

Fathers Are Important—for Real!



Fathers are essential to the healthy growth and development of their children.

Dads bring a unique perspective to the family and lives of their children.

Mothers and fathers can love their children by supporting each other as parents.

Fathers have a powerful influence on the healthy development of their daughters and their sons.

- * Babies can distinguish their father's voice from the voice of a stranger by the age of four weeks.
- * School-aged children show significant gains in intellectual development when their fathers are involved with them as infants.
- * Involved fathers enrich their daughter's and son's self image.
- * Children who have involved fathers show more sense of humor, longer attention spans, and more eagerness for learning.
- * Father involvement helps teens to develop a strong sense of who they are and increases their ability to resist peer pressure.

Dads are role models who teach their children to be strong, flexible adults.

- * Fathers teach sex roles: they are generally more physically active with their sons and more protective of their daughters.
- * Fathers often think "out of the box" and offer alternative strategies for problem solving.
- * Dads tend to offer more physical play than mothers, which increases the physical competency of their young children.
- * When fathers model behaviors that are respectful to women, their sons are more likely to see women as human beings rather than "things" to manipulate. But . . . fathers who abuse their wives raise sons who are more likely to abuse their wives and children.

Fathers are essential partners who share parenting with the mother of their children.

- * Fathers who interact with their newborn children are usually more likely to support their wife in her new role as mother.
- * As a partner, dads can provide balance and be a sounding board or a compass for the family.
- * Fathers, as an equal parent, can balance the parenting of the mothers through respectful disagreement and healthy support.
- * Fathers and mothers can work together to communicate and reach good decisions that benefit their children.
- * Both fathers and mothers need support as they grow into being parents.

Fathers need commitment from their communities in order to succeed as parents.

- * Communities can provide mentors to guide and support fathers.
- * Fathers need to be recognized for their contributions to the community.
- * Community leaders need to include fathers in decisions that concern their children.
- * Children benefit from learning about the contributions of “average fathers.”
- * Communities can plan father-child activity days.

Fathers are individuals who are growing and changing with experience and across situations.

- * Being a father is only one of many roles that men work to balance.
- * To learn their job as a father, men need room for trial and error.
- * Fathers who recognize their important contribution to the development of their child express more satisfaction with themselves.
- * Fathers who can nurture their children report more understanding of emotional situations at their work.
- * In a unique way, children expand the range and depth of experiences that fathers have.

Prepared by Linda D. Ladd, Ph.D., Family Development Specialist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, October 2000.

Source:

T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. (1992). Touchpoints: The Essential References. MA: Perseus Books.