



Updating Agencies, Professionals, and Individuals with Current Life Skills Information

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What Do Fathers Contribute to Children’s Well-Being?

As rates of divorce and nonmarital childbearing have increased in recent decades, the percentage of children and fathers who live apart from one another has also increased.

Children benefit from positive relationships with their fathers. Warmth, closeness, and nurturance are important aspects of a healthy parent-child relationship regardless of whether the parent is a mother or a father. Research also suggests that fathers contribute to their children’s healthy development in many ways that are unique from mothers. For example, in one study of young children’s cognitive development, fathers promoted their child’s intellectual development and social competence through physical play, whereas mothers promoted these skills through verbal expression and teaching activities.

Fathers can positively influence their children’s development by assuming a significant amount of the childcare task. For instance, in one study, preschool-age children whose fathers were responsible for 40 percent or more of the family’s child care tasks had higher scores on assessments of cognitive development, had more of a sense of mastery over their environments, and exhibited more empathy than those children whose fathers were less involved.

A father’s parenting style has implications for child well being. A warm but firm

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How Do Social, Economic, and Cultural Factors Influence Fathers’ Involvement with Their Children?

Socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural variations among fathers and differences in family structure may affect fathers’ roles and their level of involvement with their children.

Socioeconomic indicators such as education level have been found to be linked to father involvement.

National studies have consistently found strong links between socioeconomic status and fathers involvement. Two national studies found that fathers

with higher levels of education are more accessible to and engaged with their school-aged children

Fathers who are able to provide economically for their children are more likely to stay invested in their marriages or partner relationships, and are more likely to be engaged with and nurture their children—even if they live apart from their children.

Conversely, fathers who are unemployed or underemployed are more

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Social, Economic, and Cultural Factors (cont.)

likely to limit their involvement with their families.

Unemployed fathers are less likely to form families or assume responsibility for their children born outside of marriage.

Within a marriage, economic hardship can create a stressful and sometimes hostile environment, with men being the primary instigators of angry outbursts.

There is some evidence that daily participation in childcare is higher among fathers in lower-level white-collar jobs and professional jobs, and lower among self-employed fathers, fathers in blue-collar jobs, and those in middle or high management positions.

Bleak economic conditions may lead fathers to seek alternative ways to be involved with their children. A study of American Indian families found that fathers saw themselves more as protectors and disciplinarians of their children than as economic providers.

In another study, a group of extremely low-income African American fathers saw their main contribution to their children as being emotionally available to them, rather than providing their children with economic support.

Research has revealed variations in the amount and type of father involvement based on the racial/ethnic background of the father. It is important to keep in mind that some of these variations may reflect socioeconomic and residential status more than race or ethnicity.

Several national surveys have found that African American fathers who do not live with their children are more likely than their White or Hispanic counterparts to share in housework and child care tasks, participate in child rearing decisions, and visit their children.

African American fathers have been found less likely to read to their children, but are more likely than white fathers to play with their children.

Certain fathering roles seem to cross cultures. These include fathers as economic providers, protectors, caregivers, and teachers.

We still do not know much about the childrearing attitudes and practices of fathers in understudied groups (such as American Indians, Hispanics, Asians, recent immigrants, low-income whites, and middle income, married African Americans.)

Source: Child Trends, www.childtrends.org/r_indicato.asp

RESOURCES

Tackling the Tough Skills

If you work with hard-to-reach adults or teens, take a look at this new resource. Tackling the Tough Skills is fun, innovative and highly interactive. The curriculum was designed to help individuals transition from welfare-to-work, it's easily adaptable to a wide range of audiences, including adults and teens. This curriculum addresses attitude, responsibility, and commitment, as well as communication skills, conflict resolution, and problem solving.

For more information contact:

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University of Missouri Outreach and Extension
Phone: 314-615-7637
e-mail: TrottaR@missouri.edu
<http://outreach.missouri.edu/tough-life-skills>

Poverty at Issue: Making Ends Meet in Missouri

A Power Point presentation to use with individuals to demonstrate how far a minimum wage check goes to make ends meet. The presentation uses a budget sheet and recommended percentage of income for each line item. For additional information contact Brenda Procter, Assoc. State Specialist and Instructor, Consumer and Family Sciences, University of Missouri, (537-882-3820, phone), e-mail: procterb@missouri.edu

To download this presentation from the World Wide Web, go to: <http://outreach.missouri.edu/cfe/poverty/discuss.htm>

The PowerPoint presentation uses \$5¹⁵ per hour for the example. This is the federal minimum wage, which is different in some states. When you open up the presentation, you can modify it to meet your needs.



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Fathers Contribution to Children's Well-Being (cont.)

parenting style benefits children. In one study of preschoolers, boys whose fathers offered praise and compliments performed better on test of cognitive achievement than boys whose fathers were cool and aloof. In another study, fathers who were able to set appropriate limits for children and also give them sufficient autonomy had sons with higher academic achievement. In a latter study, fathers' use of harsh and inconsistent discipline had a negative effect on their son's emotional adjustment and classroom behavior, which was related to lower school achievement.

Higher levels of father involvement in activities with their children, such as eating meals together, going on outings, and helping with homework, were associated with fewer behavior problems, higher levels of sociability, and a high

level of school performance among children and adolescents.

Father involvement has been found to be a more important predictor than mother involvement of the likelihood of getting high grades.

Not all fathers are able to live with their children. In cases where fathers live apart, several studies have documented a positive relationship between the provision of child support and the well being of school-aged children, particularly cognitive development, academic achievement and behavior. Other studies of children living apart from their biological fathers find that receipt of child support is associated with more positive outcomes for children than other sources of income.

Source: Child Trends, The full article with references can be obtained at www.childtrends.org/r_indicato.asp

Child Trends

In this issue we have summarized research from Child Trends. Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization dedicated to studying children, youth, and families through research, data collection, and data analyses. Child Trends was established in 1979 and currently has a staff of 39 researchers, analysts, and administrative and support personnel.

Major Research Areas:

Child Trends conducts basic research and evaluation studies in several critical areas, including:

- teenage pregnancy and childbearing;
- the effects of welfare and poverty on children;
- issues related to parenting, family structure, and family processes, including fatherhood and male fertility.

Child Trends maintains a website, www.childtrends.org, which includes summaries of recent research, highlights of new reports, links to other sources of data and research on children, and our publication list.

Fathers Are Important to Their Children

Mothers and Fathers often provide children with similar things (love, attention, guidance.) Here are some of the roles Fathers play and why they are important.

DAD AS ECONOMIC PROVIDER

Being an economic provider promotes the positive development of children. Fathers who provide for their children also serve as an important and positive role model for their children.

DAD AS TEACHER AND ROLE MODEL

Fathers are an important role model for children. They teach their children what they need to know to survive in the world. Oftentimes, fathers teach by example.

DAD AS PROTECTOR

Fathers monitor their children's safety by organizing the child's environment and eliminating hazards from the child's path.

DAD AS ADVOCATE

Fathers look out for their children's welfare in many ways. A fathers' involvement in their children's schools is linked to positive school outcomes for the child including higher class standing, more enjoyment of school, and a lowered likelihood of grade repetition, suspension or expulsion.

DAD AS RESOURCE

There are many ways that fathers fulfill the roll of "behind the scenes support." Men can provide emotional support to the mothers of their children, and help mothers in practical ways with the care of the child—whether they live with the mother or not.

Source: Adapted by Margaret Johns, UCCE, Kern County from Child Trends Research Brief: The Meaning of Fathers Involvement for Children.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

California residents should contact their local county Cooperative Extension Nutrition, Family and Consumer Science advisor. Their phone number can be found in the county section of the government pages of your local phone directory.

Out of state subscription requests should be sent to Connie Costello, University of California, Riverside, 135 Highlander Hall, Riverside, CA 92521, or connie.costello@ucr.edu. Electronic subscriptions are free.

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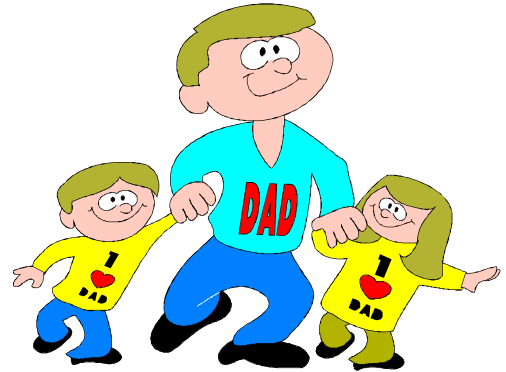
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THINGS FOR DADS AND KIDS TO DO TOGETHER



1. Cook dinner together.
2. Help with your child's homework.
3. Make facemasks out of paper bags.
4. Teach a preschooler colors, or the alphabet.
5. Help your child address, stamp and mail a letter to himself possibly containing a note from you. He'll await and receive the letter a few days later.
6. Spend an hour (with permission) in your child's classroom on a school day or become a volunteer teacher's aid for several hours a week.
7. Make a list of the ten most important things in your life; read it to your child.
8. Make a list of the ten most important things in your child's life; write them down, save to give to child years later when grown up.
9. Teach a youngster how to ride a bike.
10. Teach a kindergartner to tell time from a clock.
11. Prepare a picnic basket together, then go out and enjoy it!
12. Discuss what your child wants to be or do as an adult, then take the child to watch and learn from someone actually doing that function.

Adapted from articles in Single Dads Lifestyle Magazine
(c) Phoenix Rising Publications, 10/79 and 11/79
by Bob Hirschfeld

ACTIVIDADES QUE PAPÁS E HIJOS PUEDEN HACER JUNTOS

1. Preparar la cena.
2. Ayudar a sus hijos con las tareas escolares.
3. Hacer máscaras usando bolsas de papel.
4. Enseñarle a un niño el alfabeto o los colores.
5. Ayudar a su niño a escribir su nombre y dirección y colocar el sello de correos en un sobre que usted usará para enviarle una notita. Su niño esperará ansiosamente recibir esta carta en un par de días.
6. Pedir permiso en la escuela de su niño para pasar una hora en su salón de clase u ofrecerse como voluntario para trabajar de asistente de la maestra varias horas a la semana.
7. Hacer una lista de las diez cosas que son más importantes para usted. Compartir esta lista con su niño.
8. Hacer una lista de las diez cosas que son más importantes para su niño; guardar esta lista para dársela a su niño más adelante cuando ya sea grande.
9. Enseñarle a un niño a montar en bicicleta.
10. Enseñarle a un niño a leer el reloj.
11. Preparar una canasta con comida y salir a disfrutar de un agradable día de campo.
12. Hablar con su niño sobre lo que le gustaría hacer cuando sea grande. Luego llevar a su niño a que vea a alguien que hace ese trabajo y así aprenda sobre esa profesión.

