



NRFC WEBINAR

Tips for Practitioners: Talking with Fathers about Early Child Development and Parenting Skills

1:00pm EDT | May 22nd, 2019



National
Responsible
Fatherhood Clearinghouse



National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse



HHS/ACF Office of Family Assistance provides funds to support fathers and families through this Clearinghouse.

Resources are available for dads, fatherhood programs, researchers, and policy makers.



Contact

Visit the NRFC: Fatherhood.gov

- Fatherhood.gov/toolkit for *Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit*.
- Fatherhood.gov/webinars for archives of all our webinars.

Contact us: Help@FatherhoodGov.info

Encourage fathers or practitioners to contact our national call center toll-free at:
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Today's Webinar

- An overview of child development (ages 0-8) and ways to talk about this with fathers.
- Tips for practitioners working with fathers in responsible fatherhood and other family support or early childhood programs.
- Presentations from:
 - **John Badalament**
The Fatherhood Project, Boston, MA.
 - **Gardner Wiseheart**
Southwest Partnership for Fathers and Families, San Angelo, TX.
- Presenter handouts and a list of helpful resources will be available for download during the webinar.
- “Question and Answer” session with the presenters at the end of the webinar.



Relevant NRFC Resources

- Tip Cards for Dads:
 - [Tip Card for Expectant Dads](#)
 - [Tip Card for New Dads](#)
 - [Tip Card for Dads of Toddlers](#)
- Resource Briefs:
 - [Healthy Fathers/Healthy Families](#)
 - [The Benefits of Fathers Reading to Their Children](#)
 - [Supporting Fathers of Children with Special Needs](#)
- Safety Tips for Dads:
 - [Safety Tips to Keep Babies Safe](#)
 - [Safety Tips to Keep Young Kids Safe](#)
- Webinar (2013):
 - [Encouraging and Supporting Father Involvement from Birth through Adolescence](#)

Relevant NRFC Resources



TIP CARD FOR EXPECTANT DADS



DID YOU KNOW?

When dads are involved as supportive partners during pregnancy, it is good for their babies, good for moms, and good for dads.



When their partner supports them, pregnant women are more likely to get regular prenatal care and eat and live healthily, which increases the likelihood of positive health outcomes for their baby.¹



Dads who are there for mom and baby during the pregnancy are better prepared for their role as a new dad. They feel more involved, and their baby has more opportunities to get to know their dad.²



Moms who have calm and supportive birth partners have better labor experiences.³

MORE INFORMATION

NRFC Resources

- Working with Dads: Encouraging and Supporting Father Involvement from Birth through Adolescence (<https://www.fatherhood.gov/webinars>)
- Helping Young Fathers with Decision Making (<https://bit.ly/2FmkSyo>)
- Healthy Fathers, Healthy Families (<https://bit.ly/2riAQLl>)

Internet Resources

- An Expectant Dad's Guide to Pregnancy, WebMD (<https://wb.md/2Vln12>)
- Blog for Expectant Dads, Mr. Dad (<https://bit.ly/2GqO3ch>)
- Tips for the Expectant Father, Minnesota Department of Health (<https://bit.ly/2pFohiA>)

Books

- The Expectant Father: Facts, Tips, and Advice for Dads-to-be (4th Edition), Armin Brott and Jennifer Ash, 2015.

Relevant NRFC Resources



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TIP CARD FOR NEW DADS



DID YOU KNOW?

When dads are very involved from birth, their children do better—and dads do too!



When dads are very involved from birth, their children:¹

1. Reach developmental milestones earlier.
2. Form better friendships.
3. Do better at school.
4. Are less likely to get into trouble as teenagers.
5. Develop higher IQs.



Dads who spend time caring for their newborns:²

1. Form a bond faster and are likely to enjoy fatherhood more.
2. Are more likely to report feelings of warmth, love, and satisfaction.
3. Experience positive brain and hormonal changes that make it easier to nurture and bond with their children.



A few other things to be aware of as a new dad:³

1. Loud sounds can be scary and may hurt babies' hearing.
2. Bright light can hurt their eyes.
3. Babies have "skin hunger"—they love to be held so their skin touches their parents skin.

MORE INFORMATION

NRFC Resources

- Webinar (2013)—Working with Dads: Encouraging and Supporting Father Involvement from Birth through Adolescence <https://www.fatherhood.gov/webinars>
- Safety Tips for Dads to Keep Babies Safe <http://1.usa.gov/20B5pG9>

Other Resources

- FatherWork—suggested fathering activities by age of child from Brigham Young University (developed by David C. Dollahite, Ph.D. and Alan J. Hawkins, Ph.D.) <http://fatherwork.byu.edu/activities.htm>
- Drive to Five—information and resources from Fathers Incorporated to assist and encourage fathers' healthy participation in the lives of their children 0-5 years old www.drivetofive.org
- Dynamic Dads—a YouTube video from Fathers Incorporated <https://bit.ly/2shXkmj>

Relevant NRFC Resources

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Be involved, be caring, be there.

- **Hold your baby**, gaze into their eyes.
- **Cuddle them**, change their diaper, burp them after they eat.
- **Cradle them over your shoulder** and walk around to introduce them to their new world.
- **Let your baby lie down with you**, skin-to-skin on your stomach.
- **Talk to your baby**, tell them stories, sing to them—it's never too early to start sharing with them!
- **Just look at your baby** or screw your face up and wait for a response—babies just a few days old can mimic you.
- **Start reading with your children** from an early age—reading and playing with books is a wonderful way to spend special time together.
- **Keep your baby safe** and comfortable.
 - Help them lie in different positions, but don't leave them alone on their stomach.
 - Talk to them in a calm, soft voice. Pick them up gently and slowly.
- **Help your baby feel loved** and secure.
 - Comfort and hold them when they cry.
 - Feed them when they're hungry.
 - Play with them when they're bored.
- **Select the correct type of car seat** for your child's age and weight.
 - Infants should be in a rear-facing convertible car seat until they are two years old or until they reach the maximum height and weight for their seat.
 - Never leave them in the car alone.



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¹ Program P: A Manual for Engaging Men in Fatherhood, Caregiving, and Maternal and Child Health from REDMAS, Promundo, and EME <https://bit.ly/2Lu0P1a>

² Fatherhood Institute Research Summary: Dads and Hormones <https://bit.ly/2K0Iy77>; Kyle Pruett, *Fathemeed*, 2000.

³ Welcome to Dadhood—a curriculum from Healthy Families San Angelo <http://www.hfsabx.com/welcome-to-dadhood>.

Relevant NRFC Resources



Healthy Fathers, Healthy Families

Developed by Child Trends on behalf of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance.

Overview

Fathers can influence their children's health behaviors more than they may realize. This research brief provides information and resources to help fathers improve their own health and well-being, and the health and well-being of their children. Specifically, the brief focuses on healthy eating and sleeping habits, and provides tips for healthy physical activity. These healthy lifestyle habits can lower fathers' and children's risk of becoming overweight or obese and reduce the risk of developing other diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or cancer.^[7, 8] Other benefits include improved mental health and mood and increased chances for living longer.^[9] This brief also highlights how fathers can take advantage of the preventive services provided in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) to promote their health and the health of their children.



Relevant NRFC Resources



NRFC Tips for Dads: The Benefits of Reading to Your Children

Reading to your children from an early age will help them become interested in reading – and children who enjoy reading tend to do better in school and have more employment opportunities as adults! Children often become interested in reading by watching and mimicking their parents or participating in child-parent reading routines. Reading and telling stories to your children is not just good for them, it's fun for dads too. It provides a positive way to stay involved in your children's lives and creates memories to share with them as they get older.



Read every day.

It doesn't matter what you read (books, magazines, comics, blogs), but make an effort to read, preferably something you enjoy, every single day. Your children will see you reading and they will become more interested in reading along and with you. Hopefully you will enjoy it, too!

Read words aloud to your children.

When you're out and about together, sound out the name of your street and point to the sign; when you're eating breakfast, do the same with words on the cereal box. This can help children learn new words, connect

words with how they're written, and understand spelling concepts.

Think of reading or storytelling as a bonding experience.

You can start talking to them during their first weeks of life. As you read to them, ask questions about the story (e.g., "Why did Jack do that?" "How many birds do you see in that picture?"). Young children love hearing the same story over



Tips for Practitioners: Talking with Fathers about Early Child Development and Parenting Skills



Gardner Wiseheart, M.A.

Managing Partner
Southwest Partnership
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May 22, 2019





The Importance of Father/Child Interaction

- What it is
- Why it's important
- How to assess it
- How to promote it and help dads build on their strengths



Defining Terms

- **Father-Child Interaction:**
 - All the little exchanges that go on between father and child.
 - Examples:
 - Smiling, cooing, talking, playing, picking baby up, soothing crying baby, changing diapers.
- **Father-Child Relationship:**
 - The result of those interactions.
 - The overall connections and feelings that dads and children have for each other.



Why It's Important

Those early relationships influence a child's

- Ability to trust
- Feelings of self
- Perceptions of the world
- Social relationships
- Brain development



Assessing Father/Child Interaction

C-H-E-E-E-R-S

CUES

Does Dad recognize and respond sensitively?

HOLDING

Quality and frequency.

EXPRESSION

How much does Dad talk to the child?

EMPATHY

Does Dad recognize child's emotional states?

ENVIRONMENT

Is Dad interested in and supportive of child's development?

RHYTHMICITY/RECIPROCITY

Are they "dancing?"

SMILES

Is there joy and love in the interactions?



Promoting Father/Child Interaction

Examples of Activities and Tools

See the following resources from the *Maps for Dads* curriculum:

- Just the Facts Jack
- Bonding with Your Baby
- Crying
- CHEEERS

Note:

These resources are available for free download via the NRFC's Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit and the Downloadable Resources box for today's webinar. Links to these documents are also provided on page two of today's Helpful Resources list.



Home Visit Record

- Interaction Observed
- Strengths
- Areas for Improvement
- Plans for Next Visit



Developmental Screening Tools

- To help parents with questions about where their children are developmentally, I recommend screening tools such as the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire*.
- This is available for a fee from [agesandstages.com](https://www.agesandstages.com), but you can find free tools elsewhere.



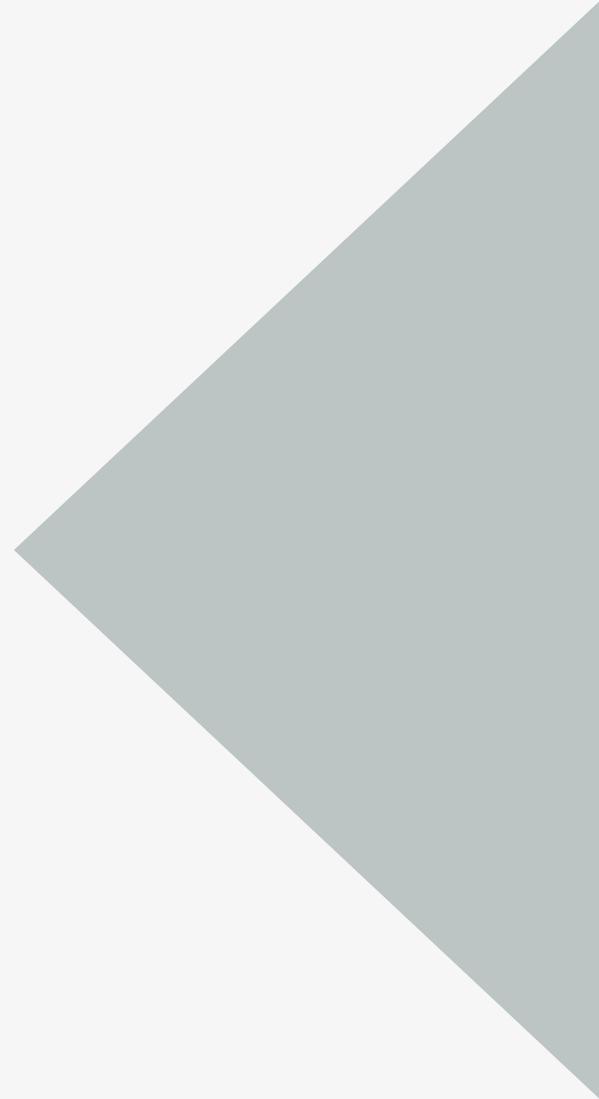
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John Badalament
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May 22, 2019





Reflecting on Gardner's Presentation

Some Key Themes

- Micro-moments are the foundation of father/child relationships.
 - Practitioners can help dads understand this and other key concepts
 - Then the task is to equip them to act on their new understanding.
- Babies come wired for connection.
 - They seek connection with the people in their world.
- Father/child connection has a fundamental impact on how a child feels.
- An engaged and understanding father sends a powerful message to his child:
 - **“In this relationship, you matter.”**



Reflection for Practitioners:

What Do We Bring to This Work?

- To maintain open-minded attitudes, we must develop an awareness of our own biases.
 - E.g., our first impressions of how fathers look, dress, or talk.
- We should all be aware of how our own experiences (including how we were fathered) impact our beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.



Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) Fatherhood Prenatal Care Obstetrics Survey Research with Expecting Fathers

THE STUDY

Fathers of all socio-economic statuses (SEs) wanted to be involved:

900+

fathers participated over 2 periods of two-weeks, one of the largest antenatal fatherhood studies in the U.S.

85%

of men approached were willing to take the 15-minute, two-part survey in the OB waiting room.



MGH Fatherhood Prenatal Care Obstetrics

Survey Research with Expecting Fathers

Significant Findings

High SES fathers:

- Higher anxiety.
- Higher stress related to becoming fathers.
- Higher rates of binge drinking.

Low SES fathers:

- Higher depression.
- Higher rates of obesity.
- Higher rates of smoking.



The Impact Engaged Dads Have On Children: Dads Need To Know They Matter*

- Fathers who are engaged in their children's lives early are more likely to remain involved.
- Fathers' active participation and emotional engagement leads to improved outcomes for their children throughout their lives:
 - Cognitively
 - Behaviorally
 - Emotionally
 - Physically

*Sarkadi A., Kristiansson R., Oberklaid F., and Bremberg S. (2008). *Fathers' Involvement and Children's Developmental Outcomes: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies*. ACTA PAEDIATRICA 97(2):153-8.



Being Intentional As A Parent: Dad's Vision Statement

Imagine 20 years from now:

- Your child is interviewed for a documentary film about their relationship with you:
 1. What do you hope they would say?
 2. What do you hope they wouldn't say?
 3. Write down a Parenting Goal that you can work towards over the next few weeks or months.
 4. What are three Action Steps you can take to accomplish this goal?



Developing Emotionally-Connected Relationships: Know and Be Known

Parental Knowledge

- How much fathers know about their children's daily experiences, whereabouts, and companions.
 - Is a key protective factor against many risks and poor outcomes, including drug use, depression, and low academic performance.
- Is not just about monitoring, which becomes difficult as children get older.
- Rather, it's about:
 - Maintaining relationship, trust, and two-way communication.
 - Developing a sense of closeness and connection between father and child early on is critical.



Promoting Father/Child Interaction

Examples of Activities and Tools

See the following resources from *The Modern Dad's Dilemma*:

- The Modern Dads Quiz
 - How well do you know your child?
- Dads and Kids Quiz Cards
 - How well do you know each other?
- The Relationship Check-up (ages 5 – 8)
- Four Key Ways to Build a Secure Attachment with your Child

Note: These resources are available to download today from the Downloadable Resources box. The Modern Dads Quiz is also available for free download via the NRFC's Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit and a link provided on page two of today's Helpful Resources list.



Modern Dads Quiz

Sample Questions

1. Name one accomplishment or milestone your child reached recently.
2. What are your child's favorite sounds or words?
3. What foods does your child like/dislike?
4. Describe one challenge your child overcame recently.
5. Name two things that scare or frighten your child.



Dads and Kids Quiz Cards:

How Well Do You Know Each Other?

Quiz for Dads

1. What recent accomplishment is your CHILD most proud of?
2. What are your CHILD'S current prized possessions?
3. Describe one thing your CHILD has done in school in the past week.
4. Describe a recent disappointment in your CHILD'S life.
5. What does your CHILD like to do with you?

Quiz for Kids

1. What recent accomplishment is your DAD most proud of?
2. What are your DAD'S current prized possessions?
3. What are two of your DAD'S hobbies or interests?
4. Describe a recent disappointment in your DAD'S life.
5. What does your DAD like to do with you?



The Relationship Check-up (ages 5-8)

Sample Questions

Questions about me

1. A really important friend to me is _____ because _____
2. I think my friends like me because _____
3. Two things I like about school (CHILD) or work (PARENT) are _____
4. If I could change one thing about school (CHILD) or work (PARENT), I would _____

Questions about us

1. Two things I like about myself are _____ and _____
2. Two things I like about you are _____ and _____
3. Something I'm very good at is _____
4. Something I think you're very good at is _____
5. Something I wish we could do together is _____



Ritual Dad-Child Time: Building Time

Research finding:

The more time children spent alone with their fathers, the higher their self-esteem. They also had fewer delinquent behaviors and were less likely to give in to peer pressure.*

Tips for Creating Ritual Dad-Child Time

- Introduce the idea of spending special time together once per month.
- Be consistent (even if it's only one hour each month).
- Having a regular day and time is ideal.
- Follow the child's interest in choosing what you do.
- Emphasize what's most important is being together, not what you do.
- Try to minimize distractions, such as devices/screens.
- Reflect, alone or with your child, on what's working and what may need to change.

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Q&A

Please submit your questions in the Q&A box at the bottom-right of your screen.



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Contact Us

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- Help@FatherhoodGov.info
- Comments, questions, suggestions for future webinar topics, information or resources that you recommend.

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