

DADICATION



Discussion Guide to **Foster Peer Support for Formerly Incarcerated Dads**



This discussion guide is designed to facilitate a discussion with a group of formerly incarcerated dads grappling with the family-wide effects of their incarceration. For example, a peer support group of formerly incarcerated dads can watch the video and use these discussion questions to move through a process of self-reflection towards achieving their goals.

Overview of Dadication

Involved fathers make essential contributions to their children’s well-being, even when parenting during tough times and circumstances. That’s what we at the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) call Dadication. We applaud and support all dads who show up for their kids, especially when parenting isn’t easy.

The DADication documentary features fathers who appeared in our [Dadication PSAs](#) and includes additional testimony from fathers and fatherhood practitioners. The short documentary emphasizes how essential fathers are to the lives of their children, illustrates the impact of growing up without a father, provides examples of fathers overcoming numerous barriers to be present for their kids, and demonstrates how fathers and their children are flourishing as a result. Be ready to shed a tear as you hear their stories.

The documentary was produced by the Ad Council and Campbell Ewald in partnership with the NRFC and the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. The video and other companion documents can be downloaded from the [Dadication page](#) at [Fatherhood.gov](#).

NOTE TO PROGRAM LEADERS AND DISCUSSION FACILITATORS:

We recommend devoting one of your planned group sessions to show fathers the DADication documentary. We also recommend that you watch the movie several times before the group watches it to familiarize yourself with the contents. This will help you prepare for the group discussion and anticipate how to structure it based on the interests and needs of your group.

You can facilitate a group discussion using the following discussion questions. The questions are arranged in the order in which the topic or quote comes up in the video. We provide specific time marks so you can either watch the whole movie before beginning your discussion, or you can choose to stop the video at specific points in order to cover a question immediately.

You can switch up the order in which you cover the questions, based on the direction in which the conversation flows, and choose whether to cover all or some of the questions depending on the time available and your program needs. And, of course, feel free to add other discussion questions to focus on different clips based on the interests and needs of your group.

We include a section at the end of this document with links to resources that provide additional information and may be helpful in following up on specific issues or questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. [0:55] In the opening scene, Durrell Lyons says:

"My dad wasn't around ... but when my children fell, I was always there to pick them up and put them back on and say, 'do it again' ... now they ride their bikes through the neighborhood."

DISCUSS: How do you think not having his dad around influenced Durrell as a father?

DISCUSS: Was your dad around to teach you things? If so, what did he teach you?

DISCUSS: If he wasn't around much, how has that affected how you parent your kids?

DISCUSS: Were your kids able to visit you in prison/jail?

DISCUSS: Did you have contact with them outside of any visits? If so, how did that go?

[Prompt: Did you have contact via phone, letter writing, and/or video visits?]



2. [1:20] In the same clip, Durrell talks about how his kids learned to ride a bike even though he never learned how to do so. He says:

"I didn't teach them. I just created an environment where they taught themselves ... Sometimes you don't have to know everything, you just gotta be there."

DISCUSS: What do you think about what Durrell said?

DISCUSS: How are you teaching your kids?

DISCUSS: How did you feel during your period of incarceration? In what ways were you able to "be there" for your kids?

DISCUSS: What's something you've taught your kids that you're proud of?

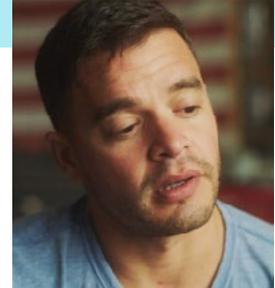


3. [1:55] Juan Scalone talks about how his two kids are different from each other.

DISCUSS: If you have more than one child, are your kids similar or different?

DISCUSS: If they are different, in what ways?

DISCUSS: Do you parent them differently?



4. [2:11] Quintavious Greggs says:

"I used to wish my first child was a boy but having a girl you learn so much from a girl ... my baby, she's my life."

DISCUSS: Do you think fathers learn different things from their sons and daughters? If so, what kind of differences?

DISCUSS: Do you have to parent girls and boys in different ways?



5. [2:33] Kenneth Braswell says:

"I remember when I got the news of the birth of my first daughter, and the first emotion I had was I was scared to death."

DISCUSS: How did you feel when you first became a father?

DISCUSS: How have you learned to be a father since then?

DISCUSS: How has being incarcerated affected how you feel as a father?



6. [3:16] Kenneth Braswell (voiceover) talks about how incarceration can make it difficult for fathers to re-engage with their children after a period of separation.

DISCUSS: How did being incarcerated impact your relationship with your children and coparent?

DISCUSS: Since your release have you received help from our fatherhood program or elsewhere to manage your situation?

DISCUSS: How could our program do more to help fathers who have been incarcerated?

DISCUSS: Do have any advice for other fathers?



7. [3:57] Joseph Stiltner says:

"I missed so much with my first child because of addiction and the situation with his mother. It doesn't get easier to stay away, but it really feels like it gets harder to come back ... it's a guilt that I kinda live with every day."

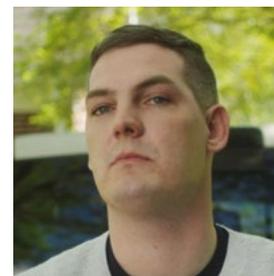
DISCUSS: Have you felt like that? If so, how do you deal with that feeling of guilt?

DISCUSS: If you've had a difficult relationship with a coparent, have you been able to improve that relationship?

- If so, how?
- If not, what supports do you and your coparent need to improve your relationship?

DISCUSS: Has our fatherhood program helped you with your relationship with your coparent?

- If so, how?
- If not, how could we help more?



8. [4:49] Kenneth Braswell explains that he didn't meet his father until he was 23 years old, when his daughter was 2 years old:

"I wanted to be the father for my child that he wasn't for me ... but I'd gotten disconnected [from her]."

[5:17] He goes on to talk about one day when he was excited because he was going to see his daughter. He sees her and her mother coming out of the door:

"They walk towards me, and they walked right past me ... either she didn't see me, or she doesn't know me ... it killed me."

DISCUSS: What was your relationship like with your father?

DISCUSS: Have you ever experienced how Kenneth felt after seeing his daughter walk right past him? If so, how did you address that disappointment?



9. [7:40] Tina Naidoo works with fathers who have been incarcerated. She talks about the difficulties formerly incarcerated fathers have in finding housing, getting a job, and reconnecting with their children. [8:26] She says:

"Nobody rents to them. There is nobody to give them a job because of their background. So how do you create a healthy stable living environment, how do you get your kids back? We spend a lot of time motivating our dads to stay in the game, to keep fighting, not to give up."

DISCUSS: Have you faced these kinds of barriers?

DISCUSS: Have you been able to find ways to overcome some of these barriers?

- If so, how?
- What additional assistance do you need?

DISCUSS: How could our fatherhood program and other community agencies do more to help you and other previously incarcerated fathers?

DISCUSS: What could our community do to provide more support for your children, and other children with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated dads?

DISCUSS: What could correctional facilities do to better support father-child visits and communication?



10. [9:35] Quintavious Greggs says:

"I made a lot of promises to myself I have to keep, and I came home to live for my purpose. Since I been home from prison, it's like walking into heaven. I got custody of my daughter. That's a beautiful picture, there ain't nothing like being a father in this world."

DISCUSS: Would you agree that there's nothing like being a father?

DISCUSS: How would you describe the feeling of being a father?

DISCUSS: What do you think about Quintavious' statement that, "Since I been home from prison, it's like walking into heaven"? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

DISCUSS: Have you made promises to yourself?

DISCUSS: Have you been able to keep those promises?

- If not, what got in the way?



[NOTE TO FACILITATORS: Emphasize that fatherhood is an ongoing process. We're all learning as we grow. Sometimes, just knowing when we've screwed up (and being able to apologize) is a real sign of growth.]

11. [10:22] Durrell Lyons talks about a time when he suffered from depression and anxiety:

"That depression ended up rolling downhill. My wife was critically depressed, and it emptied into my daughter ... [I was] coming down on her hard for stuff that's really not her fault."

[11:16] He goes on to explain that he finally figured out he was the one with the problem and realized:

"It's not about me. Whatever happens to me and affects me mentally and physically, it's gonna run downhill. And my children are part of that hill."

DISCUSS: What's your reaction to that clip?

DISCUSS: How did you deal with the stress of being incarcerated and not being able to see your children on a regular basis?

DISCUSS: How does stress affect the way you parent your children?

DISCUSS: How can you prevent any stress you feel from having a negative effect on your children?



12. [11:42] Cosette Bowles talks about how disputes between parents (e.g., about custody of their children or payment of child support) can have a negative impact on child well-being:

"I think that's really important. This is not a fight, it's not a contest where somebody wins and somebody loses, except your children."

DISCUSS: Do you sometimes feel like you're in a fight or a contest for your children with your coparent?

DISCUSS: How do you think your children feel if they see you and your coparent fighting? Do they blame themselves?

DISCUSS: Have you been able to improve your relationship with your coparent?

- If so, how?
- If not, how could the program help with that?

DISCUSS: Since your return from prison or jail, have you experienced challenges with getting to spend time with your children?

- Has our program helped you overcome these or other challenges?
- How could we do more?



13. [12:26] Kenneth Braswell asks:

"Where do we [men] go for help? Who do we ask when we're feeling vulnerable?"

DISCUSS: What kind of help do you think dads need the most?

DISCUSS: What kind of help do dads need when they return to their families and communities after being incarcerated?

DISCUSS: Have you been able to get help and support when you need it?

DISCUSS: How can this program do more to help you?

DISCUSS: How can you help other dads?



14. [12:52] Mohammad Fahmy says:

"Internally, we're thinking, 'Am I doing the right thing, Am I being a good parent?'"

[13:31] Juan Scalone says:

"As a dad, as a male, sometimes you feel alone."

DISCUSS: Have you ever felt like Mohammad or Juan?

DISCUSS: Do you ever feel like you don't know what to do as a dad?

DISCUSS: Where do you typically get support – friends, family, your religious community, elsewhere?

DISCUSS: Have you been able to get support from our fatherhood program?

- If so, what has been most helpful?
- If not, how can we do more to help you?



NRFC Resources

Check out these resources to find additional information or answer questions that may arise during your discussions.

- Providing support for children and families with incarcerated fathers [LINK TO BE ADDED](#)
- Preparing fathers for successful community reentry [LINK TO BE ADDED](#)
- [Working with fathers after incarceration](#)
- [Supporting fathers and families impacted by incarceration](#)
- [Helping incarcerated and reentering fathers helps children](#)
- [Elements of Promising Practice in Programs Serving Fathers Involved in the Criminal Justice System](#)
- [Coparenting tips for dads](#)
- [Tips for dads: Cook with your kids](#)

Other Resources

- Brennan, E., McCormick, M., Sarfo, B., & Manno, M. S. (2021). [Six recommendations for supporting families affected by parental incarceration: A review of the literature](#). MDRC.
- Focus Vol. 32, No. 2. (Fall/Winter 2015–16). [Paternal incarceration and how it affects fathers and their children](#). Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

This discussion guide was developed by Nigel Vann at Fathers Incorporated and Diego Quezada at MDRC, with assistance from Dina Israel (MDRC), on behalf of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse under contract to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance.

Suggested citation: Vann, N. & Quezada, D. (2022). *DADication: Discussion Guide to Foster Peer Support for Formerly Incarcerated Dads*. National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse.