“Meg Meeker radically changed the way I look at parenting and fatherhood. There is joy, wisdom, and truth in everything she writes, and I will be the first in line to buy each new book she shares with the world.”

—Jon Acuff, Wall Street Journal bestselling author of Quitter: Closing the Gap Between Your Day Job & Your Dream Job and father of two daughters

In the highly anticipated follow-up companion to her national bestseller, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*, Dr. Meg Meeker takes dads through thirty practical father-daughter activities, meant to strengthen dads in their parenting roles, while also creating honest and thriving relationships. With twenty-five years’ experience as a pediatrician, Dr. Meeker combines her expertise and wisdom with warmth and humor to make this the perfect guide for dads to take the *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters* experience to the next level.

Dr. Meg Meeker is a popular speaker on pediatric health issues and child-parent relationships, having appeared on several national television and radio shows. She has authored five books. Married to Walter for 30 years, Dr. Meeker has three daughters and one son. Visit her blog online at www.megmeekermd.com.

The 30-Day Challenge is not like any other guide you’ve used before. It becomes a cherished handbook as you evolve in your role as father and as your daughter becomes a mature adult woman. Use it now and experience it in one way. Use it when your daughter is a few years older, and enjoy a different outcome.

Dads, answer the call to become an engaged and intentional father, and make her strong.

Dr. Meg Meeker, M.D.
Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters

The 30-Day Challenge

The daily motivation you need to become her hero

"[This] is the book I wish someone had given me the day my first daughter was born!"
— Dave Ramsey,

New York Times bestselling author, nationally syndicated radio show host, and father of two daughters

Meg Meeker, M.D.
Day Four

Hero Worship—It’s Not What You Think

From the moment your daughter first sees you, she gives you hero status. Why? Because every little girl sees her father as larger than life. She wants you to be terrific. So regardless of how terrific you feel, your daughter thinks that you are. You are her hero simply because she wants you to be one. You don’t have to earn it; you simply have to maintain your hero status. How do you do that?

Daughters look for different character qualities in heroes than sons do. They want men who live with integrity (you never tell a lie), who will always make them feel safe and protected (even adult women want this), and who are firm but always kind. When you are these things to your daughter, you stay on the hero’s platform.

Many of you fathers fail to recognize this. You think that you must be super athletic, extremely smart, or wealthy in order for your children to see you as heroes. This simply isn’t true. Some of you believe that your daughters see you as weak or stupid because our culture tells you that your kids see you this way. Nothing
could be further from the truth. This is why you may become intimi-
dated when your daughter snarls at you. Her gesture confirms what you think is already true: that she doesn’t respect or need you. Don’t believe this!

**Testing Her Hero**

As daughters mature, they test their fathers to see if you can handle them. Sometimes they want to know how patient you are, and if you will lose your temper and topple from the pedestal. So, they push your buttons to see if you are serious about sticking around for the long haul. In short, they run you through the gamut to see if you are really a hero or if you aren’t.

When your first grader snubs you, don’t take it personally. If your sixth grader challenges your patience by yelling at you that you don’t understand her, reprimand her for yelling (in a firm but loving way, letting her know that yelling isn’t allowed in your home), and then tell her that you do understand her wishes. The reason this is important is because she needs to know that you are tough enough to handle her. As she matures, she feels a sense of growing independence and will challenge boundaries that you set. Be there to stop her if she wanders too far and reel her back in. Heroes have rules and are clear about them. And heroes always have power to make those rules stick.

Certain is it that there is no kind of affection so purely angelic as of a father to a daughter. In love to our wives there is desire; to our sons, ambition; but to our daughters there is something, which there are no words to express.

—Joseph Addison

Very often fathers fall into the trap of letting their tempers fly either directly to their daughters or in front of them. This is one of the surest ways that you will lose hero status. Dads should always keep their wits about them—not only because your daughter will imitate your behavior; but also because your tone of voice and
actions influence how she perceives herself. You always want her perceptions to be strong.

A Lifelong Hero
Tanya’s dad was her hero all of her life. As a middle-aged woman, she told me one of the things she admired most about her father was the way he spoke. He was a quiet man, scarce with words; but that fact, she said, made his words carry more punch. “What really impressed me as I got older, was the way he controlled his temper. Growing up, I could tell when he was mad, but I can honestly say that I never heard him yell, swear, or call anyone names. As a teenager, I remember getting rip-roaring mad, and I always remembered my dad and the way he controlled his anger. This made me challenge myself in those angry moments. Many, many times, I held my tongue because I saw my dad do it. Was he my hero? Up until the day he died,” she told me. “No one had the integrity and self control like my father had. No one.”

I hear stories like these about you fathers all the time. Even adult daughters hold onto heroes. Our husbands usually don’t fit the bill because they are contemporaries. They may have the character, but we perceive them as equals, not heroes. That is a position that we understand our daughters will give them and since many of us have had the privilege of having our dads be our heroes, we don’t need any more.
Day Four Challenge: Take Your Daughter Dancing

If you are an experienced ballroom dancer, then make a date with your daughter to go dancing. If you need lessons, make a few appointments for the two of you to learn together.

As you learn and practice new steps together, consider how you are leading her and how she is following. Following a real hero is easy because he’s honest, trustworthy, and confident. Not only does he have a destination in mind, but he also has a plan about how to reach it.

Use the dance lessons to exercise your heroic qualities. How does leading your daughter in dance equip you for the larger task of leading her in life?

Checklist

- Schedule dance lessons.
- Plan the date, place, and time you’ll take your daughter dancing.
- Put it on the calendar!
Day Seventeen

When the Going Gets Tough,
Dad Steps In

When I was a little girl, my father always told me, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” One thing I knew when he said this to me was that he was tough. And I wanted to be just as tough as he was. In your daughter’s mind, you are stronger, smarter, and tougher than any other man in the world. Maybe you don’t feel like these things, but no matter, she does and that’s all that is important when it comes to making an impression on her.

Many fathers are uncomfortable challenging their daughters. You know that you can be tough, but when it comes to expecting your daughter to be tough, that’s another story altogether. It’s easier to come down hard on a son and demand better behavior, but when it comes to your little girl, well, sometimes you just don’t want to be so tough. I understand this. I saw my own father wiggle when my sister and I got out of line. Rules were clear for all four of us, but somehow my brothers seemed to be held accountable
more frequently. The downside for us daughters when fathers do this is that we learn to believe that we can’t handle as much as our brothers can.

**Make Sure She Knows She Is Strong**

One of the best assurances that your daughter will stay out of trouble as she grows older is to make certain that she knows that she is strong. Don’t compromise on this lesson. When you set standards in your home then waffle when it comes to holding your daughter accountable to those standards, she feels weak. She perceives that you, who are tough in her eyes, believe that she isn’t capable of being as tough. And once she gets the idea in her mind that she isn’t strong, then she doubts her ability to make good decisions, to stand up for herself, and to say no when she needs to.

Don’t let this happen to your daughter. Teach her that she is strong. When she does something that you told her not to, make sure that consequences are as swift as they would be if she were your son. You must never be mean, critical, or demeaning, but be firm. The payoff for her will be enormous as she matures because when you teach her that you fully expect her to take control of her behaviors and make good decisions, she learns that she is strong. If you believe she is, then she believes she is. Sadly, most girls grow into adults doubting their capabilities. More often, girls are too timid to assert themselves and take charge of situations because they fear that they will either fail or that people will think badly of them. Don’t let your daughter grow into one of these young women.

It’s easy to protect your daughter when she is young and in your home. But what happens when she’s no longer under your watch and someone tries to take advantage of her? Imagine that your daughter is twenty-one years old, at a bar, and a smooth talking thirty-year-old tries to take her home. What would she say? Or imagine she is thirty and her boss is taking advantage of her kind heart and willingness to work overtime and refuses to compensate her. Would she have the courage to stand up to her boss?
You can’t afford to wonder. Derek would tell you that. When his daughter, Marcy, was seventeen, she came to me because she was depressed. She had reason to be. Her twenty-two-year-old boyfriend was sexually assaulting her, unbeknownst to her parents. Marcy was a “nice girl.” She didn’t want to hurt her boyfriend’s feelings. And, she was scared of him. No one knew that she was in this predicament. I encouraged her to tell her father. Her dad confronted the boyfriend and told him in no uncertain terms to stay away from Marcy. After the boyfriend left, her depression went away. When life gets tough, Dad needs to intervene.

*Teach Your Daughter to Be Tough*

There are many ways to teach your daughter to be tough. The first is by setting an example, like Marcy’s father did. The second is by keeping high standards for your daughter and not letting her off the hook when it comes to keeping them. Don’t worry; your daughter can take it. Finally, tell your daughter not to be afraid of being assertive. Have her practice it. Watch how she interacts with their friends. Does she get pushed around or bullied? Is she a people pleaser? If so, talk to her about not being afraid to act from her instincts and to stand up for herself. Not only will you have a tough daughter, but you will also grow closer to her in the process.
**Day Seventeen Challenge: Go Rock Climbing**

Conquering a physical feat can be a great way to understand the extent of one’s strength in all areas of life.

Take your daughter rock climbing, either outdoors if you are an experienced climber, or to an adventure center with an indoor climbing wall. Encourage her as she climbs higher and higher. Challenge her to press through any obstacles or fear to reach the top of the rock.

**Checklist**

- Locate the ideal place for your climb. If outdoors, plan the day and time for your trip. If at an indoor facility, make reservations.

- Put it on your calendar!

- Day of the climb: If outdoors, bring appropriate snacks and water. If indoors, bring extra money for facility fees and snacks.