

WHY DADS MATTER



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April 2014
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Our Vision

“A GREAT DAD FOR EVERY CHILD”



For fathers' to take on more childcare . . .

WHO HAS TO CHANGE?

Everything has to change . . .

Cultural messaging

Policy

Institutional practices

Mothers, fathers, wider family



Fatherhood Institute: what we do

Gather and publicise research evidence

Work with policy makers to develop father-relevant policy, guidance and inspection frameworks

Develop mainstream practitioners' skills and confidence in engaging with men in families

Design and deliver parenting interventions with mothers and fathers

Work with mothers and fathers in the corporate sector

Support the corporate sector to acknowledge and serve their employees who are fathers



Our work is based in understandings
derived from robust research
evidence that . . .



Men are ‘naturally’ suited to caring for young children

- there seem to be no biologically-based differences between the sexes in capacity to care for children well (*Parke, 2008*).
- there seem to be no biologically-based differences between the sexes in sensitivity to infants (*for review, see Lamb et al, 1987*)
- fathers' responsiveness seems to vary depending on the degree to which they assume responsibility for the care of their infants (*Lamb and Lewis, 2010*).
- when similarly supported, both sexes develop childcare skills at the same rate (*Myers, 1982*)



Men are ‘hard wired’ to be nurturing and affectionate caretakers

- **Reduced testosterone:** found in men living with pregnant women, and in new fathers
- Within 15 minutes of holding a baby, men experience **increases in the hormones** that facilitate
 - responsiveness to infants (vasopressin)
 - closeness and care (prolactin)
 - affection and social bonds (oxytocin))
- Hormonal responses **are more rapid** in experienced fathers

*(Kim et al, under review; Atzil et al, 2012,
Gray & Anderson, 2010)*



Involved fathers are good for children

Children with highly involved fathers tend to have:

- better friendships with better-adjusted children
- fewer behaviour problems
- lower criminality and substance abuse
- higher educational achievement
- greater capacity for empathy
- non-traditional attitudes to earning and childcare
- more satisfying adult sexual partnerships
- higher self-esteem and life-satisfaction

(for reviews see *Tamis-LeMonda et al ,2013;*
Sarkadi et al, 2008; Flouri, 2005;
Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004)



Children do badly when their father's parenting is poor

- Harsh parenting by fathers, low levels of fathers' sensitivity, fathers' poor mental health have negative impacts on child and adolescent functioning (*Phares et al, 2010; Ramchandani, 2008*).
- Disengaged and remote father-child interactions as early as the third month of life, predict externalizing problems in children over many years (*Ramchandani et al., 2013*)
- Getting on badly with EVEN ONE PARENT more than doubles the likelihood of a young person engaging in anti-social behaviour (*Wood, 2005*).



Families flourish when fathers play a substantial role in care-taking

- Fathers – good, bad, dead, alive, present, absent – have powerful impacts on children that last a life-time
- Mothers ‘parent better’ when fathers play an active role (e.g. Guterman & Lee, 2005)
- Involved fatherhood is in tune with what modern families want – and are increasingly practising (e.g. Scott & Cleary, 2013)
- Involved fatherhood is essential if women are to fulfil their potential in education and employment (e.g. Silverstein, 1999)
- Fathers are happier when they undertake more housework and childcare (e.g. Guterman & Lee, 2005)
- Couple relationships are more stable when caretaking and breadwinning are more equally shared (e.g. Olah, 2001)

Tips and strategies for busy dads

- Your ‘next meeting’ is with your children
 - Stay focused – relaxation is for afterwards
 - Keep it predictable
 - Be in touch every day
- Get the knowledge & skills
 - Practice makes papa
 - Learn about child development
 - ‘Quiz’ yourself on how much you know about your children
 - Ask for feedback on your parenting



More tips and strategies for busy dads

- Knowledge & skills (continued)
 - Spend time in charge of family situations
 - Spend one-on-one time with each child
 - Keep talking with your children's mother – the 'parenting team'
- In interactions
 - Stay 'present'
 - Listen first, talk second
 - Keep it rational
 - If you can't say something positive, don't say anything
- Regularly do stuff with your child that you BOTH enjoy
- Say how much I love you



Further resources

- Free DADS INCLUDED online course:
<http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/training-and-consultancy/dads-included-free-online-course/>
- Access our research summaries
www.fatherhoodinstitute.com/research
- Download free resources
www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2014/bringing-fathers-in-resources-for-advocates-practitioners-and-researchers/
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