
About.com Fatherhood

Connecting with Other Parents: Help for Dads with Cold Feet

By [Wayne Parker](#), About.com

Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to talk with another dad and just couldn't think of the right thing to say? Or maybe you've watched and even admired how another parent dealt with a situation and thought, "Now there's someone I should get to know."

Starting a conversation with another parent can sometimes be a little intimidating. I think we dads can feel a little awkward in starting or carrying on a parenting conversation, particularly if we don't know the other person in that conversation well (or at all). So, how do you find other dads with similar interests? What are the best ways to initiate the contact? What kinds of conversations should you have with women with children?

Where to Find Other Dads to Talk With.

Finding other fathers with common interests and a similar commitment isn't as hard as you might think. Here are a number of ideas of how to find other dads with whom you can connect.

Use your networking skills. Years ago when I was looking for a job, I got some great advice. It was to tell everyone I knew that I was in the job market, and to ask people if they knew anyone who might help me. That same networking approach can work as you try to find other dads to talk with. Ask your friends, associates, parents of your children's friends and coworkers about committed and successful dads that they know. Start making a list of those you hear about.

Go places where good dads go. Consider looking for other parents at the playground, at church, at library storytimes or in the park. Then strike up a conversation with one that seems friendly.

Find a playgroup. Many dads, particularly stay at home dads, are forming playgroups with other fathers. Find out more about methods for [creating a successful playgroup](#)¹ or find a fathers' playgroup on an [interactive map at rebeldad.com](#)².

Starting a Conversation.

The hardest part of starting a conversation is just starting. What should you say first? How can you engage another parent in a chat without feeling like a failure if it doesn't work? Try some of these tips for getting the ball rolling.

Break the ice by being a good listener. The easiest way to start that discussion is to insert yourself in one already underway. Pay attention to what the person is saying and listen for common interests. Then jump in gently with a comment that is pertinent to the conversation, and you'll be connecting before you know it.

Smile and make eye contact. People feel comfortable starting a conversation when you seem comfortable as well. Smiling naturally and making eye contact when you greet another person will help make that contact pleasant and easier for both of you.

Ask questions that don't allow short answers. You know how when your kids come home from school, it's best not to ask "how was your day?" It is better to ask a question such as "What did you like best about school today?" It is the same in getting a conversation started with anyone. Ask about experiences, feelings, and attitudes-it will help you learn more about the person and how they think and act as a parent.

What About Talking with Moms?

Trying to create a relationship with a mother can create some pretty sticky situations. If you're a single dad and she's a single mom, creating a connection can be a good thing for both of you. But if either of you is married or has a domestic partner, an innocent conversation can lead to things that might be uncomfortable. So casual conversations can be OK, but make sure it doesn't go beyond that. If you want to connect with a mother, make sure you involve both sets of children and significant others.

Online Options for Connecting

Finding other dads to talk with online is getting easier all the time. One of the best places for fathering connections is the [Fatherhood Forum](#)³ here at About.com. Here you can ask questions and engage in conversations online about various fathering issues.

Other places online for connecting with other dads include:

At Home Dads. This is a great website for stay at home dads. They have an online [and an link url=http://www.athomedadconvention.com/annual_convention_for_stay_at_home_dads](#)⁴.

Fathers Forums. At the Fathers Forums' website, dads in various stages of life can connect via discussion boards on [pregnancy](#)⁵ and on the [first year of fatherhood](#)⁶.

United Fathers. The United Fathers of the Southern Tier also has a [helpful chat room](#)⁷ that focuses on fathers' rights issues.

The most important thing about trying to connect with other fathers is just to get started. And as you share experiences, ask questions and gain insights, you'll discover that it was a worthwhile effort to start the conversation.

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