

Family Assets ... Building Blocks for Life



Fact Sheet



Family Life Month Packet
Family and Consumer Sciences

The Importance of Fathers in Children's Asset Development

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You may have heard the saying, "The greatest thing a man can do for his children is to love their mother." There is a lot of truth in that! Studies have shown for many years that the quality of parents' relationships is predictive of their children's future marital success. But loving his children's mother is not the only important gift a father can give his children. New studies are showing that fathers' involvement in their children's lives is strongly related to children's life-long well being.

Benefits of Father Involvement

The benefits of fathers' involvement with their children begins in infancy. Despite traditional expectations, studies show that fathers can be as sensitive and responsive to their infant children as mothers. And fathers' sensitivity can be very important. Infants whose fathers were closely involved with their care were found to be more cognitively developed at one year of age than infants with less involved fathers. In addition, fathers' positive and sensitive attitudes toward their infants were related to their children's problem solving competence later in their children's lives.

The importance of fathers' role in their children's upbringing is also seen in the early and middle childhood years. Fathers' personality traits have been strongly related to their children's well being. Children who were disliked by their peers commonly reported having poor

relationships with their fathers. Researchers have also found that women and men who get along well at work and in their personal relationships were likely to have had warm, loving relationships with competent, strong, and emotionally secure fathers who helped to nurture them while they were young.

Dads and Teens

During the adolescent years, fathers' attentiveness to their children was strongly related to their children's school achievement. A study of over 30,000 high school seniors reported that 85 percent of "A" students had fathers who kept close track of how their children were doing in school. Adolescents' relationship ties with fathers may be even more important when parents divorce and children live with their mothers, and this is especially important for boys. Both girls and boys have an easier time adjusting to their parents' divorce when conflict is low and the noncustodial parent (who is typically the father) maintains reliable and frequent contact with their children. Fathers who maintain involvement with their children, including participation in child rearing decisions and having some control over their children's upbringing, feel more comfort and closeness with their children and are more likely to make regular child support payments. Perhaps more importantly, however, resilient children who are able to bounce back from traumas or serious

problems in their lives tend to come from families in which members have strong positive relationships with one another and who are emotionally supported by both parents.

Beating Stereotypes

The good news is that fathers are becoming more involved in their children's lives. Contrary to stereotypical beliefs about fathers and children, a New York Times-CBS poll conducted in 1989 found that nearly as many working men (72%) as working women (83%) felt conflict between their work and family responsibilities. Similarly, research indicates that men's family roles are just as important to them as their career roles and that fathers are reporting that involvement with their children and families is a source of personal satisfaction more frequently than in the past.

Clearly fathers' involvement is important to children's intellectual and emotional development. Be sure to celebrate fathers' contributions to children's lives.

Source

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