



Being a Dad...

There are many ways of being a parent and each person will bring a unique range of experiences to his role as a dad.

Dads will bring experiences from their own father as well as cultural influences and values.

There are also social values about fatherhood that are constantly shaping the way men play a part in their role as a father.

Children's Development

Mothers and fathers are both important in responding to their child's vulnerability and dependency.

Children need physical and emotional comfort as well as intimacy and protection.

Happy and healthy children grow and develop within a range of fathering styles.

There is no 'right' way but certain things do help to foster your relationship with your child.

A father's relationship with his child grows through frequent positive contact as part of familiar daily routines.

Special times are important but sharing simple daily tasks serve the same purpose.

You should seek to share in the everyday life of your child.

Some Suggestions

- ◆ Be aware of the way your baby shows how he/she feels to his mother and yourself.
- ◆ Talk to others about ways to reassure and comfort your child and try them yourself.

- ◆ Find out developmental milestones and look for them happening with your baby or child.

Your Relationship with your child

Children need limits set for them as they grow and develop.

You may have ideas from your own parents, or culture about these limits and they will change in keeping with the age, temperament and individual make-up of your child.

How you set and maintain these limits will help your child feel secure with you as a dad.

Parenting is most effective when it is fair and consistent.

Some Suggestions

- ◆ Take time to learn about developmental stages for children and what you can expect from them at a given age or stage.
- ◆ Talk to other fathers about their sons and daughters and the way they parent.

- ◆ Take time to observe your child(ren) and discover their own unique talents.
- ◆ Become part of the activities they enjoy.

What we know is that...

- Children love spending time with their dads, just being with them and being part of what they do.
- Dad's are often more physical in play with their sons – make sure this is OK beforehand. Being rough will not 'make them a man'. It's alright to show boys tenderness.
- Children like their dad to show interest in their world. This may be by just holding your baby and letting him or her touch your face.
- With a toddler it may be helping your child to take a few steps, learning to run or kick a ball.
- As your child begins school, it may be being present on book day or sports day.
- As your child grows and matures, you may help them with reading and homework.

- When dads show they are proud of their children this gives them a tremendous boost in their self-esteem.
- Praise them for effort rather than achievement.
- Sometimes it is fun to play without boundaries or the need to correct mistakes. Remember that you don't always need to teach your child.
- Children love being able to teach dads and mums how to play their games. Learn to follow the leader and your child will show you all you need to know.

Resources

- ❖ Steve Biddulph, *Raising Boys*
- ❖ Jodie Kewley & Hannah Lewis, *Fathers*
- ❖ Christine Williams, *Fathers and Sons*
- ❖ Department of Family and Community Services, *Fitting Fathers into Families*

Written by Southern Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, P.O. Box 248, Oaklands Park, 5046