

## Fathers Are Important—for Real!



**Fathers are essential to the healthy growth and development of their children.**

**Dads bring a unique perspective to the family and lives of their children.**

**Mothers and fathers can love their children by supporting each other as parents.**

**Fathers have a powerful influence on the healthy development of their daughters and their sons.**

- \* Babies can distinguish their father's voice from the voice of a stranger by the age of four weeks.
- \* School-aged children show significant gains in intellectual development when their fathers are involved with them as infants.
- \* Involved fathers enrich their daughter's and son's self image.
- \* Children who have involved fathers show more sense of humor, longer attention spans, and more eagerness for learning.
- \* Father involvement helps teens to develop a strong sense of who they are and increases their ability to resist peer pressure.

**Dads are role models who teach their children to be strong, flexible adults.**

- \* Fathers teach sex roles: they are generally more physically active with their sons and more protective of their daughters.
- \* Fathers often think "out of the box" and offer alternative strategies for problem solving.
- \* Dads tend to offer more physical play than mothers, which increases the physical competency of their young children.
- \* When fathers model behaviors that are respectful to women, their sons are more likely to see women as human beings rather than "things" to manipulate. But . . . fathers who abuse their wives raise sons who are more likely to abuse their wives and children.

### **Fathers are essential partners who share parenting with the mother of their children.**

- \* Fathers who interact with their newborn children are usually more likely to support their wife in her new role as mother.
- \* As a partner, dads can provide balance and be a sounding board or a compass for the family.
- \* Fathers, as an equal parent, can balance the parenting of the mothers through respectful disagreement and healthy support.
- \* Fathers and mothers can work together to communicate and reach good decisions that benefit their children.
- \* Both fathers and mothers need support as they grow into being parents.

### **Fathers need commitment from their communities in order to succeed as parents.**

- \* Communities can provide mentors to guide and support fathers.
- \* Fathers need to be recognized for their contributions to the community.
- \* Community leaders need to include fathers in decisions that concern their children.
- \* Children benefit from learning about the contributions of “average fathers.”
- \* Communities can plan father-child activity days.

### **Fathers are individuals who are growing and changing with experience and across situations.**

- \* Being a father is only one of many roles that men work to balance.
- \* To learn their job as a father, men need room for trial and error.
- \* Fathers who recognize their important contribution to the development of their child express more satisfaction with themselves.
- \* Fathers who can nurture their children report more understanding of emotional situations at their work.
- \* In a unique way, children expand the range and depth of experiences that fathers have.

Prepared by Linda D. Ladd, Ph.D., Family Development Specialist, Texas Cooperative Extension, October 2000.

#### *Source:*

T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. (1992). Touchpoints: The Essential References. MA: Perseus Books.

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