



**Father
& Child**

Why Dads?

**NZ's Best Father's News
Parenting, Research
Real Kiwi and
New Dad Stories**

Why Dads?

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Foreword

Dear Parents,

It may still be argued that children can get all they need from one parent. This may be possible, but it probably leans on help from other mentors and a community or is likely to result in one exhausted parent. Modern science has found that a good bond with both parents sets a child up for life.

From early pregnancy and first parenting months, an involved father can help, support or arrange to meet the needs of both the mother and child. A fully informed dad is vital to recovery from a tricky birth or through relationship changes and perinatal adjustment.

Men are prewired to be caring parents and children benefit immensely from the ways dads are different. From a child's earliest days and in their teenage years, dads add extras, whakapapa understanding, family traditions and helping expand their children's self-esteem.

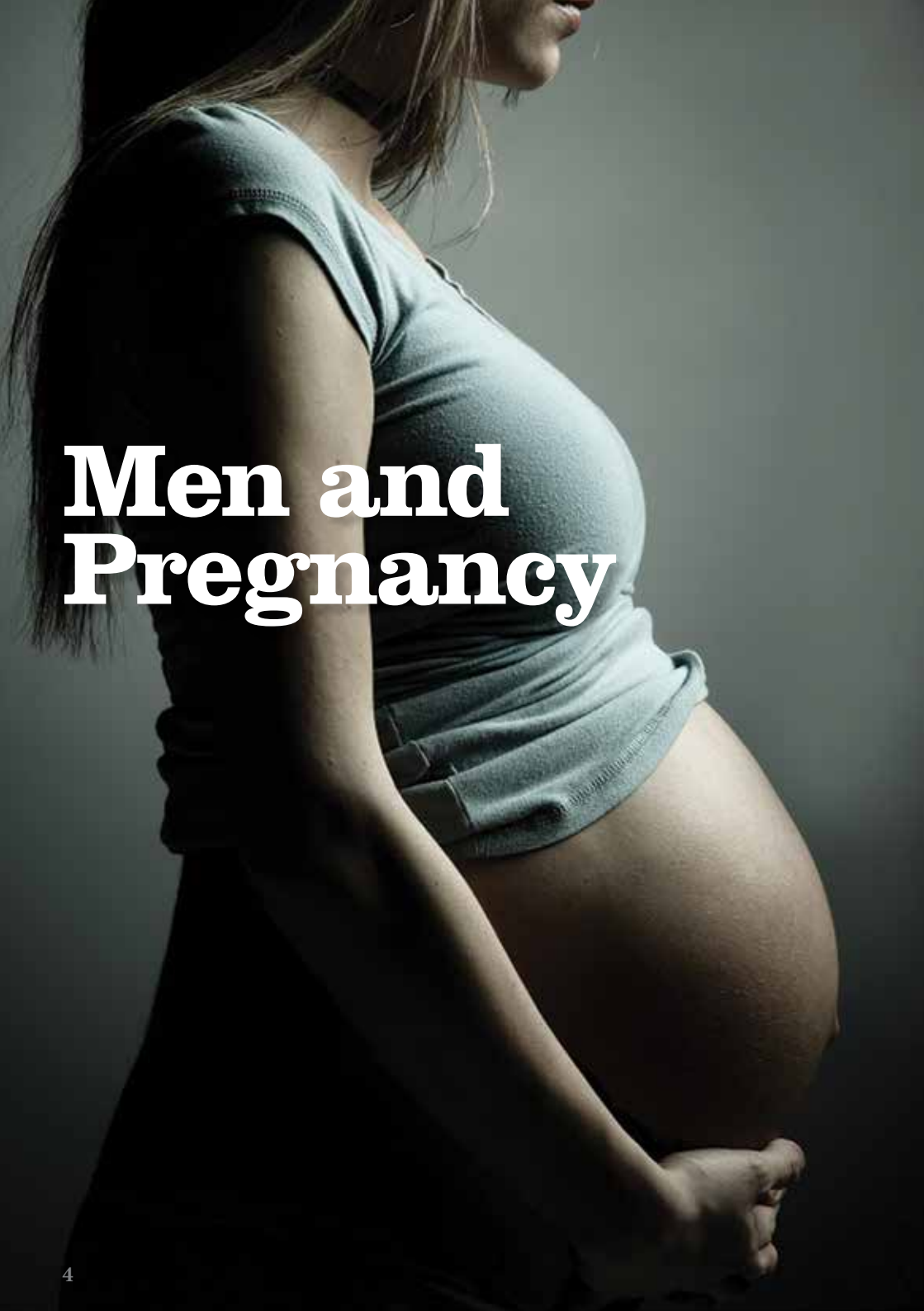
Dads play different and often with physical contact, bringing healthy connection and in the form of tickle or play fights, vital skills in resourcefulness, understanding strength and developing resilience.

Quantity of time nurturing counts, but dads can be providers or focus on quality time too. For investment in a child's productivity, the model of at least one happy, successful parent is paramount.

With the rise in support needs for our modern teenagers, we have to consider strategies to improve outcomes for all children. Mothers or family support workers may decide how much dad time a baby gets, but they should not deprive babies of vital development play or a father's involved support.

We hope this resource helps mums, dads, families and professionals to inform and encourage great fathers. Good outcomes for mothers and children probably depend on one.

Brendon Smith
Father and Child Trust
Auckland, August 2011



Men and Pregnancy

Men who have children as part of a loving, probably living together relationship, hopefully find out about any potential pregnancy as soon as possible. In the event of any awkward decisions, if fully informed, a man can confirm his position and contribute.

Prior to conception, men should know that they are more vulnerable than mothers to pollutants, including drugs which may affect the baby.

In the event of a termination, miscarriage or unexpected loss during that risky first trimester, a supportive father can help the mother by being a caring, listening and considerate partner.

Once a pregnancy is in full swing, the fun really begins. Mothers experience this major transition, from independent individual to 24hr support provider for another person, over a few months. This transition travels a random route for fathers.

If expecting fathers are included in midwife visits, able to attend early scans and related meetings, this may help.

During the last trimester, if the expecting dad feels a kick or a movement in utero, for him, it could be – hey presto, we are dad!

Most dads eventually come around to the fact that their life will change, how dramatically will depend on the dad. More often than not, fatherhood will hit them like a brick, possibly during labour.

If the labour and birth are not straightforward, according to experts, an informed and supportive father is beneficial to mum's recovery.

Dads will understand some of the obvious changes in 'the relationship' with their partner, like a longer than usual abstinence period and babies assuming ownership of the breasts, but fathers should also talk about support, hormones and parenting roles, especially if they work full time.

Dads should abstain from drinking or smoking around their partners during pregnancy, also through breastfeeding, perhaps even take an interest in mum's diet or exercise needs.

Did You Know? Dads hormones change too!

Men's lack of awareness of how their 'relationship' changes around baby time is increasingly recognised as a factor in relationship break-ups.

Having a first child is a major transition in both the man's and the woman's life, their family dynamic is altered forever and in many cultures this has high spiritual relevance with important rituals.

Changes in the relationships of new mothers and fathers may be based on:

- their ideas of themselves as a parent and their roles
- expectations of their partner, as a parent and in that role
- the expecting mothers support and/or antenatal health

Couples should discuss these vital clues, for their own Co-Pregnancy – Co Parenting partnership.

However, our ideas of what constitutes a good girlfriend or boyfriend are not necessarily the same...

Relationship changes during pregnancy

Men's lack of awareness of the changes in the relationship that having a baby brings about is increasingly recognised as an important factor in relationship break-ups.

Having a first child is a major transition in both a man's and a woman's life, and in many cultures has high spiritual relevance.

The change in the relationship between their mother and father is triggered by:

- their parents' ideas about themselves as father or mother,
- their parents' expectations on the other as a father or mother,
- their and the expecting mother's higher physical support needs.

Our ideas of a good girlfriend or boyfriend are not necessarily the same as our ideas about a good mum or a good dad. What we expect from those roles changes how we see the person we have possibly lived with for years. For men it may be the first time that they held anything back from their partner, for fear of upsetting them during a time when she is fragile.

Many expecting mums become quite assertive about their needs during pregnancy, and are encouraged to be. Coupled with a man's sense of responsibility for his partner this may lead to a relationship no longer being mutually supportive, but becoming a bit more like a one-way street. For men this can have devastating effects, if their partner has been their only emotional support so far, as is so often the case in Western culture relationships.

Traditional male support networks, such as working men's clubs, sports clubs, or even the evening in the pub, have broken down in many communities, or they include mixed-gender situations, which can make it difficult for a man to talk about relationship issues without appearing disloyal in front of women.

Support and information for both parents during pregnancy helps. Yet, because so much attention is focused on the mother, and as she has such obvious needs, dads are even less likely to receive outside support than in other life situations, and more likely to feel guilty about asking for such support in the first place.

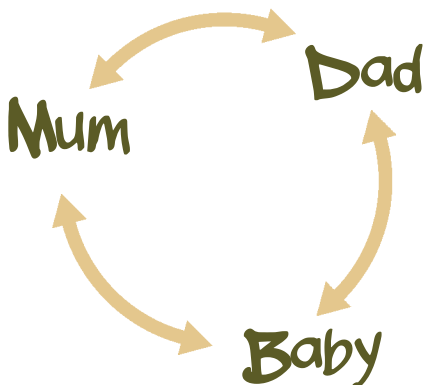
Men also often cannot see the difference between their relationship to their partner and to their baby. It can be said that while a mother has individual relationships to her partner and to each of her children, a man has a relationship with his family. Her actions will be directed towards what she sees as being best for the individual child or her partner, his actions towards the wellbeing of the family as a whole.

Fathers may feel they are doing a good job if they can provide their partner and child with choices: career opportunities for mum that do not arise from financial necessity, a safe “nest”, opportunities for activities as a family, and for quality childcare or education.

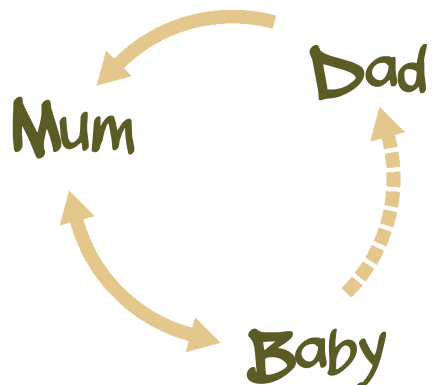
While this attitude was useful at a time when a provider/caregiver split in men’s and women’s roles existed, it can be counterproductive in modern situations. It can lead to role confusion and adjustment issues in situations where the father is either the main caregiver, or spends significant time with the children due to shift work or self-employment.

Relationships After Childbirth:

How SHE sees it...



and how HE sees it...



Dads can help during pregnancy

- Be a caring, listening and considerate partner
- Abstain from drinking or smoking anywhere near pregnant mums or babies.
- Support your partner's diet or exercise needs
- Attend ante-natal classes or discussions
- Talk to baby, softly through the last weeks
- Be informed about birth expectations and a partner's labour pain control preferences.
- If at work, arrange support for your partner
- Understand the coming relationship changes
- Understand your partner's hormone and mood swings!
- Buy a bassinet and paint baby's room, quick!
- Organise a celebration, christening or naming day, but ensure the clean-up is not mum's job!



Dads and Babies

Father's role at birth is a much discussed topic lately.

Dads have been welcomed into maternity wards during birth for many decades. Some cultures may provide directions but most times the expecting mother's request prevails.

Either way, dads should be allowed to hold and see baby immediately if safe, share the precious first moments with their partner and if possible, touch skin.

How babies experience birth is probably not as important as how calm both parents remain during those sometimes crazy first few months. Things usually get better around 3 months, with baby sleeping well and most of mum's recovery complete.

Provider responsibilities consume many a new-born father, hopefully they prioritise time to be involved with baby and arrange plenty of support for their new-born mum.

Early father-baby bonding ensures a lifelong involved relationship.

Fathers give babies an early experience of masculine: ie, body, behaviour, manner, thinking, action, energy, play, voice, smell etc. This builds understanding and potential for skill at handling, or at least co-existing with around half of the world's population.

Children and babies themselves put importance on 'real' fathers, ie, blood or genetic, as part of establishing where they come from, their identity, whakapapa.

Dads with new babies can...

- Be at the birth, support their partner to hold and treasure baby
- Support new-born mother and baby heaps, especially in the first few months
- Understand the gradual changes and slow recovery of their new-born mums
- Enjoy bonding, including lots of skin-to-skin
- Support breast-feeding, as long as possible
- Change nappies, get baby ready for feed-time
- Help with bath-time, hold baby in the water
- Stimulate baby with funny faces, noises, play.
- Take care of baby, give mum a break.
- Play peek-a-boo and hidey-go-seek!
- Gently fly baby on airplane rides...!

A photograph of a man and a young child standing on a beach, looking out at the ocean. The man is on the left, wearing a light blue t-shirt and khaki shorts, with his back to the camera. The child is on the right, wearing a black t-shirt and a purple cap, also with their back to the camera. The ocean is a deep blue, and the sky is a lighter blue. The title 'Dads love Toddlers' is overlaid on the right side of the image in a large, white, serif font.

Dads love Toddlers

Dads can all be just like mums in caring for a baby, cuddling, nurturing and gently protecting. In front of mums, dads are similar, safe and probably stay within the play limits set by mothers.

If mothers are absent, dads play different! They introduce their own aspects of safe play and learn.

Dads test their children, move and hold them in different ways, play tricks on children by introducing silly aspects to obvious games, check whether the children are aware of other influences, introduce play fights, opening and challenging children's physical and emotional development.

A huge part of child development involves touch, through this connection children experience acceptance, love and tenderness. Through tickle or gentle play fights, girls especially experience healthy touch and acceptance. Through hugs with both parents, children experience connection with their wider world, right throughout their childhoods.

In slightly risky or even dangerous or rough play, dads encourage awareness or feelings of thrill and skill that empower and stimulate children. Rough play helps boys measure their strength, without hurting anyone, while girls get mild knocks, which helps build their resilience.

Adaptive and resourcefulness skills progress with these sorts of games. Such expectations dads place on children may generate early sport achievements or aspects of creativity.

Dads introduce problem solving, tests and tricks into games and play. Gentle play-fights help develop resourceful, resilient children.

Dads love Toddlers

- Dads introduce problem solving, tests and tricks into games and play.
- Fathers build positive self-esteem that originates from a man. Failure to do this can make the young adult feel uneasy when around men, or uneasy being a man.
- For sons, understanding of father is critical for a solid positive identity. Fathers need to touch children in affirming and nonsexual ways. For both sons and daughters, sex and affection may become confused if they do not. Touching develops greater personal love and respect for children's bodies and a sense of being connected to men. Boys especially need hugging and holding by men and women.
- Children of an involved father develop a sense of adventure and confidence in their world. Fathers encourage big picture views and community driven action in children.
- Dad time appears to have an important connection with the outdoors and wild places.

A close-up photograph of a man with short dark hair, looking down at a baby he is holding. The baby is wearing a red jacket and has light-colored hair. They are outdoors, with a blurred background of trees and autumn foliage in warm tones. The title 'Dads and Discipline' is overlaid in large, bold, red letters with a white outline.

Dads and Discipline

‘Wait till your father gets home!’ says the mum, after she has been running the household, nurturing the young ones and providing unconditional love.

With their distance and time away from the children, objective views and more rigid behaviour boundaries, fathers or full-time working mothers can often bring a better sense of justice and perspective to the complexities of parenting.

Consistency over time and unique appraisal for each child or incident brings order and reason to the multitude of developmental stages in every child’s life, plus it gives mothers a break!

- The involved father’s guidance imparts a sense of internal structure, order and discipline. Children need focus and direction in a world that lacks balance and boundary.
- Fathers often demonstrate more rigid boundaries than mothers, this may especially help boys or challenging girls as regularity in discipline engenders trust and security.
- For daughters it is important to learn how to relate to a man in a safe, confident, affirming and boundary-setting manner. Loving approval from a father may prevent dependence and vulnerability in her relationships with men.
- Fathers regular healthy touch and boundary setting helps teach daughters to deal safely with men’s sexuality.



Dads and Learning

From the earliest days, the different types of stimulation dads provide will enhance and expand the nature of their children's experiences. Dads are less verbal and encourage risk taking.

While it is said that children get their intelligence from their mothers, now most stay-at-home parents are women, it could also be said that children get more worldliness from dads.

Fathers in the past were usually in charge of children's education, coming home from work to check homework and measure performance. Modern dads give objective, accurate feedback and praise.

- From six weeks, babies know to expect play from dads, by age two they develop physical strength, activity and problem solving skills, play fights help manage excitement and decipher emotions.
- For more gentle children, fathers help develop physical activity with safety strategies and rules.
- Fathers can show how to manage aggression, anger and frustration through well managed, rules based, rough play. Emotions and feelings are more freely expressed and earlier understood.
- Children may get self-esteem or approval from dad time that helps them to get on with life...
- Fathers can add to a mother's experiences and influences, provide multiple benchmarks, expose children to different work places, practices, connections and relationships.
- Children who are raised with involved fathers tend to score higher on measures of verbal and mathematical abilities, plus demonstrate greater problem-solving and social skills.



Provider Dads

Working fathers have to juggle work with quality parenting time, and love their child's mother!

Some fathers spend as little as 5 minutes a day actually talking/listening with their children.

Take every opportunity to pick up/drop off your children.

Introduce other adults into their lives as mentors.

Holiday with families who have similar age kids.

Play games or enjoy idle time with your children.

Encourage independence – the more you do for your children, the more you disable them.

Tell your children stories, include a few about what you were doing, at their age.

Give children most of your first ten minutes when you're home!

Ask questions and listen hard!!

Some dads are driven to success at the cost of everything around them, thus some kids are more driven to success due to absence of father's time, inherent acceptance and love, which means dads who work too much, may also make kids more driven and successful.

Well researched papers have been presented that support the need for two parents, eg...

- In a 2004 study by the National Council on Family Relations, researchers noted that adolescents living outside two-biological-parent married families tend to exhibit more behavioural and emotional problems” and are “significantly less engaged in school.”
- A study published in the February 2007 issue of the Journal of Population Economics notes: “There is longstanding evidence that youths raised by single parents are more likely to perform poorly in school and partake in ‘deviant’ behaviors such as smoking, sex, substance use, and crime.
- A February 2006 study by the University of Maryland’s Population Research Center found strong links between a father’s residence with his children and their well-being. While the authors expected to find that well-being was higher overall for children when their fathers lived with them, they seemed surprised when the evidence indicated it was higher still when the father was committed enough to be married to the children’s mother, the finding that the legal relationship between the parents is also linked to child well-being is a relatively new and important discovery.”
- Kyle Pruett, in his book *Fatherhood*, shows the effects of father attitude to care on a child’s development. After considering dozens of potential influences, such as social class, economic and marital circumstances, birth order, and gender of children, Pruett concludes that a father’s attitudes toward and behavioral sensitivity to the care of his children have a more positive influence on the child’s socio-emotional development than the total amount of time spent in interaction with the child.
- Researchers such as Elizabeth Gould of Princeton University are discovering indications that fatherhood may increase the nerve connections in the region of a man’s brain that controls certain types of goal-oriented behavior, including planning and foresight, judgment, and the prediction of behavioral consequences. The bottom line? The closer the relationship between father and child, the better it is for both—now and in the future.

Postnatal depression – partner's perspective

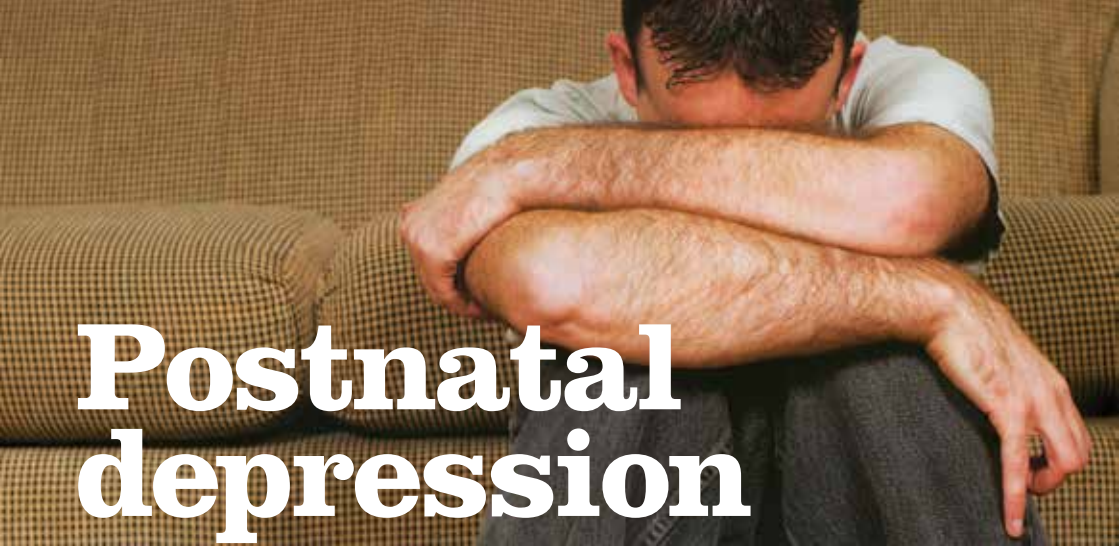
Fathers can be affected by postnatal depression directly or indirectly. Where they are affected indirectly (through their partner's depression) common issues are:

- Not knowing how to help a partner through her depression,
- Attempts to help or diagnose are frustrated or met with evasion.
- Disappointment: a father expects a baby to be a joyful event, and a happy time. He may feel his partner does not share the idea.
- Partner's anxieties 'rub off' on him and he feels agitated but not sure why.
- Feeling overwhelmed by responsibilities, partly by partner's altered needs and functionality.

A father may have long days at work and feel he has the baby thrown into his arms as soon as he comes home. Some fathers may go without sleep, or come home after a nightshift to a partner that does not seem to be coping and take over baby anyway.

His ability to function as a parent may be reduced due to pressure.

His reaction to a complaint may be direct and confrontational, not meaning to offend his partner, but needing an answer or solution to issues rather than just hearing the emotion. Some understanding about listening empathetically may improve reactions. Mothers may have to be careful not to dismiss the good things dads contribute



Postnatal depression in fathers

Fathers can suffer from postnatal depression themselves. According to some studies postnatal depression is as common in men as in women (20-30% of all births). At the core of such adjustment problems for men are often:

- Uncertainty about their role (how much or how little does their partner want help)
- Mixed messages about his role from friends, family, media
- Own understanding of fatherhood not matching expectations
- Bonding with baby is frustrated by an exclusive mother-baby bond
- He may feel he is not earning enough to make him useful enough
- Reality different from expectations, initial relationship with the baby
- Feeling 'trapped' in the family, i.e. loss of emotional attention from partner, no real gain in emotional attention from offspring may make a father perceive family life as unrewarding, while at the same time social pressures prevent him from doing other things he might enjoy
- Unable to help or resolve problems with his partner, as if a failure
- Trapped in relationship he was unsure about, even if a keen father
- Not recognising or foreseeing signs of depression in his partner

A father may also crash or burn when his partner begins to recover from a trauma birth, PND themselves or even mild PTSD, especially as the events of the past months catch up with him.

He may feel guilty spending any time on himself, or waiting for the depression to be over so that they can get on with happy family life...

Either way he needs support as a parent and as a partner.

The birth of a baby, especially the first baby, is a time of great changes which both partners need to adjust to. There are major changes in the relationship of parents to each other, which can be a substantial contributing factor to the depression in either or both partners. It makes sense to involve both, men and women, in the postnatal relationship adjustment or counselling process.

If a mother becomes enrolled in a programme for the treatment of postnatal depression, the father should be given information about the programme as well as general resources about father support.

This plays a role in thinking about how the father sees himself in the relationship and in relation to the child. A worker dealing with the mother most should also try to establish a relationship with the father. This is to keep an eye on the father's own mental health, and it may also aid the depressed mother by giving her the feeling that her family is in need, not just her in isolation.

Where parents are separated, establishing contact with the father may also be useful, unless this would distress the mother even further. Running a partner evening can go a long way in establishing a support network for the fathers.

For a part of the evening the group should be split in men and women, and the male group facilitated by another man. Relationship issues can then be discussed more easily in the reunited group between men and women.

Questions you may ask a father with a postnatally depressed partner, or when facilitating a men's group during a postnatal depression programme:

- What is it like to come home from work at the moment?
- Does she appreciate your efforts to help?
- How do you feel about having a baby?
- Are you worried about baby?
- Do you know what to do to help her out of her PND?
- Do you want to know more about postnatal depression?

Research papers continued...

Kyle Pruett makes several suggestions to help men develop a strong connection with their children. "What I mean by fathering is involved fathering," he writes. "This is male behavior beyond insemination that promotes the well-being and healthy development of one's child and family in active ways."

Then, with the caveat that "a list of behaviors can't possibly encompass all important aspects of fathering," he names a few of the "everyday characteristics" of an involved father:

1. Feeling and behaving responsibly toward one's child
2. Being emotionally engaged
3. Being physically accessible
4. Providing material support to sustain the child's needs
5. Exerting influence in child-rearing decisions

Loving involvement requires more than words. A father must be plugged in to the daily operation of his family so he can clearly see his children's needs. It is increasingly evident that fathers can't sit on the sidelines or let mothers parent alone.

Are fathers necessary? Based on the statistics, the right type of father is in high demand. In fact, loving, engaged and committed fathers are perhaps more important than ever before.

No man is perfect. The first thing a dad should realize is that you cannot be a perfect parent in all aspects but he can try to be a good one. We all commit mistakes but we should learn from our mistakes and the mistakes of others and better ourselves.

- So, how to be a good father to your children?
- How to be a father your kids would be proud of?
- What are the traits or qualities one should develop to be a good father?

I am sure many men would want to know the answers to the questions so that they can develop those characteristics.

Long term benefits of an active, involved father...

Few parents would now argue that single-parenting is ideal. While some single parents do great jobs, they probably find it exhausting.

An impressive body of research suggests that fathers and mothers make different though equally important contributions to the healthy development of children and that neither parent is dispensable.

At Father and Child Trust we often refer to the H and X of kids.

Boys need to watch and copy dads to learn how to be a man and especially how to behave in front of women. Boys also need mums to learn approximately how to have a relationship with a woman.

Girls need to watch and copy mums to learn how to be a woman and especially how to behave in front of men. Girls also need dads around to learn and practice how to have a relationship with a man.

- The love a girl gives to her dad, is her first test of whether her love will one day win her a good man.
- Fathers interrupt that intensity between the mother and the child, which builds more individuality.
- Fathers double the extended family and this can teach families to work together in common cause.

Long term benefits of an active, involved father...

- For a son, a trusted and affirming father prevents unhealthy dependence on, or use of women for approval, identity, companionship and support.
- For both boys and girls, love and dependency can be confused without a father.
- Fathers tend to promote a sense of risk-taking and excitement in children.
- Fathers often trick their children, test them, plus they expend physical exercise.
- Fathers often demonstrate a respectful, loving and equal relationship with a woman.
- Fathers can back up mothers and demonstrate affection and respect for women.
- Fathers can support mothers in giving each child two parents to listen to them, watch and interact with.
- Mothers and fathers demonstrate through their modelling how to have happy, respectful relationships.

A report from Warwick Pudney and others called, "Fathering our City" for Waitakere City in 2004 collated information on needs and statistics for New Zealand on fatherlessness. We gratefully acknowledge their work and parts of the report that have been used in this publication.

A photograph of a man and a young boy sitting together. The man is on the left, looking towards the right. The boy is on the right, looking towards the camera. They are both wearing dark clothing. The background is dark and out of focus.

Dads and Manhood

- Fathers show it is manly to have feelings and express them.
- Fathers can teach respect for other males or kaumatua.
- Fathers can show love from a man, in a world that objectifies men as workers, protectors and power objects.
- Children want and need to be loved by their fathers. Sons particularly need the guidance and the strength of the father to help them direct their own strength.
- Fathers are expected to protect the family when needed and are by nature, expected to be willing to die for their children or for the mother of their children.
- Fathers, cross-culturally assume a role as a primary providers for their families and as the most influential models of men in a child's life, they have the opportunity to change the next generation for the benefit of society.

Fathers...

- Bring a physical strength, rigour and durability.
- Can model support of cultural or religious rules.
- Often give confidence that things can be fixed
- Affirm endeavour and physical achievement.

Dads and Self-esteem

Accuracy and uniqueness are vital aspects to giving praise.

Over use of approving acceptances may end up impeding motivation.

Specific endorsements and careful feedback on areas to improve are far better than general praise or a simple pass mark.

Catch your kids, as well as others, being good, and praise them.

Praise their effort, special details and use constructive ideas.

Reward determination, enterprise and initiative as well as results.

From the age of six, boys especially take notice of their dads.

Make sure each of your children think they are most important.

Spend quality time each week with your teenage daughter,

know her dreams and her best friends.

Know that your adolescent boy will learn most things by osmosis, that is by just being around his father, he will absorb behaviours.

Show affection, hold and cuddle your kids, play tickle fights!

Hang out with your kids as long as they let you.

Tell your daughter she is beautiful, clever and sweet, every day.

Listen to your children's issues, stories, sadness, anger, fears or joy.

Fathers who support their children emotionally tend to raise children who are more in-tune with the needs of others.

Active fathers help children's self-esteem by being fully involved in their lives and letting them know that they are highly valued.

Dads and Daughters

You only need to tell your daughter she is beautiful, clever and nice, every day. Psychiatrist Frank Pittman says in 'Women and Their Fathers' by Victoria Secunda, "When it comes to little girls, God the father has nothing on father, the god.

This is an awesome responsibility." Daddy is usually the first man a little girl loves and learns to relate to. How Dad responds to her, and how he encourages her, may form the basis of how she will relate to all men in her family, relationships and work domains throughout her life.

A girl feels abandonment, betrayal and anger when she is denied a close connection to her father. Unless adequately dealt with, they will plague her young and adult years. A girl who has close physical proximity to a dad, but little emotional connection may be just as confused.

Daughters want dads who can show feelings; who nurture; who adjust to a daughters continually changing emotions or transition to womanhood; dads who, according to Victoria Secunda, "walk the thin line between too much closeness and too much distance".

Dads are expected to be an actively involved parent and demonstrate a healthy marriage. A father who displays affection, respect, and a true partnership with his wife provides an incredible example that his daughter will want to mirror in her own life.

When a father fully and wholeheartedly supports his daughter, she will develop strong self-esteem and a positive self-image. Without having to agree to everything, a dad's unconditional love allows girls to take risks, make the odd mistake, but know they will still be protected and cared for.

Dads need to be role models in many ways, girls will refer to their father's values in all major life decisions. In being accountable for actions and demonstrating love by being available, dads deliver genuine self-esteem which helps their daughters to choose good husbands.

Dads who spend a few hours every week in idle chat with their daughter, know her best friends and her main dreams, may end up producing good women and great mothers.



Solo Dads

Solo dads are the fastest growing share of the parenting sector. Around one in six solo parents is a dad and according to NZ Census 2006, as they grow older, there are more solo dads than mums.

In early Britain, it is said that many children spent a part of their childhood in homes where dad was the only surviving parent. Oldest siblings, aunties and nannies filled the gaps in childbirth survival. The percentage of solo dads in NZ has stayed reasonable steady at 16-17% for over thirty years.

Solo dads who saw Father and Child around 2009 said, 'someone to talk to' and parenting support, along with 'help with work' are top of their wish lists. Most felt that their kids were happy, but around half said they would not be solo dads if they had a choice. They also asked for a fathers' newsletter, a drop in centre for dads, a support group and/or ways to meet other dads.

Solo dads have very similar needs to solo mums, they ask for support less and are often isolated by a combination of inevitable and avoidable issues. Dads may not easily fit in to coffee groups as group dynamics change, while parenting agencies may not actively invite dads due to policy.

Many solo dads are in high risk, young parenting situations with low money and education. These dads need even more support to ensure their children are not missing out. Most solo dads of young children had lived with the children's mother previously, so may be dealing with loss issues.

Warren Farrell quotes in a US study that academic outcomes for children of solo dads was higher than for solo mums, probably due to the commitment and focus most dads bring to their role.

We know that many solo dads do a fantastic job with little or minimal help, developing great children and hopefully leaving a legacy of parenting mentorship for generations to come.

Shared Care Dads

Fathers who are forced into a new arrangement or even a lifetime of shared-care, struggle into a mode that's almost the opposite of what fathers want to be, available, protective and dependable. It is harder to make shared care work if it is imposed on parents who are highly conflicted.

Parents who willingly agree to a shared-care deal are typically older and continue to live in close proximity to one another. Their children tend to be of school age and their parenting relationship is co-operative, flexible and focused on their child's welfare. Outcomes are usually better here.

Children need to see and hear their parents co-operating about them, if not everything, with age appropriate child consultation and hopefully special time for each child.

Communication requires both parents to show respect to each other, in front of the child. When the children see and hear this, their self-esteem rises as they know their parents have but their issues below the children's needs. Abuse of a parent in front of a child, is abuse of half the child.

Parents should aim to agree on Guardianship decisions, early parenting mix, pre-school or ongoing medical needs, while children should be consulted on all possible subjects.

Good outcomes for children are more likely based on the quality of relationship between the parents than an even split of time with each parent. Dads need regular contact and kids need financial support – but Disneyland dads who are also soft on discipline create dependent children.

Quality time for shared care dads may be similar to that of provider dads who work too hard. Plan holidays with other kids and demand family friendly work conditions, including parental leave, flexible hours and work from home options.

Shared care dads who demonstrate respect for the children's mother, even in tricky circumstances, show that they know children need this. Dads who keep such promises help develop self-esteem immensely and keep children's faith in adults alive.

Resources...

Father & Child Magazine

Quarterly magazine published by:

Father & Child Trust,

PO Box 26040,

Christchurch.

Subscription: \$25 per year, also available in some bookstores and libraries. Covers parenting, real dads stories and fathers issues.

Dads and Babies Guide –

A5 Booklet for professionals who work with parents and families.

See **fatherandchild.org.nz** to subscribe or search old articles.



- **Active Movement DVDs from SPARC.org.nz**
Music, dance, exercise routines for parents of babies and toddlers.
- **21 Practical Alternatives to Smacking**
pdf file - google search via Barnardos
- **Parenting through Separation**
a free program at justice.govt.nz/family
- **SKIP Free strategies**
for kids and information for parents.

Call any Father and Child office for local services and latest resources.

further resources...

DVDs, Magazines and Booklets:



In Your Hands DVD by Greatfathers.org.nz

See the website for details of music, cartoons and real life interviews. Stars Tiki Taane, Sean Donnelly and Warren Maxwell. Visit the greatfathers.org.nz Toolbox for Dads page to learn all the trade secrets on great fathers...or Donate to order a DVD..!



Father & Child - New Babies Edition

by Father & Child Trust (2012)

An easy-to-read issue of Father & Child magazine specifically covering new-dads stories. (Free).

Internet resources:

Father & Child Trust's own web site, split into a general section and one for teen dads. Probably the most comprehensive site in New Zealand for parenting, research, and general issues for dads.

fatherandchild.org.nz

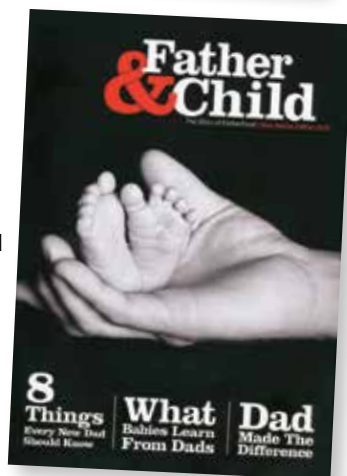
Research, studies around fathers.

DIYFather.com

Wellington based articles, tips and worldwide stories about dads. Books on fatherhood and mobile apps for dads.

www.fathersdirect.com

comprehensive UK Dads site also the hub of an international network of agencies, researchers and policy makers.



Absence of Dads

Things that may happen when Fathers are Absent:

1. Children may feel unprotected. There is increased risk of abuse from new partners, strangers and the mother. (Farrel, 2001)
2. Boys have more trouble with the police and law and anti-social behaviour. 90% of West Auckland police-involved youth are fatherless. (Police Interview Nov.2005)
3. Boys are more inclined to suicide and have poor mental health. Fatherless males are 5 times more likely to suicide. 63% of NZ youth suicides are from fatherless homes. (McCann 1999)
4. Boys will likely be more dependent on mothers. The intensified relationship can make adolescent separation more troublesome and adversarial.
5. Boys are likely to transfer that dependency to a woman partner.
6. Boys may lack the clear, more black and white boundaries that males tend to hold. Under-fathered men are more likely to be violent to their partners.
7. Under-fathered girls are more likely to become pregnant. (US and NZ, 2 to 8 times Ellis, 2003)
8. The under-fathered child is more likely to use drugs. Fatherless boys are 10 times more likely to abuse chemicals. (NZ McCann)
9. Fatherless boys may feel angry and cheated, uneasy around friendly adult males. Authority figures receive a lot of the projected anger felt for the absent father.
10. Truancy may increase. Fatherless boys are 71% of high school dropouts. (US 2001) and 9 times more likely to drop out of high school (NZ McCann 1999)
11. Fatherless boys are 20 times more likely to end up in prison. (McCann 1999)
12. Solo parent boys may feel a duty to be 'the man' of the house and may become prematurely adultified.
13. Poverty is more common in fatherless homes. Single parent families are 3 x more likely to experience poverty than a 2 parent home
14. Educational achievements may be reduced. 80% of referrals to Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour are Boys. (NZ 2009)
15. 90% of all homeless and runaway children come from fatherless homes. (Farrell US 2002)
16. There may be difficulty feeling confident while dealing with or around males in later life for both boys and girls.
17. Physical health, happiness and social skills may all be reduced, especially if father absence is linked to parental alienation.

Want to know more?

There is only so much you can cover in a resource like this. Father & Child Trust also offer staff or agency training:

- Best practice for working with two parents or involving non-residential fathers.
- Engaging With Fathers for Agencies like CYFs, Plunket and Barnardos
- Dad's influence in child development.

Father & Child Trust Information and support

- Expecting Dads – antenatal info and resources
- New/Young Dads – dads and early baby stories
- Trauma/PND Dads – understanding and support
- Solo/Separated Dads – advocacy and resolution
- All Dads – surprise dads, step-dads, special dads...
- Resources – Magazines, DVDs, booklets, web sites...
- Research – Teen fathers, solo dads, 'Westie' dads...
- Partnerships - with mothering or parenting groups
- Agencies - referrals, seminars and dad training!

Our Mission:

To provide fathers and their whanau/families with help, information and support, plus to improve fathers' access to family services.

enquiries@fatherandchild.org.nz



**Email: enquiries@fatherandchild.org.nz
fatherandchild.org.nz**

Father & Child Trust Auckland

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83 Church Street, Onehunga

auckland@fatherandchild.org.nz.

fatherandchild.org.nz/auckland

Drop In 10-2 work days, Father's Mauri Ora Circle Wednesdays 7-9pm at the Onehunga Community Center, downstairs from the library, behind C.A.B

New Born Fathers

Monthly Albany group seminars for new dads. Call Frank Hayes. Ph: 09-477-3764

Young Dads Groups

Auckland has regional groups in Waitakere, Auckland City, Glenn Innes, Otara and Manurewa

Contact: auckland@fatherandchild.org.nz for details

Union of Fathers

Get the help you need, support groups in: Hamilton, Hawke's Bay, Tauranga, Wellington.

Ph (07) 928 4323 or visit www.uof.org.nz for local meeting details.

Father & Child Trust Wellington

Phone Quentin (04) 909 7294. Email: q@fatherandchild.org.nz.

Nelson/Top of the South Island Neighbourhood Centre/Real Dads:

Counseling, separation and fathers issues.

Ph (03) 548 0403

Father & Child Trust Christchurch

Phone: (03) 982 2440, Fax: (03) 982 2441

1/369 Hereford Street, PO Box 26 040, North Avon

Email: enquiries@fatherandchild.org.nz

Father & Child Trust Dunedin

New group starting. Contact Graham Dewhirst

Ph (03) 476 64 63. Email: dewey@xtra.co.nz