every girl needs to know that unconscious bias about her abilities is completely unfounded. She also needs to know exactly what to say and do to defend herself in situations where she feels like her potential is being compromised.

If you can help her untangle the unfairness of gender bias now, and teach her how to defend herself confidently, you’ll be doing her an enormous favor as she grows into her future.

While there’s no perfect script for conversations about gender bias, hopefully the sample conversations and suggested responses in this chapter will give you a good starting point.

### **Step 1. Define gender bias *together***

Before you begin, keep in mind that when kids sense the important adults in their lives are concerned, they can sometimes feel like they’ve done something wrong.

It’s important for you to tell your girl as soon as she knows you want to talk about something important that you’re not angry with her. This will hopefully prevent her from spending the entire conversation trying to figure out what she did wrong.

You could start the conversation by saying something like:

*‘First, I want you to know that I’m not angry. Not at all. I just want to make sure that you and I agree on the topic of gender bias and how to handle it.’*

Once you feel like she understands that you’re not angry, help her understand what gender bias is. You can start by telling her what *you* think it is. So that she can understand it at *her* level, you could define it as:

*‘Sometimes in the classroom, teachers unintentionally show gender bias by allowing more boisterous behaviors from boys than girls, or expecting girls to turn in homework more consistently, or calling on boys more often to answer math questions.’*

Gauge her reaction here. Hopefully, she’ll be nodding her head in agreement. Then, without putting her on the spot, ask her what *she* thinks ‘gender bias’ is.

Really listen to her answer. Her opinion about gender equality might be completely different from what you’re planning to communicate. Consider her words carefully before you continue.

At this point in the conversation, it’s extremely important for her to feel confident so that she believes in her ability to participate in the discussion.

A new study indicates that back-and-forth conversations with kids is not only beneficial to their confidence but also to their brain development.

*“These ‘conversational turns’ are strongly related to the physical strength of white-matter connections between the two key language regions in the left hemisphere of the brain.”<sup>4</sup>*

Engage her participation but if her understanding of gender-equality is completely different from what you want her to know, reconsider your approach. Maybe talk to her teacher at school to get ideas about helping your girl understand the advantages of gender parity.

On the flip side, if her thoughts are basically aligned with yours and just need a deeper understanding with a few tweaks here and there, you’re on the right track. Continue by working out a definition of gender bias *together* that combines both of your input.

Here are some phrases you could potentially use during your conversation.

- *‘It’s always OK to tell me something even if you think it’s bad.’*

- *‘This is a tricky topic. I’m glad we’re talking about it.’*
- *‘Why do you think that?’*
- *‘How did it make you feel to hear that?’*
- *‘If you think of any questions that you want to ask me, you can ask me anytime. You don’t have to wait for the right moment. If it’s important to you, it’s important to me too. Even if it feels silly to you, we can talk about it together. Anytime.’*

Most important, your girl needs to feel like she has a knowledgeable, safe person she can go to if she has a question or concern.

## **Step 2. Help her understand that gender stereotypes are often completely false**

When we hear something over and over again like ‘boys are better at math than girls’ or ‘girls can’t play sports,’ we tend to consider it as truth.

But just because something is said repeatedly, doesn’t make it true. Your girl needs to know this.

Based on your girl’s age and maturity level, here are some TV shows and movies you can watch and discuss *together* that defy gender stereotypes:

- **Project MC2** – a TV series where being good at math and science are more important to four girls than their appearance. [Trailer](#)
- **Andi Mack** – a Disney TV series about a young gay girl who’s trying to determine where she fits in and the many amazing ways she can live her life without conforming to gender stereotypes. [Trailer](#)
- **Arrival** – a movie about an accomplished female professor who leads an elite team of investigators to avoid global war. [Trailer](#)

- **Billy Elliott** – a movie about an Irish boy who wants to be a ballet dancer despite his macho father's objections.  
[Trailer](#)

If she's eager, let her come up with her own suggestions and watch them together. Encourage her to explain to you how her selections defy gender stereotypes.

### **Step 3. Help her 'discover' how entrenched gender bias is in our culture**

Sometimes people aren't even aware they're being biased. Assuming women's inferiority has become so routine, it's 'baked' into our culture.

*"...stereotyped views are an instance of implicit bias, revealing automatic associations that people cannot, or at least do not, report holding when asked directly."*<sup>5</sup>

Media, and other cultural influences, perpetuate the bias that most people aren't even aware of.

Here are some examples of common phrases that we often don't recognize as sexist:

- drama queen
- man up
- grow a pair
- throw like a girl
- don't you worry your pretty little head
- honey, dear, missy
- boys will be boys
- you guys

The list is endless. Girls need to know that this kind of unconscious gender bias blindly dictates everyday decisions, what the hidden meaning is, and how it affects them.

But just like the rest of the suggestions in this book, your message about unconscious bias will be more effective if your girl feels like she's discovered it on her own.

Here are some ideas for helping her 'discover' unconscious bias:

- Explain why terms like 'drama queen' are so insulting. But leave it at that. Encourage her to come up with more examples.
- Suggest that she start listening for gender-biased words and phrases in everyday conversation. You can get her started by watching a TV show *together* and calling attention to examples.
- Make it a game. Challenge her to come up with a list of sexist phrases and gender-neutral alternatives. Tell her you'll do the same, and see whose list is longer. No Google!

Let her come up with examples that support the definition that you have crafted together.

Watch a few TV shows *together* and ask her opinion of how boys and girls are depicted in the media. The goal here is to get her to think of gender-bias examples that are 'baked' into our culture.

Then look for instances *together* where girls are represented as equal. For example, on a television show, maybe a girl is depicted as the first student to solve a math problem, or maybe it's a woman who does the voiceover for a computer commercial. Make sure she sees you praising this behavior.

Just talking about entrenched gender inequality with you will hopefully guide her toward clarifying it in her own mind.

#### **Step 4. Give her options for specific words she can use to respond to gender bias in her own life**

Once you feel like your girl understands what gender bias is and why it's so demeaning, it's time to help her respond to it.

If she tells you there's a boy in her class who says she's not good at math because she's a girl, you could give her specific words to use.

If you give her enough options, she'll hopefully select the words that feel right for her and assume ownership. Here are some ideas for potential responses:

*'Some girls are better than boys at some things, and some boys are better than girls at other things.'*

Or use humor:

*'You just WISH you were as good at xyz as I am.'*

Or simply:

*'What made you say that? Can you explain it to me?'*

Even pointing the behavior out without being accusatory can sometimes make a difference. Ask her what words *she* would use.

Give her as many options for responding as you can so she can pick the one she's most comfortable with. Work on wording *together*.

Open, honest communication is key here. More than anything, she needs to feel like she has a knowledgeable ally she can confide in anytime.

## **Step 5. Model confident behavior**

Finally, try to remember that the purpose of the suggestions in this chapter is to help your girl understand that she is no less important than a boy, that gender bias is completely unfounded, and that you are always available to help her respond to gender bias situations in her own life.

The best way to make these concepts sink in is by modeling confident behavior yourself. If she sees you reacting to outdated sexist notions by standing up for your yourself, she'll mimic your behavior.

Conversely, if she sees you succumbing to outdated sexist norms, she'll assume that's what she should do too.

Television is full of examples of gender bias. If you see something sexist on TV while you're watching a show together (or if it's just 'on' in the background), make a comment about why it's offensive and bothersome to you.

Ask her if she heard it and if she thought it was acceptable. If she responds with an explanation that coincides with what you've already talked about and how she would respond, great.

If she *doesn't* respond, take the opportunity to explain why you think it's inaccurate, why it bothers you, and how *you* would respond.

Also, try not to be defensive if she starts calling you out on your own behavior. Her awareness means that your conversation sunk in. That's *good* news.

Thank her for pointing it out to you and tell her that you're going to work on fixing it. Ask her if she could remind you if she sees you doing it again.

Feeling like she's teaching *you* will help her absorb the concept, increase her awareness of gender bias, and clarify appropriate ways to respond.

If it feels like you're not getting anywhere, try again in a week or so. She needs to know that responding to gender bias is an important topic to you, that you want to share your feelings with her, and that it's significant enough for you to bring up again.

Note: Remember that the suggestions in this chapter (and book) are meant to be communicated over a period of time, not in one formal conversation.

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## More Resources

- [Parents Talking About Media Gender Stereotypes](#) (video)
- [How to Teach Children About Gender Equality](#)

- [Raising the Next Generation of Women Leaders; Talking to Our Daughters About Gender Inequality.](#)
- [Preventing Gender Bias](#)
- [6 Everyday Ways to Bust Gender Stereotypes](#)



# Chapter 3: Provide Options for Helping Her Feel Included in Girl Power

At a time in your girl's life when feeling included and recognized is so important for her self-confidence, the burgeoning girl-power movement offers a perfect opportunity for you to foster a sense of belonging.

She'll get to experience what it feels like to be included in a growing, unified goal, she'll get to discover and showcase her passion(s), *and* her self-esteem can grow exponentially.

Equally important, it's just as beneficial for introverts ('independent thinkers') to feel a sense of belonging and forward movement as it is for extroverts ('joiners'). This chapter provides tips for both the 'independent thinker' and the 'joiner.'

Remember: your girl needs to start the process of feeling included in the girl-power movement with someone she loves and trusts. You.

## **Step 1. Talk about girl power *together***

This first step's purpose is to get the process started. Hopefully, she'll do the rest of the work on her own, but for now, she needs your help to get started.

First, offer *your* opinion about the current women's equality movement and how you think it affects girls her age. Even though it's important to make this a conversation about *her*, it's also important to help her feel like you're sharing important personal information with her.

Doing your own sharing has the added benefit of guiding the conversation in the right direction.

Here are some questions you could ask if you're having a hard time getting things started:

- *Do you think current efforts will affect women's rights for your generation?*
- *Do you think it's important to feel included in the current movement?* (Note: tread lightly here)
- *Do you think girl power affects the women's rights movement?*

Remember that the intent here is to elicit her feelings without putting her on the spot. At the same time, it's important for her to know that her thoughts and feelings matter. It's a delicate balancing act.

Also, her answers to your questions have two purposes: 1) they'll help you formulate your strategy for implementing the rest of the steps in this chapter; and 2) they'll guide her thoughts toward feeling included in girl power.

## **Step 2. Watch a girl-power video *together***

This step's purpose is to continue building opinions about girl power *together*. Watching a video together is a good way to do that. It will let her organize her thoughts in private, without feeling like she has to form an opinion on-demand.

Here are some options for things to watch together. Before inclusion in this list, each item was culled with age-appropriateness in mind, but of course the final decision is up to you.

Ask her to choose one (or more) after you have perused the list. Try to listen to her reasoning patiently.

### **Documentaries**

- He Named Me Malala. Features the young Pakistani female activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, who has spoken out for the rights of girls, especially the right to education. [Trailer](#)
- Girl Rising. Tells the stories of nine girls from nine countries. Their stories reflect their struggles to overcome societal or cultural barriers. [Trailer](#)

## Speeches

- [Priyanka Chopra - Full Power of Women](#). This UNICEF ambassador and Bollywood actress gives an empowering speech about the importance of educating girls and giving a voice to the voiceless.
- [We Should All be Feminists by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie](#). In this TED talk, Chimamanda uses her experience growing up in Nigeria to highlight the misconceptions that have made the idea of equality between genders into something that it is not.
- [Meghan Markle UN Speech](#). Meghan Markle recounts her experience as a young girl objecting to a P&G commercial about women washing dishes. In her speech, she uses her memory to reinforce the importance of standing up for what you believe in. Note: Meghan's age at the time of her epiphany (11 years old) will hopefully be an added incentive for your girl to feel connected to the notion of personal integrity.

## Fictional movies with strong female lead(s):

- **Moana** (Disney). The film tells the story of Moana, the strong-willed, heroic daughter of a chief of a Polynesian village, who is chosen by the ocean itself to reunite a mystical relic with a goddess. Parent tip: If you can get past the violence, this movie delivers mighty girl-power messaging with wonderful songs and beautiful images. [Trailer](#)
- **Mulan** (Disney). Fearful that her ailing father will be drafted into the Chinese military, Mulan takes his spot—though, as a girl living under a patriarchal regime, she is technically unqualified to serve. She cleverly impersonates a man and goes off to train with fellow recruits. Parent tip: Mulan is a 'Disneyfied,' but dignified and accurate story of a brave, persistent Chinese girl warrior. [Trailer](#)

[A Mighty Girl](#) and [Common Sense Media](#) have more information about suitable movies.

### **Step 3. Encourage her to join a girl's organization**

At this point in your conversation, the subject of girl's organizations is appropriate to mention. If your girl is a 'joiner,' there are some high-quality girl-power groups she can join.

If her preference is to do things on her own, there are also many proven, effective options available to help her feel like she belongs. This step #3 is for the 'joiner.' The next steps #4 and #5 are for the 'independent thinker.'

For girls who are at their best in a group setting, DEI Parent Guidebooks recommends the following groups (all organizations listed here have either already been established or are aspiring to establish chapters nationwide). Note: This list is not exhaustive, but it will give you a good sense of the types of organizations that are available.

- [Global Girl Scouts](#) A central focus of the organization is raising strong and confident girls who are skilled leaders; this is emphasized through team-building activities and community service.
- [Girls on the Run International](#) - Girls on the Run fosters positive emotional, social, mental, spiritual, and physical development in girls ages eight to thirteen years old through running programs and workouts. The goal is to prevent girls from engaging in at-risk activities as they mature.
- [Girls, Inc.](#) - Girls Inc. inspires girls worldwide to be strong, smart, and confident through education programs. Key programs include math and science education, drug abuse prevention, media literacy, economic literacy, adolescent health, violence prevention, and sports participation.

- [Girlstart](#) - Girlstart provides Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education programs for girls in kindergarten through twelfth grade. This focus on STEM helps to develop interest in STEM electives, majors, and careers.
- [Girl Talk](#) - Girl Talk is a peer mentoring program that pairs high school girls with middle school girls. The goal is to help younger girls navigate the tween and early teenage years. Not only do the middle school girls benefit from the guidance of their older peers, but the high school girls also learn from sharing their experiences as positive role models.
- [Girls Leadership](#) - Girls Leadership considers girls' real-life, every-day relationships with friends and family as a prime opportunity to teach the leadership skills that will serve them over a lifetime: self-advocacy, negotiation, compromise, personal responsibility, and conflict as an opportunity for change. *"Too often girls avoid leadership because they don't feel confident in skills such as public speaking or because they fear their peers will disapprove."*<sup>6</sup> The Girls Leadership organization works not only with girls, but also with primary influencers – parents, teachers, and caregivers – to help girls develop leadership confidence, despite peer opinions. This is a great option for parents who want to transform their girl's 'bossiness' into leadership skills.
- [Girl Up](#) - Girl Up is a campaign of the United Nations Foundation. The mission is to give girls the opportunity to become global leaders and to raise awareness and funds for United Nations programs that help adolescent girls in need around the world.

**Please note:** Each organization listed above is global. Also, if your girl does better when she is able to focus independently, steps #4 and #5 below might be better suited for her personality.

## **Step 4. Suggest helping others as a way to help her feel empowered**

For girls who like to feel productive without the ‘team-spirit’ theme, there are plenty of options. This step suggests ideas for your girl to feel included in the girl-power movement without forcing her to do something that she’s not comfortable with, like joining a group.

Volunteering might be a smart way to facilitate her own confidence-building while simultaneously helping others. Any of the ideas below will help her feel empowered:

- Walk around the neighborhood with a garbage bag and pick up trash on the side of the road.
- In the fall, offer to rake leaves. In the winter, be available to help shovel snow.
- Plant flowers for a neighbor or in a communal neighborhood area.
- Collect and deliver supplies to neighbors who have just had a baby, undergone surgery, or experienced a house fire.
- Coordinate a neighborhood garage sale and donate the proceeds to a local charity.
- Bring her with you to cook or serve meals at a homeless shelter.
- Make care packages for the homeless. Include travel-sized toiletries, granola bars, and bottled water.
- Collect coats and give to a homeless shelter in winter.
- Gather canned foods to deposit at a local food bank.
- Have her sort through old toys they don’t play with anymore and donate them to a local charity group.
- Participate in local events, such as 5Ks, fun runs, or other events that donate proceeds to local charities helping those in need.
- Volunteer at a local animal shelter.
- Donate newspapers, dog beds, or other pet supplies to a local animal shelter.
- Place bird feeders in the yard for local wild birds.
- Offer to walk a neighbor’s dog.
- Pet sit for a neighbor when they go out of town.

- Bring smiles to local Senior Citizens by visiting or volunteering at an assisted living or nursing home facility.
- Bring easy to eat treats or hand-drawn cards to a nursing home or children's hospital.
- Decorate a senior center for a holiday.
- Read stories to younger children at schools, libraries, daycares, or churches.
- Plant flowers at a local elementary school or library.
- Offer to be a mother's helper to a new mom.
- Hold a lemonade stand or bake sale and donate the profits to a local organization.
- Bring meals to your local firehouse.
- Write thank you cards to local police officers and deliver them to the station to thank them for protecting the community.
- Volunteer at a Special Olympics event.
- Make gifts for children in the hospital, or distribute Halloween candy, Valentines, or Christmas gifts.

## Step 5. Be the spark!

[DEI for Parents](#) strives to make parents' and caregivers' lives easier, *not* busier. However, the only way to guide your girl toward feeling included in girl power *might very well be* daily inspiration and closeness with you. If so, here are some ideas:

- **Set daily reminders** - Motivational quotes are a great way to jumpstart a positive opinion of girl-power. The right quotes can remind your girl that girls are smart, capable, and deserve a chance to thrive. Take time to help her create daily reminders; there are plenty of smart phone apps that make it easy. She can use these reminders to begin her day on a positive girl-power note.
- **Be her biggest cheerleader** - Your girl needs to feel loved and supported at all times. Support her ideas and accomplishments by taking time to talk with her. Guide her toward confidence by being there to give her a little push when she needs it. Then stand back (a little) and watch her grow. Accomplishing a goal through her own

hard work will show her that she is capable of creating her own happiness. So important!

- **Take a class together** - Do you know how to change a tire or fix the garbage disposal? If you do, pass this information on to your girl. If you don't, take a class and learn *together*. Teaching her to do fix-it chores around the house or how to change a car tire are wonderful ways to bolster her confidence.
- **Teach bravery** - Trying new things is a great way to learn bravery. Most of us develop confidence by experiencing mastery of a new skill that we were initially afraid to do or were simply unfamiliar with. When your girl is struggling with a new skill, remind her of the other times she's learned something new. Your guidance and encouragement will help her persevere.
- **Expose her to positive female role models** - There are countless women who are doing work that they are passionate about and making an impact in the world. Expose your girl to those you know in your daily life and those that you can find through film, television, and online sources. Point these amazing role models out to her whenever you come across them in your life or online.
- **Try not to be too critical** - This is probably the trickiest suggestion, especially during the tween years. Your girl is pre-programmed to break away; it's a natural part of growing up. Try not to take it too personally. Guide her (as much as you can) to come up with her own solutions.

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## More Resources

- [How the need to belong influences human behavior and motivation](#)
- [Girls Empowerment Network volunteer opportunities](#)

- Does feminism make room for shy or introverted girls
- Help her find her girl squad



## Chapter 4: Create a Gender-Equal (and Civil!) Home Environment

It's more important than ever to create a gender-equal foundation at home so your girl can mimic equitable values, instead of antiquated notions, as she weaves her way through life.

*“The data show that the disproportionate burden of domestic work begins early, with girls between 5 and 9 years old spending 30 per cent more time, or 40 million more hours a day, on household chores than boys their age.”<sup>1</sup>*

Clearly, more progress is needed. The following suggestions are structured to help you cultivate a gender-equal household.

### Step 1. Chores

With chores, two principles are crucial for building an equitable household: 1) Children should help equally with household tasks regardless of gender; and 2) Both genders can and should help with both outside and inside chores.

First, try to keep in mind that chores are practice for adult living. If boys are allowed to continue playing video games while girls help in the kitchen, that's the model for fairness that your girl will take into her adult life.

Second, try to refrain from assigning outside chores to boys (for example, mow the lawn) and inside chores to girls (e.g. empty the dishwasher).

Girls need opportunities that not only stretch beyond traditional roles, but also help build a foundation of self-sufficiency. If your girl learns how to mow the lawn now, she'll be better prepared for a gender-equal life as an adult.

It might take a few tries to perfect a task, and you might have to do some up-front heavy lifting/training, but that will subside.

Of course, you know your children best and it's your final decision to assign the amount and type of household chores based on developmental and physical ability. That said, here are some ideas that defy the 'typical' boy/girl chore assignments:

**Boys:**

- empty the dishwasher
- do the dishes
- make the dinner salad
- organize the grocery list
- feed the family pet(s)
- set the table
- vacuum
- sweep
- learn to use washing machine and start a load of laundry
- fold laundry
- pick up clutter
- dust
- help care for baby and/or ailing grandparent

**Girls:**

- yardwork - raking, weeding, mow lawn, etc.
- stack the firewood
- walk the dog (safely)
- unload grocery bags from car

- replace light bulbs
- empty indoor wastebaskets and recycle bins
- wheel outside trash and recycle cans to street
- wash windows
- collect dirty laundry from family members
- collect pet waste (if you have a yard and a dog)
- wash family car(s)
- clean garage
- auto repair

If your kid(s) complain about their tasks, listen to their protests, and ask how they would make it more equitable. Talk about it together. They need to feel like they're part of the discussion.

Ask if they think they can continue with their assigned chores for another week. Hopefully, they'll agree, their complaints will wane, and then disappear altogether.

If not, you might consider rotating tasks, so everyone gets to try their hand at everything.

Repeat these words as often as you can:

*'There's no such thing as boys' work or girls' work—it's all just work.'*

## **Step 2. Allowance**

Equal pay? Yes! Absolutely!

Not only does equal pay for equal work make *practical* sense, contribute to girls' self-esteem, and make it clear to both boys *and* girls that they are equally capable, there is another benefit.

*"Another advantage of chore equality and pay is that it teaches our daughters how to talk about money. Teaching them*

*to negotiate a fair and equitable allowance can have lasting outcomes that would follow them into the working world, showing them that they deserve just as much money and respect as their male co-workers. This lesson is an important one.*’<sup>8</sup>

Just like with chores though, there might be some pushback. If they start whining about who does more, listen to their concerns, ask how they would make it more equitable (without saddling you with more work or expense), and compromise. It’s important for them to know (especially your girl) that their opinion matters.

If there are special circumstances in any given week (e.g., special chores for bonus pay, sick child, conflicting family obligations, etc.), try to balance-out opportunities and payments in the ensuing weeks.

Additionally, it might be necessary to have a conversation with them about gender pay discrimination. If needed, watch this wonderful video that makes the unfairness of unequal pay easy to understand:

[Kids React to The Gender Pay Gap \(video\)](#)

### **Step 3. Sibling arguments**

Sibling squabbles are unavoidable. They come with the territory of being a parent to more than one child. And the long-overdue movement towards gender equality has introduced yet another reason for siblings to disagree.

But it doesn’t have to get nasty.

Yes, girls are starting to understand (hopefully!) that they are not the weaker gender. But that doesn’t mean they need to be unkind about standing up for themselves.

Here are some ideas for guiding your girl toward standing up for herself and softening her message at the same time.

If you notice your girl using acrimonious jargon and/or gestures towards her brother (or whomever), take her aside and explain that being a gender-equal male is a fairly new

concept and lots of boys need gentle guidance and time to adjust.

Tell her that patience is a learned skill and you're confident she is the right person to help him learn. Guide her toward helping him by being the teacher and using calm language.

The point of guiding your girl toward a teaching role is to give her back some of the autonomy that she feels like she's losing.

Give her examples of calm language and understanding. Suggest that she use phrases like:

- *'That doesn't seem fair to me. Can we compromise so it's fair to both of us?'*
- *'What if I did that to you? Wouldn't you feel like I was being unfair?'*
- *'I already know how to xyz. You don't need to explain it to me. But thank you anyway.'*

(Or use whatever language is appropriate.)

Let them talk it through on their own. Don't engage unless you feel like their conversation is headed in the wrong direction.

The goal here is to let them practice discussing the problem and reaching a compromise on their own. A valuable life skill!

If your girl still isn't making progress about whatever point she's trying to get across, tell her she can come to you, and you'll work it out together. She needs to know that she has a reliable, knowledgeable ally.

#### **Step 4. Model gender-equal household behavior**

In an ideal world, both parents (if there are two) should be doing an equal amount of housework and both parents should be contributing the same amount of work hours outside the home.

But we don't live in ideal world, and families come in all shapes and sizes, so the 50/50 scenario is a great goal, but not always realistic.

Whatever division of labor you and your partner can contribute towards the ideal 50/50 scenario is best.

Try to keep in mind that although it might not seem obvious at the time, the words your girl hears and the actions she sees from you are etching a permanent opinion in her psyche.

For everyday conversations, try to use words that avoid gender bias. For example, the words *policeman* and *stewardess* are gender-specific job titles; the corresponding gender-neutral terms are *police officer* and *flight attendant*.

(You can always Google ‘biased language examples’ if you need more examples.)

Another thing to be aware of is your attitude toward gender inequality in the media.

While you’re watching media together, make a remark about how fair or unfair a certain scene is. Then talk about how it used to be accepted that men were superior to women, but that mindset is thankfully changing.

Tell her how lucky she is to be young and alive during such an important movement toward equality justice. Opportunities for girls are finally appearing after centuries of injustice.

Make sure this concept sinks in. She needs to feel like this is a special time for her.

## **Step 5. Toys/gadgets**

Traditionally, the world of toys has been sexist. Marketing campaigns have been wrongly based on the theory that girls only play with creative or social toys and boys only play with spatial or digital toys.

The good news is that things are slowly changing. Many toy manufacturers are no longer explicitly marketing their products solely based on gender.

Retailers are starting to replace pink and blue toy aisles with gender-neutral toy aisles. Parents need to get on-board too.

If you provide toys that are traditionally geared toward boys alongside toys that are traditionally geared toward girls, your

girl will naturally gravitate toward the toy(s) that appeal the strongest to her innate passions and capabilities.

Who knows? Maybe she's a born nurturer and will naturally gravitate toward dolls, but she should at least be given options.

Here are some toys that are traditionally associated with boys that should also be available to girls:

- construction vehicles
- Legos
- toy cars
- model airplanes/rockets
- magnetic building sets
- puzzles
- science kits
- sports equipment
- action figures
- train sets
- robots
- binoculars
- microscopes
- remote-control racing/flying devices

Electronic gadgets (e.g., smart phones, tablets, laptops, etc.) follow the same guidelines as gender-based "toys."

Use an online shopping resource to let your girl choose the gadget "flavor" that appeals to her. If she wants the laptop decorated with the solar system instead of ballerinas, let her have it.

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## More Resources

- [A Generationally Perpetuated Pattern: Daughters Do More Chores](#)
- [Where the gender pay gap may start: At home](#)
- [Kids explain why women are paid less than men](#)
- [Beyond pink and blue: the quiet rise of gender-neutral toys](#)
- [17 Wonderful Gender-Neutral Toys for Kids](#)
- [Gender-neutral language - Wikipedia](#)



# Chapter 5: Explain ‘Consent’ at Her Level So She Feels Like She Owns It

Thanks to #metoo and the long-overdue disclosure of rampant, harmful misogyny, ‘consent’ has finally become a recognized value that needs to be taught to our children.

One way to teach consent is to explain it to girls at *their* level by equating it with ‘respect,’ ‘self-respect,’ and ‘boundaries.’

To do that, the steps in this chapter are intentionally ordered sequentially to take you step-by-step through the process of helping your girl *fully* comprehend ‘respect’ then ‘self-respect’ then ‘boundaries.’

Further, each step’s *content* is intentionally designed to help your girl feel ownership of the subject as you’re teaching.

*“The more you hand over to the children, the more they feel in control of their learning. By giving them ownership, I find children develop a love for learning. It is empowering for children to see their brilliant ideas come to fruition.”<sup>2</sup>*

Hopefully as the years unfold, the more ownership of ‘consent’ she’ll feel. And the more ownership she feels, the easier it will be for her to apply the values you teach her to scenarios in her own life.

## **Step 1. Review basic respect *together***

Start by giving her a compliment by saying something like:

*“I know you already know what respect is. For starters, it’s things like saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you.’ And I know you already know that respect goes beyond just saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you.’*

*To me, respect is a way of treating or thinking about something or someone. If you respect your teacher, you admire her and*

*treat her well. If you respect your friend, you regard her highly and treat her with consideration.”*

Hopefully, she'll chime in here and add her own examples of respect. If she doesn't contribute and needs more time to join the conversation, you could continue offering your own examples about what respect is.

Try to tailor your examples to match activities in *her* life. For example, you could say something like,

*“To me, respect is ‘not interrupting the teacher’ or ‘not borrowing someone’s sweater without asking.’”*

Keep it simple. Talking about it with her on a level that she understands will greatly increase the odds that the concept sinks in. If you start throwing around terms like ‘sexual assault’ and ‘social injustice,’ she’s likely to tune out.

The goal in this step is simply to establish a foundation by helping her feel comfortable with the topic of ‘consent’ and contribute her own ideas as much as possible.

Keep the conversation going by defining respect together. Try to get her to expand on your examples. Then expand on *her* examples so it starts (or continues) to feel like a two-way conversation.

Here are more ideas for defining respect *together*:

- Think of someone who is respectful and talk about why they would be a good friend.
- Think of things people say who are respectful. Here are a few: ‘please,’ ‘thank you,’ ‘I appreciate that,’ ‘may I hold the door for you?’ ‘excuse me,’ and ‘I’m sorry I offended you’.
- ‘Respect for belongings’ is a big issue at the grade-school age. You could try to integrate it into the conversation if you’re having a hard time getting things started. If you’re the target of her ‘respect for belongings’ frustration (for example, you borrowed something from her without asking), listen attentively to her feelings, make eye

contact, and tell her you'll pay more attention to the problem and work on improving.

- Watch a TV show together and point out examples of respect/disrespect and why. Do the same thing when you are out doing errands together (store clerks? parking etiquette? check-out line?).
- Think of ways to show respect that connect with her interests. For example, if she's interested in climate change, think of examples (together!) that respect the environment. Recycling? Reducing carbon emissions? Look up Rachel Carson and/or Laurie David on Wikipedia and talk about how they respect the environment. Or guide the conversation toward a young person by talking about Greta Thunberg.

Try to make sure she has a good foundation for understanding respect before going on to the next step.

## **Step 2. Connect respect and self-respect**

One way to pivot the conversation from 'respect' to 'self-respect' is to connect both terms by discussing simple definitions of self-respect *together*.

Here are some ideas for simple definitions:

- When you set boundaries that you don't let others cross.
- When you accept yourself for who you are, no matter what others say.
- When you feel good about yourself and know you deserve to be treated fairly.

Let her tell you which definition she likes the best. Remember, you want her to feel like she has an equal stake in the conversation.

Play a game where you both think of everything you love about yourself. You can start by listing the wonderful things

about yourself. This will allow her to clearly see your own self-love and will give her permission to do the same.

When it's her turn and she shares things that she likes about herself, discuss it with her *extensively*.

For example, suppose she tells you she thinks of herself as a kind person because when no one would play with someone during school recess one day, she comforted that person and spent recess talking to her and getting to know her.

Ask her questions about why she comforted the child at recess and how it made her feel. Ask her more questions about the incident. Try to lead her into saying out loud (again) that she thinks she's a kind person.

Or maybe she'll tell you that she always keeps her word to others. She considers herself very reliable because she always does what she says she's going to do.

Or maybe she considers herself to be trustworthy because when someone tells her something in confidence, she keeps it a secret.

Whatever she tells you, the goal here is to make a big deal about the traits she considers admirable about herself.

Then connect the traits she admires about herself with self-respect.

Give her an example of when you chose to respect your own boundaries. Maybe someone tried to cut you off in the Starbucks line? Grocery store line? Tell her that your inner dialogue said "Wait. That's not fair to me."

Ask her if she can think of an example of someone who tried to cross her boundaries and she stuck up for herself.

When she offers her own example, pay extra attention to it. Ask her what made her decide it wasn't fair to her, what she said/did, what was the outcome?

Dwell on her decision to respect herself so your girl gets a healthy dose of experiencing what self-respect feels like. This is a great opportunity for the concept of self-respect to fully sink in.

Another suggestion is for you to find a role model who exudes self-respect and point out that person (Beyoncé? Lady Gaga? Someone you both know?).

Even if the role model you point out seems obnoxiously self-involved, talk about how you can tell that person would never let anyone take advantage of her.

The goal of this last suggestion is to give your girl a visual example of self-respect - someone she could hypothetically ask herself '*Would Beyoncé let someone do that to her? Probably not.*'

Continue to think of ways, *together*, that you can practice self-respect as you go about your busy lives.

Return to the topic and compare notes. She might have more questions as she goes out into the world and practices what you discussed. That's a good thing.

Take time to answer her questions thoroughly. Make it an ongoing conversation.

### **Step 3. Define 'boundaries' *together***

One of the most important building blocks of successful parenting is establishing and maintaining consistent boundaries. But because 'boundaries' is such an abstract concept, when explaining it to your girl, it's best to use an easily identifiable visual metaphor.

You can think of *parental* boundaries as a long bowling alley lane with a rubber bumper on each side where your girl can zigzag from one bumper (boundary) to the other and feel safe.

As she progressively tests the limits of her world, she'll hopefully feel safe every time she bounces off one boundary and encounters another. As she grows, her boundaries will get farther and farther apart.

The same bowling alley metaphor can be used to help your girl understand the concept of 'boundaries' as she applies them to her own independence.

Tell her that as she gets older, she will be increasingly in charge of how far to expand (or not) her own personal

boundaries of consent.

She needs to know that she, and she alone, is in charge of controlling the boundaries for how others treat her.

Depending on your girl's maturity level, here are some more words you could use to explain boundaries:

- *'We all have a thing around us called a boundary, which is a line between ourselves and other people. You can't see it but it's there. It's kind of like an invisible forcefield and it's there to protect each of us from the people who feel bad to be around – the ones who say mean things or do mean things that you just don't deserve.'*<sup>10</sup>
- *'You are completely in charge of the invisible forcefield around you. You can decide when it goes up and when it comes down. You can decide what's allowed in and what must stay out. You're the boss of yourself and you'll always be the boss.'*<sup>11</sup>
- *'Sometimes there might be people who do or say mean things so often that you never feel good when you're around them. That's when it's okay to put your forcefield up. In fact, it's one of the bravest things you can do.'*<sup>12</sup>
- *'It's important to respect other people, but it's even more important to respect yourself first – and putting up your forcefield is one of the ways you can do this.'*<sup>13</sup>
- *'We can't control other people, but we can control whether we let the mean things they say or do come close enough to hurt us. Being a kid is hard work – and you're awesome at it.'*<sup>14</sup>
- *'Everyone is responsible for how they treat other people, including grownups, but the person you have to treat the very best is yourself. Sometimes that means not listening to what other people might say about you.'*<sup>15</sup>

- *‘Sometimes you have to be your own hero and protect yourself from being hurt by people who don’t know the rules about being kind and respectful.’<sup>16</sup>*

Any combination of the suggested words above will help communicate to your girl how important boundaries are.

#### **Step 4. Model respectful behavior**

As with *all* values we try to instill in our children, the best way to get the message across is by modeling the behavior ourselves.

While your girl is gradually defining ‘respect,’ ‘self-respect,’ and ‘boundaries’ in her own head, she needs someone she can emulate.

Here are some suggestions for what you can do and say that will give her someone whom she loves and trusts (you!) to mimic:

- **Keep your cool.** Instead of yelling, *‘Don’t you say that to me, it’s disrespectful!’* Calmly respond to her misbehavior with words like *‘You know, we don’t talk to each other like that in our family. We treat each other with respect.’<sup>17</sup>*
- **Practice kind and firm discipline.** Discipline means to teach or to train, not to punish. It’s not about shaming her. Discipline is a lot more effective and longer lasting when not using punitive strategies. Teaching respect and using disrespectful discipline are mutually exclusive.
- **Reiterate that everyone is different.** When children’s differences are accepted, they feel heard and respected. If she has a different way of doing things, respect that difference by saying things like ‘I’ve never seen anyone do it that way before, but I like it!’ Say *‘everybody’s different’* every opportunity you get.
- **Don’t be disrespectful of others.** Children are master observers. If you’re sarcastic, dismissive, and talk behind

others' backs, she'll try out that kind of behavior soon enough. If she thinks it's OK to be disrespectful of others and to herself, she'll mimic your behavior.

- **Model positive personal ethics.** Whether it's obvious or not, she's watching you. She's watching and listening to things like whether you pay your bills on time, if you help others, if you're generous with tips when the waiter/waitress does a good job, and if you participate in charitable giving.
- **Say you're sorry if you screw up.** A mature, respectful grownup accepts responsibility and apologizes when he or she makes mistakes. Let her see and hear you apologizing if you are wrong.
- **Share your own story.** This will make her feel like you are accessible and that she has a starting point for a conversation about self-respect. For example, she might say something like *'Remember when you told me xyz, well something similar happened to me and I need your opinion.'*
- **Show respect to your partner.** This will go a long way towards setting an example of how two people should treat each other. Remember she's watching you. Even things like whether it's OK to take/use the other person's belongings without asking is something she'll learn from you.
- **Be a good listener.** Give her your undivided attention when she is speaking to you. Listening to others' opinions without retaliation is an enormous part of learning how to respect others.
- **Be trustworthy.** Keep her heart-felt feelings and experiences private; show her that you can be a trusted adult who cares about her feelings and her self-respect.
- **Go on a date together.** Dads? Uncles? Consider taking your girl on a 'date' to show her how she should expect

to be treated. She needs to feel empowered and know that a healthy relationship is free from hurt (emotionally and physically) and behaviors like that are unacceptable. Shower her with love, appreciation, and respect and ideally, she will expect the same from her future partners.

Granted, the modeling suggestions above are extremely hard to accomplish, especially when you're in the heat of the moment. But if you can at least strive to accomplish *some* of the suggestions, your girl will be better off. It will help her define 'respect' in her own head and will also help her recognize when disrespect is occurring in her own life.

### **Step 5. Make 'consent' an ongoing conversation**

While she's young, sex doesn't necessarily have to be part of the conversation. The subject of 'consent' can be anything related to how two people treat each other.

As she grows older, you can modify the subject. For example, when she's 7, your 'consent' conversation might be about a friend who borrowed something of hers without asking.

As she gets older, the 'consent' subject can slowly wind its way into lots of more mature topics of conversation. If the conversation *is* about sex, she needs to know that she doesn't have to do anything with her body (or anything else that belongs to her) that she doesn't want to.

Even if all she hears from your ongoing conversations is 'blah blah consent blah blah self-respect blah blah blah' you've given her two words ('self-respect' and 'consent') she can use as a takeaway.

Hopefully, *none* of your conversations will sound like 'blah blah blah.' But if she comes back to you a few days later and says '*what's consent again?*,' you've done your job.

Keep hammering away at the notion of 'self-respect' and the word 'consent.' She needs words she can use as a reminder of your conversation.

Remember though, kids are clever. When you think you're sneakily slipping 'consent' into the conversation, she might be

fully aware of what you're doing. (Just a heads up.)

The good news is that the decisions that she makes as she grows through adolescence and early adulthood will be informed by her understanding of what you teach her in your ongoing conversations about self-respect.

If you can get her to remember your discussion of 'consent' in her head when she's unsure about boundaries, she'll be one step ahead.

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## More Resources

- [A really simplified, yet effective, video that explains the concept of consent to kids](#)
- [Parents explain #metoo \(video\)](#)
- [4 Ways Parents Teach Kids \(wrongly\) That Consent Doesn't Matter \(video\)](#)



# Chapter 6: Guide Her Toward Discovering and Exploring Her Passion

Having a passion that your girl can pursue wholeheartedly and rely on to always be by her side throughout her life, will be a huge advantage for her.

There are ways you can guide her toward discovering and exploring that passion without being obvious about it. Here are some ideas.

## Step 1. Offer multiple activities

Give her options galore! She needs to experience a full sampling of everything that's available to her. If she's never given the opportunity to explore a myriad of possibilities, she'll never know what lights the spark inside her.

Most community centers offer classes for kids in multiple subjects. Get a copy of your community center pamphlet and, *with your girl*, look through the classes/activities that are offered.

There should be options for music, sports, dance, cooking, art, carpentry, writing, computers, etc. Which activities interest her? Ask her to choose one, and then sign her up.

The more activities she experiences, the greater her chance of discovering her true passion. If she gravitates toward a particular activity, ask her (subtly) what she likes about it and if she wants to find out more.

If she's on the shy side, and prefers to experience activities with someone she loves and trusts, when it's safe, go to discovery museums, sports events, musicals, book signings, movies/documentaries, dance performances, etc. Anything that will expose her to a wide spectrum of interests.

Or maybe you could clear a Saturday to do an activity of your girl's choice and ask her why she wanted to go on that

particular outing. If you notice that she has a new area of interest, ask her what it is that specifically fascinates her about this topic.

Learning what's at the root of your girl's passion can help you direct her to similar activities she might enjoy too.

Watch and listen. If you notice that her interest is sparked by a particular activity, subtly ask her leading questions like "what was your favorite part?" and/or "why was xyz your favorite part?"

Hopefully, these kinds of questions will trigger her brain to start digging deeper into whatever activity interests her. Let her have private thoughts so she feels like she's discovering her passion on her own.

If there is a subject at school that you notice she is particularly interested in, you have a wonderful head start. Ask her if she wants to find out more about that subject.

**Note:** It's also possible that she doesn't have a skill yet that she's passionate about. Her brain might not be ready to narrow things down. As she grows, there will be plenty of opportunity for her to discover something that lights her spark. Everyone's pace is different. Let some time pass before you offer more options.

## **Step 2. Let her be bored**

If you hear your girl say "I'm boooooored!" that's a good thing. Boredom is the perfect outlet for her to get creative and find imaginative ways to entertain herself. It's also the perfect time for you to watch and listen to whatever activity she naturally gravitates to.

Boredom is *so* important to self-exploration, in fact, that it's wise to purposely create scenarios for your girl where she has no pre-planned activities. Suppose there's an hour after school, before the 'homework, dinner, bath, bed' routine starts when she has nothing planned.

*"When our kids have nothing to do, they exercise their imaginations and that just might be the most important skill they can develop."*<sup>18</sup>

Try to steer her away from watching television (or any screen) and take notice of what she does. Does she head toward the kitchen and put together a snack? Does she go outside and ride her bike? Build a makeshift treehouse? Explore with a neighborhood pal? Brush the dog? Does she stay inside and read? Write? Hang on you? Test limits?

Can she successfully entertain herself? If so, it will boost her problem-solving skills and self-esteem.

If not, ask her what her favorite thing to do is. Guide her toward that activity (or reasonable replicas).

Whatever she does, try carving out downtime for more than one day and keep watching to see where her mind goes.

Her natural inclinations won't necessarily scream "this is my passion!" but they might lead to a larger picture of her personality tendencies.

For example, if she repeatedly gravitates toward caring for the family dog (brushing, throwing a ball, comforting, etc.), maybe she's a natural caretaker? A veterinarian/psychologist/teacher in training? Maybe.

Or does she gravitate toward building something? (It could even be rearranging rocks in the yard.) Future engineer or architect?

Try to make a mental note of what she does and see if any other Aha! activities or trends come to mind. Watch and listen.

If you notice a pattern, great. But don't make it obvious that you've been watching her.

It's so important for her to feel like she's discovering herself on her own. Your job is to provide the right space and time for her to grow into herself.

### **Step 3. Take her to work with you**

If you work somewhere that allows you to take your girl for a visit, schedule some time to do just that. Sharing your own likes and dislikes will allow her to start thinking about what she's truly passionate about.

Tell her why you got into the line of work that you did and what you were good at as a kid. Kids love learning about their parents' past.

Are there parts of your job when the time goes by really quickly because you're doing something you love? Tell her about it. Share with her what parts of your job you like and dislike and why.

As long as you're setting a positive example, that whole "monkey see, monkey do" thing can be a benefit here. Some passions are borne out of a desire to model the interests and behaviors of the people your girl loves and admires.

If you have female relatives or friends with professions you think might interest your girl, ask them if they're willing to share. Your girl will hopefully love seeing what you and others do at work all day.

Again, let her have private thoughts so she feels like she's 'discovering' her passion on her own. But be sure to answer any questions she asks.

Sharing professional day-to-day tasks will either increase your girl's desire to be more like you or will make her realize she doesn't want to go down the same path you did. Either way, that realization is important to her self-discovery.

#### **Step 4. Nurture her interests**

You might not know until she is older, but once you start to see your girl's natural talents develop, it's important to nurture them. The innate gift(s) that she is born with should be celebrated and supported.

When you realize that your girl has a particular interest, you should encourage her (without being too obvious about it) to explore it further. Guide her toward participating in specific activities, watching relevant TV shows, or going on educational outings.

Does she love cars? Take her to a car show. Or maybe she just can't stop talking about chess. Seek out an after-school club where she can practice her chess skills.

If she's always talking about basketball and shooting hoops every chance she gets, sign her up for any basketball-related activities you can find.

Whatever she's interested in at the moment, and it could change suddenly and repeatedly, lead her down a path that offers the opportunity to learn more. Even if that path is a dead-end, keep offering opportunities.

Here are more ideas for guiding her toward exploring her passion:

- Research YouTube e-learning tutorials
- Look for Amazon (or library) books that she might be interested in
- Google your girl's passion followed by the words 'activities for girls' in 'your location.' For example, enter 'writing activities for girls in San Francisco' and click through the search results.
- Ask her teachers, friends' parents, neighbors, and family members if they know of any resources that would be appropriate for your girl to explore her passion.
- Join a Facebook group for parents and ask if anyone in the group knows of a good resource in your area (or online) for your girl to explore her passion.
- Sign your girl up for a summer camp (with her involvement of course) that focuses on her passion.
- Go together on trips to museums, galleries, sports events, and festivals that celebrate your girl's passion.
- If your girl wants to explore her passion by starting her own business, there are lots of girlpreneur examples and resources online. [The Startup Squad](#) is a good place to start.

- Look for magazines and online newsletters that you think your girl might like to receive regularly.

Be patient. She's learning. Try to step back and let her explore at her own pace.

Definitely don't let her know you have an end-goal in mind. Just keep quietly offering exposure to activities that complement her interests.

If she takes a roundabout route, that's OK. Let her know you support her every step of the way.

## **Step 5. Take a step back**

The goal of the suggestions in this chapter (and book) is to **guide** your girl toward suitable resources for finding and exploring her passion.

Once you locate the right resource(s), it's really important to let her do the rest of the legwork on her own. Let her choose the details that she thinks fit her the best.

As long as her choice is safe and doesn't conflict with other family obligations, support her decision. She still needs to know that you're there to continue guiding her in the right direction.

The simple fact that you're willing to take time out of your own busy schedule to find appropriate resources shows that you are interested in her well-being. Involve her in the research process so she knows you're looking for activities to support her passion. Guide her toward feeling a sense of ownership.

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## **More Resources**

- [18 of the best blogs for helping kids find their passion](#)
- [Scout Out Her Passions](#)

- Savoring an interest: Helping your child get a taste of passion



## Chapter 7: Create a Dedicated Project Space Just for Her

Especially now, when girls and women are starting to take their rightful places in an historically male-dominated world, it's so important for your girl to feel like she has every right to pursue her interests.

Helping her feel like she has a space of her own to navigate her abilities at her own pace, will not only reinforce the notion to her and your entire family that her development is important, but will also enable her to investigate her own special abilities with confidence.

### **Step 1. Find a space *together* that she can call her own**

Even if your girl has her own room, she needs a project space to call her own that is part of the family area of your home. Situating her space in a common area has the benefit of sending a message to the entire family that her work is an integral part of the household.

Find a spot *together* that she can call her own. It doesn't have to be big or elaborate. It could even be an unused nook, a wall space, a closet, a foyer, a play space, or a corner.

Just an area that is solely hers where she knows that her ideas and activities are safe. Make sure that the entire family understands the boundaries of her space.

It should be clear that you have the final say about what space will work best. That said, try to involve your girl in your thought process as much as possible.

*With* her input, try to find a space where she's within earshot of an adult family member, so she can ask questions, feel like she is an important part of the family, and get help if there's an emergency.

Make her feel included now; you'll be happy you did when the time comes to clean up after a messy project.

## **Step 2. Include the basics**

The goal of this project-space is to create a sense of independence for your girl. The contents of the space that you create for her aren't as important as the fact that you are showing her that she matters enough for you to take the time and energy to do right by her.

That said, there are some considerations for what to include in her special spot.

At the very least, she needs a table, a chair, a light, an electrical outlet, and a trash can. These bare necessities should be enough to provide a foundation for most activities.

To provide a space beyond the bare necessities, her table could have drawers or open spaces for storage bins, there could be some kind of shelving or peg board for storing tools and project supplies.

There could be a power strip, a rolling utility tray, table-top containers, a spot for her laptop or tablet if she has her own, and a drop-cloth or plastic sheeting for messy projects.

There should also be empty space on either side of her area in case she needs room for future expansion as her interests evolve.

Pinterest is a great source for project space ideas. Here are some of the search terms you could use both on Google and on the Pinterest search engine to find what you need:

- 'at home kids tinker space'
- 'DIY workbench'
- 'home project table for kids'

## **Step 3. Make sure she helps**

You should *not* set up a designated space for your girl's activities without her help. She should be involved in every

step of the process. Her involvement will not only give her a sense of ownership and independence, but it will also hopefully take some of the onus off of you.

If she resists helping, you could tell her that you can't set it up without her help because you don't know exactly what kind of layout would work best for her projects.

Tell her she'd be much better at designing the space than you would be (flattery still works at this age!).

If she continues to resist helping, show her a calendar and ask her to pick a day and time that would be good for her to set up her project space with you.

Once you agree on a day and get started, encourage her to help you with the "heavy lifting" (e.g., moving furniture, sweeping or vacuuming newly vacant spots, going with you to the store for a power strip, replacing light bulbs, etc.)

As with all projects with kids, it will go much faster if she is actually helping and not creating more work along the way.

If all goes well, you *should* be able to complete it together in an afternoon.

#### **Step 4. Let her customize her space**

This step is meant to allow you to take a break and for your girl to customize her space to fit her needs and personality.

As long as she doesn't want to make any permanent structural changes to your home, let her personalize the space on her own. Create a list together of future supply 'wants' and budget guidelines.

*"Talk with your child about money and how to use it wisely. Talk about their goals for their money. What do they want? What do they need? There may be short-term goals they can be purchased right away. They may have long-term goals that will require them to save over time. It is helpful for children to have a reminder of why they are saving and why they should not spend all of their money now."*<sup>19</sup>

Teaching your girl about prioritizing her 'wants' for her project area is a great way for her to learn about budgeting and

becoming financially independent later in life.

Here are some ideas for household items she could use for her projects:

- Paper towels
- Kleenex
- Pencils
- Pens
- empty cans or jars to hold supplies
- sharpies
- wet wipes
- popsicle sticks
- old carpet remnants
- glue sticks
- baby food containers
- coffee filters
- paper plates
- clothes pins
- scissors
- masking tape
- duct tape
- aluminum foil
- cardboard toilet paper and paper towel tubes

- hand towels
- old flat sheet for messy projects

Gather some of these items and tell her you trust her to organize her space on her own. Encourage her to make her space functional to fit her needs.

This is a perfect time for you to take a break.

### **Step 5. Establish ground rules**

Your girl might be displaying some mixture of gratitude and awe at this point—gratitude that she has a spot to call her own and awe that you’re taking time out of your busy schedule to help set it up with her.

As with any new ownership, however, comes a new set of responsibilities. She should know that her new space comes with rules.

Tell her that you have informed the other family members that her space is hers *only* and they’re not to touch it. If there is ever a controversy about someone invading her space, ask her to come to you so you can resolve it together.

Let her know, gently, that it’s *not* okay for her to be bossy/dictatorial about her space. Yes, it’s hers and hers alone but she lives in a household not a personal cubicle.

Remind her that she’s responsible for upkeep if she wants to continue calling it her personal project space. Here are some things that might need doing as her activities evolve:

- replace lightbulb on table lamp
- replace paper towel roll or clean rag
- maintain clean work area
- empty trash can
- save allowance-money for any accessories/tools she wants to add

Tell her it's now her own personal project area. Enjoy!

If your girl's project space becomes a positive part of her development, think of other ways her space can be used and/or expanded as she gets older.

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## **More Resources**

- [How to create the perfect kids' workspace so it actually gets used](#)
- [8 Design Tips for Your Kid's Study Space](#)
- [Kids' Tinker Space on a Zero Dollar Budget](#) (Pinterest ideas)



# Chapter 8 Help Her Find the Right Role Model

Thanks to the Internet and the increasing visibility of women excelling in professional careers, your girl can easily find and follow a pertinent example.

Discoverability is key here. Finding the right role model can make the difference between discovering her gender-equality confidence and not trying.

Once she locates someone whom she admires and wants to emulate, your girl can investigate her role model's path to success and set similar goals for herself. (Maybe she doesn't have to look very far because you're her role model! If so, congrats to you!)

Ideally, because her role model was able to find success, she'll believe that she can be successful too.

This chapter provides step-by-step practical suggestions for explaining the importance of role models to your girl, focusing on the subject that interests her, and helping her find a role model who exemplifies the kind of success she looks up to.

## **Step 1. Explain why role models are important**

First, helping your girl understand the importance of role models is crucial to engaging her in the role model search process.

You can start by 'talking-up' the benefits of role models in general. *'If you can see it, you can be it'* is a slogan that's often used to define the importance of role models. It's a memorable phrase and might be a good way to establish a lighthearted foundation.

*"Role models show young people how to live with integrity, optimism, hope, determination, and compassion. They play an essential part in a child's positive development."*<sup>20</sup>

The advantages of having a role model are undeniable. Watch this great YouTube video featuring girls and women talking about role models, admirable traits, and the effect of media:

[More Than Beautiful: Strong Female Role Models](#) (video)

After you feel like the concept of role models and their importance has sunk in with your girl, tell her that this is the perfect time in history for her to find a role model. Tell her how lucky she is to have been born when female role models are not only more plentiful, but the Internet has made it extremely easy to find them.

**Please note:** Role models are often confused with mentors. A good explanation of the difference is that a mentor knows you and tries to help you succeed; you have an actual two-way relationship with a mentor. Alternately, a role model is someone whom you look up to and try to emulate from afar; it's a one-way connection.

## **Step 2. Ask her what subject most interests her**

So that your girl can find a role model who has the same interests as hers, she'll need to decide on her favorite subject.

Maybe she already knows what lights her spark or maybe she doesn't. Either way, knowing which subject captures her interest, will make it *much* easier to find the right role model.

Tell her a little about what subject captured *your* interest when you were younger and why. Then have her explain to you what subject she's most interested in and why.

Your girl's decisions about her interests might change many times during her growing-up years. The important thing is for her to know that you are consistently interested in her development.

Having conversations with you about her favorite subject will hopefully help her clarify her own opinions and identify a role model who is succeeding in a subject that interests her.

## **Step 3. Guide her toward online role model selection websites**

Of course, your girl's #1 resource for a role model is you. Or she might have a teacher at her school or a family friend whom she admires for their professional accomplishments.

If she doesn't have a role model readily available in her immediate family circle, there are some safe online sites where she can find what she's looking for.

Even though initial contact is made on these sites is via the potential role model's contact information, if you haven't already, now is a good time to have [that conversation with your daughter about giving out her personal information online](#).

As she gets older, her choice for a role model might change. But for now, guide her toward the person who exemplifies the characteristics and expertise she looks up to.

Here are some global online resources:

- [Fab Fems](#) (STEM-specific) – Fab Fems are women from a broad range of professions in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). They have signed up to be part of the Fab Fems directory specifically to be role models for young girls.
- [Women You Should Know](#) is another great resource. It's a community website all about dynamic girls and women, their drive, passion, and their interesting stories. This resource highlights less well-known female role models. You can click 'girls' in the menu bar at the top of the website to learn about young girls who have followed their passion.

#### **Step 4. Guide her toward *multiple* resources for her role model search**

If she's still unsure about the benefits of a role model, here are more options:

Common Sense Media is a wonderful resource for finding movie and television show role models who are appropriate for your girl's age and interests.

Just go to <http://www.common sense media.org>, enter ‘role model’ into the search field at the top of the home page, and scroll through the search results to find appropriate media.

Also, talk with family, neighbors, friends and community members who work in professional fields and ask them questions about what they do and how they got there.

Share this information with your girl without sounding too obvious. Remember, the goal is to *guide*.

Exposing her to as many successful women as possible can never go wrong. Give her options and let her make her own decision.

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## More Resources

- [Which school subject are you?](#) (video quiz)
- [8 Things to Teach Your Kids Never to Give Out Online](#)
- [Who’s who of female role models](#)
- [Mattel’s New Barbie Role Models](#)
- [Role models and kids](#) (video)



# Chapter 9: Encourage STEM Thinking at Home

Relating STEM principles to everyday household projects, conversations, and media choices is a great way to boost your girl's STEM knowledge.

And who knows? She might actually embrace STEM concepts even more when they involve doing something fun.

The options below should give you a good start for discovering informal STEM-learning opportunities in your own home.

(Note: Even though the ideas in this chapter provide suggestions for encouraging and maintaining girls' interest in STEM subjects, many of the principles can be applied to non-STEM subjects as well.)

## **Step 1. Relate STEM concepts to whatever she's into**

Here are some thoughts about how to connect her interests with STEM concepts.

- If she likes to cook, you could talk about recipe measurements and/or scientific food reactions.
- If she's into mixing weird ingredients together, make a DIY bubble mixture and discuss how the ingredients interact. (This one could possibly get messy. Just a heads up...)
- If she loves ballet, have her think about how two shoes are engineered to support the human skeleton.
- If she has a fish tank, talk about how plants provide oxygen and absorb the carbon dioxide and ammonia that fish generate.
- If she likes to help people with disabilities, you could talk about 3D printing and artificial limbs.

If you need more information about a topic, you can supplement your knowledge with a simple Google search. All

you need to do is google the word for her passion followed by 'STEM' (e.g., 'ballet STEM') and spend a few minutes reading and clicking around to find information that you think might capture her interest.

## **Step 2. Encourage problem-solving and perseverance**

The very act of recognizing a problem and seeking a better result is STEM in action. In all STEM subjects, finding out that something doesn't work is just as important as discovering a new way to make it work.

For example, suppose your girl doesn't consider herself a good bike rider. The next time she complains that she can't go as fast as everyone else, encourage her to use the word 'yet' at the end of her sentence.

Explain to her that everything takes practice; no one is instantly good at anything. Tell her if she keeps practicing riding her bike, even if it feels frustrating and pointless at first, she'll eventually be able to go faster, or whatever she feels is holding her back. Praise effort over results. Tell her to keep at it.

*"Offer praise and encouragement for your child's strong effort. We tend to praise our children for being smart, but also remember to offer encouragement for completing goals, for not giving up, and for being determined."* <sup>21</sup>

Help her make the mental connection between her bike-riding practice and the importance of finding better solutions, persisting, tweaking assumptions, adjusting actions, and discovering new and improved results. STEM in action.

If you can successfully convince your girl that determination is part of learning, not only have you highlighted the STEM concept of viewing challenges as opportunity, but you've also taught her a crucial life lesson about the importance of persistence and not doubting yourself.

## **Step 3. Pick the right media**

As we all know, media has an enormous influence on what we learn on a daily basis. Here are some suggestions for making sure your girl is learning the right thing:

**Television.** Try to watch a show together. When you do, encourage STEM-related shows. Talk about the program you viewed afterwards. Common Sense Media has some great choices for educational TV shows for kids:

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/lists/educational-tv-shows-for-kids>

**Movies.** Again, Common Sense Media has the best suggestions for STEM-related movies you can watch together:

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/10-great-movies-for-the-stem-classroom>

(Note: Common Sense’s movie list is intended for classroom discussions, but the movies are available for home streaming too.)

**Websites.** There are lots of wonderful STEM websites available now for helping girls improve their STEM skills. All you have to do is Google ‘STEM activity websites’ to find a long search-results list. The trick is to figure out which ones are educationally engaging and safe. Here are some tips on what to look for:

- Is the content current? A good way to tell is to look at dates. If one of the main activities is more than 6-9 months old, the website is probably outdated.
- Is the resource for girls only? While it’s important for girls to feel empowered by girls-only resources, you shouldn’t discount a high-quality STEM website just because it’s not gender-specific.
- How long has the organization been in operation? While the surge of support for STEM girls is fairly recent and there are some perfectly fine newer resources, if you have a choice between a newish resource and an established quality-driven one, pick the established quality-driven one.
- Negative reviews? Do a Google search for reviews. If the resource has a bad review, even if it sounds like it’s from

a chronic complainer, move on. There are plenty of other choices.

- Does the resource focus on career advancement? At some point in the future, your girl will need to start angling her STEM interest(s) towards a viable career, but not yet. If the website looks like it's career-focused only, remove it from your list.

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### **More Resources:**

- [Six ways to encourage STEM at home](#)
- [The Ultimate STEM Guide for Kids: 239 Cool Sites About Science, Technology, Engineering and Math](#)
- [Kids' Health - Internet Safety](#)



# Chapter 10: Infuse Life Lessons into Science-Fair Stress

Girls seem to experience a disproportionate amount of stress at science fairs. Not only are they on the spot to outperform their peers, but they're also starting at a runner-up position because they're girls.

But science fairs aren't necessarily all about stress and winning. There are some hidden life-experience gems too (e.g., committing to a decision, managing time, making assumptions, etc.). Working through these life lessons together can be a wonderful way for you to teach (or re-teach) skills that strengthen your girl's odds for future success.

Here are some ideas for 'teachable moments:'

**Make good decisions.** It's important for your girl to select a project topic carefully, make a commitment, and stick with it. This project could potentially be the longest project she has experienced. Help her choose a topic that is both interesting to her and is also robust. 'Easy' projects might seem appealing at first, but she'll regret her decision if six weeks into the project, her content is weak, and she realizes that she picked a 'skinny' topic. Bonus points for selecting a topic that sparks future ideas.

**Lay the groundwork before you start a project.** It's so tempting to start a project without being fully prepared. We've all done it at some point and had to start all over. Science fair projects are no different. Help your girl understand how important it is to research reliable information sources *before* she starts her project. One way to establish and organize research methods is to start a project journal where she can list information sources and what type(s) of data they provide.

**Manage your time efficiently.** Science fair projects are perfect learning experiences for the importance of effective time management. Using a calendar to plan project milestones is a wonderful visual tool for honing this life lesson. Help your

girl use the calendar to block out time for research, supply purchases, trial and error, family commitments, report writing, display board creation, practicing her speech, etc. Make sure she makes adjustments to the calendar as the project unfolds.

**Set a budget and stick to it.** Science fair projects are a perfect opportunity to help your girl get a head-start on learning how to budget money. Once she selects a project topic, she'll have an understanding of the supplies and other expenses she'll need to include in her budget. Let her make a list of expenses and calculate the total. Then review her budget together to make sure she included everything. Budget items are meant to remain static, but occasionally there are emergency expenses. Help her understand the difference between an emergency expense and a trivial one. Teach her how to allow room in her budget to accommodate emergencies.

**Document everything.** You never know when you need a written detailed account to prove something. In her project journal (preferably a digital one so the information is accessible from any device), your girl should be taking notes to record data on every aspect of her project: her budget guidelines, calendar adjustments, supply needs, research anomalies, experiment results, contact details, etc. This is a good habit for her to learn. Plus, she'll be able to leverage her work on this project for future endeavors like college applications and/or future science projects.

**Learn to write well.** Regardless of the topic, good writing gives your subject the professional consideration it deserves. Almost all science fairs require a research report as part of the competition requirements. The report is likely the most comprehensive report your grade-school girl has written so far.

*“This writing workload from school only increases, as the child grows older. But writing doesn’t stop with school. The importance of writing skills holds true for life. The emails that we write daily are a form of written communication too. Being keen on improving writing skills – grammatically and with good vocabulary – will ensure you consistently get better at effective communication.” <sup>22</sup>*

In addition to bolstering her writing skills, science-fair reports are a great way for her to learn how to write an abstract and a bibliography, practice her writing mechanics, and familiarize herself with the ‘anomalies’ of word processors.

**Don’t plagiarize.** The Internet has made it too easy to fool readers. Copying content from a Wikipedia page and pasting it into your own content takes about 10 seconds. But you can never fool *yourself* and plagiarizing others’ work defeats the purpose of the learning process. Help your girl understand the importance of citing resources in her research paper bibliography and how much work the original author put into their own project. Compare the originator’s efforts to the amount of work she’s committing to her project. Let her make the connection so she feels like she owns the aha! moment.

**Take one step at a time.** Life is not a race. Try to focus on each task individually and not worry about everything that needs completing all at once. During the project, encourage your girl to take her time. The calendar she completed for this project should be her only motivation - not the fact that there are other competitors doing the same project and trying to do a better job.

**Learn from your mistakes.** Trial and error is the best way to learn. Period. Reassure her that just because she tried something and failed, it is not the end. Keep moving forward. If needed, help her figure out why the failure occurred by asking leading questions so she can figure out the solution on her own. Sometimes just talking it out leads to a discovery. Let her draw her own conclusions, adjust her approach, and try again. Repeat if necessary.

*“... although it may feel uncomfortable to some, we also need to provide opportunities for learning that come from making mistakes. In fact, letting children learn from their mistakes helps build resilience and is essential to raising a confident, capable, happy, and successful adult.” <sup>23</sup>*

**There will always be naysayers.** People like to complain. It makes them feel better about themselves. Science fairs are no different. Science fair detractors like to complain about too much parent participation, unfair judges, lousy venues,

inaccurate age groups, blah blah blah. Help your girl ignore the ‘Debbie Downers’ and focus on what she’s gaining from the competition.

**Communicate your ideas.** People can’t read your mind. Learning articulate, truthful communication is a crucial skill for both business and personal relationships. Your girl will have to persuade science fair judges about the validity of her hypothesis. This can be great practice for her to articulate her ideas. To help her, have her practice communicating her thoughts to you before she has to explain it to others.

**Be aware of the world around you.** From food to medicine to weather, societies around the world rely more and more on science every day. It’s so easy to forget the role that science plays in our everyday lives and take it for granted. Participating in a science fair is a wonderful reminder of the magic of scientific discovery and its usefulness. The scientific literacy and awareness of the world around her that your girl is grasping now will benefit her throughout her lifetime.

**Prizes are just the icing.** Try to stay focused on baking the cake. It’s not about winning; it’s about learning along the way and using your newfound knowledge for next time. Agree with you girl that science fairs can be an excellent way to earn significant prizes, including cash, scholarship funding, and sponsored trips to more significant science-related events. Then remind her that the grand prize is new knowledge. That might not sound very appealing to her now, but hopefully it will make sense eventually.

**Have fun!** Life is meant to be enjoyed, not endured. Encourage your girl to pick her head up every now and again, look around her, and appreciate what she has accomplished. Tell her to keep moving forward and build on what she’s accomplished so far and what could potentially be in her future (science fairs at the national level? scholarship opportunities? more hands-on competitions?). Encourage her to keep going. This is a perfect time in history for her to shine!

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**More Resources:**

- [How to Help Children with Science Projects Without Doing It for Them](#)
- [Parents' Guide to Science Fairs](#)
- [Science Buddies – Hands-on Science Resources](#)

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If you found this guidebook helpful, PLEASE consider sharing it or writing a brief review (your review can be super short if needed). Reviews are a huge boost for writers to get the word out about their books. Thank you so much! - Trish

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# Also by Trish Allison

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Watch for more at [Trish Allison's site](#).



## About the Author

Raising two children in a 1990s same-sex family (way before modern acceptance), gave Trish a unique perspective on the importance of teaching kids that *everyone* deserves kindness and respect.

She combined her experience as a parent, her career as a technical/procedural writer, countless hours of child psychology research, a degree in English from U.C. Berkeley, and a long-ignored passion to write something meaningful — into a collection of social-justice parenting books.

The timing couldn't be better. As the world finally (slowly) awakens to the dire need to reduce cultural unfairness, helping parents raise a generation of open-minded kids is critical.

Read more at [Trish Allison's site](#).