

**The President's Weekly Address**

*June 18, 2011*

Hi, everybody. This Father's Day weekend, I'd like to spend a couple of minutes talking about what's sometimes my hardest, but always my most rewarding job—being a dad.

I grew up without my father around. He left when I was 2 years old, and even though my sister and I were lucky enough to have a wonderful mom and caring grandparents to raise us, I felt his absence. And I wonder what my life would have been like had he been a greater presence.

That's why I've tried pretty hard to be a good dad for my own kids. I haven't always succeeded, of course. In the past, my job has kept me away from home more often than I would have liked, and the burden of raising two young girls would sometimes fall too heavily on Michelle. But between my own experiences growing up and my ongoing efforts to be the best father I can be, I've learned a couple of things about what our children need most from their parents.

First and foremost, they need our time. And more important than the quantity of hours we spend with them is the quality of those hours. Maybe it's just asking about their day or talking a walk together, but the smallest moments can have the biggest impact.

They also need structure, including learning the values of self-discipline and responsibility. Malia and Sasha may live in the White House these days, but Michelle and I still make sure they finish their homework, do their chores, and walk the dog.

And above all, children need our unconditional love, whether they succeed or make mistakes, when life is easy and when life is tough. And life is tough for a lot of Americans today.

More and more kids grow up without a father figure. Others miss a father who's away serving his country in uniform. And even for those dads who are present in their children's lives, the recession has taken a harsh toll. If you're out of a job or struggling to pay the bills, doing whatever it takes to keep the kids healthy and happy and safe can understandably take precedence over everything else.

That's why my administration has offered men who want to be good fathers a little extra support. We've boosted community and faith-based groups focused on fatherhood, partnered with businesses to offer opportunities for fathers to spend time with their kids at a bowling alley or a ballpark, and worked with military chaplains to help deployed dads connect with their children.

We're doing this because we all have a stake in forging stronger bonds between fathers and their children. And you can find out more about some of what we're doing at [fatherhood.gov](http://fatherhood.gov).

But we also know that every father has a personal responsibility to do right by our kids as well. All of us can encourage our children to turn off the video games and pick up a book. All of us can pack a healthy lunch for our son or go outside and play ball with our daughter. And all of us can teach our children the difference between right and wrong and show them through our own example the value in treating one another as we wish to be treated.

Our kids are pretty smart. They understand that life won't always be perfect, that sometimes, the road gets rough, that even great parents don't get everything right. But more than anything, they just want us to be a part of their lives.

So recently, I took on a second job: assistant coach for Sasha's basketball team. On Sundays, we'd get the team together to practice, and a couple of times, I'd help coach the games. And it was great fun, even if Sasha rolled her eyes occasionally when her dad voiced his displeasure with the refs.

But I was so proud watching her run up and down the court, seeing her learn and improve and gain confidence. And I was hopeful that in the years to come, she'd look back on experiences like these as the ones that helped define her as a person and as a parent herself.

In the end, that's what being a parent is all about: those precious moments with our children that fill us with pride and excitement for their future, the chances we have to set an example or offer a piece of advice, the opportunities to just be there and show them that we love them.

That's something worth remembering this Father's Day and every day. Thanks, and happy Father's Day to all the dads out there. Have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:10 p.m. on June 17 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on June 18. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 17, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 18. In the address, the President referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

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