



BECAUSE EVERY CHILD DESERVES A 24/7 DADSM

About the Author

CHRISTOPHER A. BROWN is *President* of National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI). He received his bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of North Texas and his master's degree in Applied Anthropology from the University of South Florida. Chris lives in the Austin, Texas area with his wife. He is the father of two adult daughters. He is also a grandfather.

Chris has played a critical role in shaping NFI's focus as the leading provider of fatherhood skill-building resources in the country and the leading trainer of practitioners seeking to offer fatherhood programs in their communities. In his long tenure with NFI, he has been the organization's foremost developer of its world-class fatherhood programs. Brown has authored or co-authored flagship NFI programs such as 24:7 Dad® and InsideOut Dad®, and its more recent, innovative programs such as Understanding Dad™ and ProFathering15™. He has also authored many workshops, brochures, pocket guides, and other skill-building materials.

An applied anthropologist and author of several journal articles and book chapters on issues related to child health and well-being, he has studied masculinity cross culturally, especially as it applies to fatherhood and men's health and well-being. He has appeared as a fatherhood expert in media outlets, including the L.A. Times, New York Times, Nick Jr. Magazine, and CNN.



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Introduction

So you want to work with fathers? Did you recently receive a grant to create a fatherhood program or service? Are you a community volunteer who simply has a passion for the well-being of fathers, mothers, and children—someone who wants to make a difference in this world by ensuring that more children live with great dads? Are you a divorced mom or dad who has experienced the challenge of living without your children or of raising them on your own? Perhaps you're a child of divorce who barely remembers your dad. You might even be someone who has a wonderful father and whose parents are still married, and you simply want to see more children experience the positive connection you have with your dad. You might also be a dad raising kids who wants to help other dads. Whatever your situation or reason for acquiring this guide, you might be asking the following questions: Where do I start in working with dads? What in the world do I focus on? How do I help fathers?



How to Use This Guide

You're not alone in asking these questions. Everyone who works with fathers has asked them at one time or another. National Fatherhood Initiative® developed this discussion guide to answer these questions and, more specifically, in response to requests for help in identifying the most critical issues to address with dads. Use this guide to design lectures, workshops, seminars, events, and other activities for fathers that cover one or more of the topics addressed in the following pages.

We have identified 17 issues (hereafter referred to as topics) over the years that are critical to address when assisting fathers of any race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background in becoming involved, responsible, and committed dads.

- Each topic is covered in two to three pages. You will find background information on the topic, which includes several important factors to keep in mind when working with fathers on the topic.
- The background information is followed by key learning objectives for fathers that you should build into the type of learning format that you decide to use.
- The topic ends with key questions that fathers should ask themselves on the topic. These key questions are tied to the learning objectives.

Depending on how long and intensively you have worked with fathers, consider using additional NFI resources to more fully address some of the topics. We also encourage you to subscribe to our **Championing Fatherhood Blog** (<https://www.fatherhood.org/championing-fatherhood>), which includes tips, advice, and examples on how to effectively work with dads. It will also keep you updated on the latest research on, and opinions about, fatherhood and father involvement.

Who We Are

National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI) was founded in 1994 to stimulate a society-wide movement to confront the most consequential social trend of our time: widespread fatherlessness in our nation. Our mission is to increase father involvement by equipping communities and human service organizations with the father-engagement training, programs, and resources they need to be father-inclusive. Our vision is that all communities and human service organizations are proactively father-inclusive so that every child has an involved, responsible, and committed father in their lives.



Our 3E Strategy

NFI works to accomplish its mission with a focus on the following “3E” strategy:

EDUCATE

We educate and inspire all Americans, especially fathers, through public awareness campaigns, research, and other resources. We educate Americans on the consequences of father absence, the positive impact of involved fathers on children, and the importance of promoting involved, responsible, and committed fatherhood. We have generated hundreds of millions of dollars across the country in donated television, radio, print, and Internet advertising. Our campaigns focus on the unique and irreplaceable contributions that fathers make in the lives of their children, and that as a nation, we must do more to encourage and support men to be good and responsible fathers. We produce *Father Facts*, now in its 9th edition, which is the definitive source of data on the consequences of father absence and the benefits of father involvement. We conduct original, cutting-edge surveys, such as *Pop’s Culture: A National Survey of Dads’ Attitudes on Fathering*. (You can download many of our surveys and other free research at <https://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistic>).

EQUIP

We equip fathers and develop leaders of national, state, and community fatherhood initiatives through curricula, training, and technical assistance. We provide workshops, training institutes, and technical assistance on fatherhood issues and programs to national, state, and community-based organizations and networks that operate in all sectors, including state and local government, civic organizations, corrections, faith-based groups, businesses, education, healthcare, law enforcement, and the military. Our staff trains organizations on how to become father friendly and on how to create, manage, promote, and evaluate. Through FatherSOURCE™, we provide several leading curricula on responsible fatherhood. FatherSOURCE™ also includes brochures, posters, and interactive resources. View and shop online at www.fathersource.org.

ENGAGE

We engage every sector of society through strategic alliances and partnerships. We organize coalitions of national, state, and local leaders from all sectors of society (e.g. social services, business, healthcare, civic, corrections, philanthropic, media, military, government, education, and faith) that seek to create a culture that values and supports responsible fatherhood. At the national level, we organized bipartisan task forces on responsible fatherhood in the U.S. House and Senate. We have also collaborated with nationally renowned community-service organizations and businesses—such as the Salvation Army, Head Start and Early Head

Start, YMCA, FedEx, Twentieth Century Fox, Disney, Honda, and the National Basketball Association—to create unique initiatives that engage fathers and their families.

Use NFI Programs, Products, and Services

We encourage you to use our programs, products, and services as you become more comfortable in your work with dads. We have outstanding fatherhood programs that have been evaluated for effectiveness; workshops and online self-paced training certificates that can help you build capacity to manage, market, and evaluate fatherhood programs and services; brochures on a number of subjects related to fatherhood (e.g. for new and expectant dads); posters; and more. You can use many of these resources as you work with fathers on the topics in this guide or after you complete this work with them.

NFI has broken down its fatherhood skill-building resources into 3 levels of “intensity” to help you better select the best resources or program for you:

LOW INTENSITY RESOURCES

NFI fatherhood skill-building resources which require minimal staff time and monetary investment, and are easily incorporated into your other organizational offerings for fathers.

- Brochures, Tip Cards, and Posters
- Pocket Guides for Dads
- Pocketbooks for Moms

MEDIUM INTENSITY RESOURCES

Fatherhood skill-building workshops and resources which require moderate staff involvement and monetary investment, and are generally shorter in delivery length.

- 24/7 Dad® Key Behaviors Workshop
- The InsideOut Dad® Guide to Family Ties

HIGH INTENSITY RESOURCES

Group-based fatherhood programs that require the highest level of staff time and monetary investment, (e.g. 8-12 weeks/sessions) allowing fathers and mothers to connect with one another while learning.

- 24/7 Dad® A.M. and P.M.
- InsideOut Dad®
- Understanding Dad™

We also have an online, on-demand fatherhood program called ProFathering in15™ that your organization can offer fathers. You can use it as a stand-alone program or to compliment any of our other fatherhood programs and workshops.

All of these resources and more can be found at FatherSOURCE.org, NFI’s one stop fatherhood resource center, offering everything you need to effectively serve fathers and their families.



www.fathersource.org
Phone: 240-912-1263
Fax: 301-948-6776

A father's own father is often the most powerful influence in shaping how he fathers his children.

Topic 1: Family of Origin

Background

What is the most important factor that influences a father's knowledge, attitudes, values, and behavior about how to raise and care for his children? If you said, "The influence of the family he grew up in," you hit the nail on the head. If you want insight into how a father thinks and what he feels about fatherhood, and how involved he is in the lives of his children, ask him what he learned about being a father from his parents and extended family. The family someone grows up in is often called a "family of origin," because it is the family in which a person begins their life.

A father's own father is often the most powerful influence in shaping how he fathers his children.

This influence starts, quite simply, with his presence. Indeed, research shows that children are better off just by the simple fact that they have a father present in their lives. But we also know that the amount of time a father spends with his children and the quality of that time increase the influence of his presence. A father's influence can be positive or negative—almost always a combination of both.

The knowledge and skills of a father transfer directly to his children. This fact is true for both boys and girls. He will show and sometimes discuss the knowledge and skills of a father with his sons and daughters. The sons will use what they learn when they raise their children and the daughters will look for this knowledge and these skills in the men they choose to father their children.

A father's father is not the only powerful influence shaping his view of fathers and fatherhood. A father's mother can be as great or even a greater influence. This is especially true in families where the father was never around (and never known), or the father left the family or died during a father's childhood. In some cases, a male relative might step in to serve as a "father figure." Still, the mother in these father-absent families will shape a boy's image of his father by what she says about his father and men in general.

The media and entertainment industry today have become part of children's family of origin. Some children spend more time in front of the television, on the Internet, and engaging social media each day than they do with their parents. The problem with this development—beyond



the constant exposure of children to violent shows and games—is that the vast majority of dads are portrayed as one of the “3 Ds”—dumb, dangerous, or disaffected—unable to care for even the most basic needs of their kids. Worse yet, they are also too often portrayed as stalkers, rapists, drug dealers, and murderers. Mothers must swoop in to save their children from their dangerous fathers, and save the well-intentioned, incompetent fathers from themselves.

In working with fathers on this topic, it's vital that you help them connect with the positive and negative influences that their family of origin has had on their fathering knowledge and skills. Fathers will have selective memories. If they grew up with an involved, responsible, and committed father, they will tend to ignore the negative influence of their father. Likewise, if they grew up with an uninvolved father, or even an abusive one, they will ignore any positive influence that he might have had. When fathers begin to connect with and explore their family of origin, memories of abuse might rise to the surface. It is sensitive and delicate work to touch these memories, so make sure that you have a list of individuals and organizations that can help fathers to process these memories. Encourage fathers to talk with their children about the negative image of fathers portrayed in the media and entertainment industry, and tell fathers to encourage their children to watch shows that portray fathers in a positive light.

Basic Learning Objectives

Fathering is a generational issue.

Fathering knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills are handed down from generation to generation. A father learns these things from the fathers before him and will influence fathers in his family for generations to come.

Generally, the most powerful influence in a father's life is his own father.

A father might be motivated to be a great dad by either a positive or negative influence of his father. Don't assume that if a father had an uninvolved father that he will be uninvolved, too.

A father's mother is also a powerful influence on his image of fathers and fatherhood.

Fathers must connect with what they learned from their mothers about being a father. A father's extended family is another powerful influence. Fathers must connect with what they learned from their grandfathers, grandmothers, aunts, uncles, and other relatives about being a dad.

The media and entertainment industry is now a part of children's family of origin.

Today's dad must focus not only on the influence that he, the mother of his children, and his extended family have on shaping his children's views of fathers and fatherhood. He must also be wary of the powerful influence that movies, television, radio (e.g. song lyrics), social media, and the Internet have on his children's image of fathers.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- What fathering knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills did I learn from my father?
- What did I learn from my mother about fathers and fatherhood?
- What did I learn from my extended family?
- Who in my family of origin was the most powerful influence on how I father my children?
- Did my family of origin provide me with a positive or negative image of fathers and fatherhood?
- (If negative) How can I work to overcome that negative image?
- Are there some positive things I learned that I tend not to acknowledge?
- (If positive) How have I used that positive image to father my children?
- Are there some negative things I learned that I tend not to acknowledge?
- How much time do my children spend watching television and movies, listening to the radio, playing video games, using social media, and surfing the Internet?
- Have I talked with them about how they see fathers being portrayed by the media and entertainment industry?
- Which shows and movies should I encourage them to watch that portray dads positively?
- Do my children listen to music that portrays dads negatively?

The key to developing good fathers is to first develop good men.

Topic 2:

Masculinity and Fatherhood

Background

Have you ever put together a model airplane? The idea was that if you followed the instructions, your model should have looked like the picture on the box. Unfortunately, your model might not have looked like the picture, because pieces were missing or you didn't thoroughly read or follow the instructions.

Learning what it means to be a man and father works the same way. Men learn from their parents and culture a model for how a man and father should look and act. This model comes with instructions that help men grow into the "right kind" of man or father. As boys grow into an adult, this model becomes a part of who they are. It guides their decisions and actions from that point forward. It guides them in how to treat themselves (i.e., their physical, emotional, and spiritual health), their children, and women and wives/mothers of their children. Men in all cultures learn some very good things and, unfortunately, some not so good things about being a man and father.

Part of being a good man is to have good character. A man can't be a good dad if he's not a good man. The key to developing good fathers is to first develop good men. The most effective fatherhood programs seek to build the man before focusing on fathering skills. Your job is to help men understand that they must first work on themselves before, or at least at the same time, as they work on their fathering skills.

Keep in mind that in all cultures the models of masculinity and fatherhood exist along a continuum from traditional to non-traditional. A father can fall anywhere along that continuum. He might be a very traditional man and father or a very non-traditional one. So while you can use these models as a guide when working with dads, an individual father might or might not fit the mold of a traditional man or father in his culture. Don't make the mistake of labeling a traditional view of masculinity and fatherhood as "bad" or "wrong" and a non-traditional view as "good," or vice versa. If you do, you will run the risk of alienating some fathers, which will make it much more difficult for them to learn from you.



A man's character is the key ingredient in how good a man and father he can become.

Also keep in mind that these models evolve over time. In many cultures, the “traditional father” today is not what he was 20, 30, or 40 years ago. He is spending more time in the daily care of his children and is more active in areas that have long been considered “women’s work,” such as doing laundry and cooking.

Basic Learning Objectives

The models of masculinity (how to be a man) and fatherhood (how to be a father) are linked.

A father must be a good man in order to be a good dad.

A man's character is the key ingredient in how good a man and father he can become.

A man's character is a combination of the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and moral qualities that make him unique.

Morals are the key to character.

Like the directions to building a model airplane, morals give fathers a sense of direction by telling them what's right and wrong.

Fathers must constantly teach, model, and reinforce morals in their children.

Generally speaking, children learn more from what fathers do than from what they say. In other words, good morals are more caught than taught.

Fathers must work on their character if they are to raise healthy children.

If a man has good character, and his children see this, then his children are likely to become people of good character.

Children of good character tend to avoid risky behavior, such as alcohol and substance abuse, smoking, and violence.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- How have I been affected by what my parents and culture taught me about being a man?
- How has my fathering been affected by what I learned about being a father?
- What did I learn about character from my father (or father figure)? What did I learn that was good? What did I learn that was not so good?
- What did I learn about character from my mother (or mother figure)? What did I learn that was good? What did I learn that was not so good?
- Which traits in my character have served me well as a father? How will I continue to use these traits to raise healthy children?

- Which traits in my character have not served me well as a father? How can I overcome those traits so that I can become a better dad?
- What are five character traits that I can begin working on right now to become a better dad?
- Which traits do I want to pass on to my children? Which traits do I not want to pass on?
- Which morals do I want to teach, model, and reinforce in my children? How will I teach, model, and reinforce those morals?
- How will I show my children that I have good character?
- What do I want my children to say about me 10 years from now? What am I doing today to make this a reality? What am I not doing today, but should be doing, to make this a reality?

Self-efficacy is the belief in a father that he has the skills—or can acquire the skills—that he needs to be a good father.

Topic 3: Fathering Skills

Background

Unfortunately, many fathers lack the self-efficacy they need to be good fathers. *Self-efficacy* is the belief in a father that he has the skills—or can acquire the skills—that he needs to be a good father. A lack of self-efficacy can be especially chronic in fathers whose own fathers were physically or psychologically absent.

The goal of building the fathering skills of dads is to help them become involved, responsible, and committed fathers. But what does it mean to be involved, responsible and committed?

At its most basic, **involvement** means that a father spends time with his children. Time is like oxygen for children. The involved father spends as much time as he possibly can with his children and tries to have that time be of high quality.

A father invests his time in simple activities, like eating meals with his children and going for walks with them. Through involvement, a father shows his children that he loves them. His love should be unconditional—the kind of love that says he'll be there for his children through thick and thin, through the messy toddler years, moody adolescence, and into adulthood. It's the type of love that leads a father to put his life on the line to protect his children.

Commitment means that a father keeps his word to his children, whether it's getting to a baseball or softball game on time or providing the emotional, financial, and material needs his children need to succeed in school and in life. His commitment is forever.

Responsibility means that a father is responsible for the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of his children. The responsible father considers the impact that his actions and decisions have on his children.

Along the way to becoming involved, responsible, and committed, fathers must learn that **fathering** is different than **mothering**. Research shows that fathers tend to excel at certain skills and that mothers excel at others. Fathers, for example, tend to play in a rough and tumble manner with their children more often than do mothers. This skill benefits children tremendously because, when fathers engage their children in appropriate physical play, it teaches children how to regulate their emotions. One study found that dads hold their children



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differently than do moms. The moms in the study held their children the same way nine out of ten times, while the dads held their children in different ways nine out of ten times. Dads will often hold their children upside down and toss them up in the air and catch them. Research has shown that this kind of holding and play helps children develop their sense of equilibrium (balance).

The bottom line is that fathers and mothers parent differently and that these differences are good for children. Fathers often engage their children by acting as their children's toy (e.g. a climbing apparatus), while mothers tend to engage their children with toys. Fathers encourage their children to explore the world by challenging their children to learn new skills through appropriate risk-taking, while mothers tend to be more focused on their children's safety. Fathers look to their children's futures, while mothers tend to focus on the present needs of their children. In short, these differences argue for the need for children to be raised in a home with both of their parents.

In working with fathers, it's important to develop their skills using a strengths-based approach instead of a weaknesses-based approach. Fathers have heard enough about the inability of men to be good parents. You only have to turn on the television and you will see numerous examples of "idiot fathers" who are continuously being rescued by mothers. Help fathers identify and then build on the skills they are really good at before addressing their weaknesses. Men like to be challenged, so when discussing weaknesses, call them "challenges."

Basic Learning Objectives

Fathers can be just as effective at parenting as mothers.

Mothers do not have a corner on the parenting market.

Fathering is different than mothering and parenting.

Fathering is a man's unique ability to contribute to the positive health and well-being of his children and family. **Mothering** is a woman's unique ability to contribute to the positive health and well-being of her children and family. **Parenting** is the knowledge and skills that dads and moms need to raise healthy, happy children.

Fathers and mothers parent differently, and this is good for children.

Fathers should learn these differences and that a father's contribution to his children is unique, special, and irreplaceable.

Being an involved, responsible, and committed father means being there for children physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

The best dads father from this holistic perspective.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- What are the unique contributions that I bring to the lives of my children? What are the unique contributions brought by the mother of my children? How do these/our unique contributions compliment one another and benefit my children?
- Which fathering skills am I really good at? Which fathering skills am I not good at?
- How can I build on my fathering strengths? How can I address my fathering challenges?
- How can I become more physically involved in the lives of my children? How can I become more emotionally involved and available? How can I become more intellectually involved, as in more involved in my children's education? How can I become more spiritually involved?

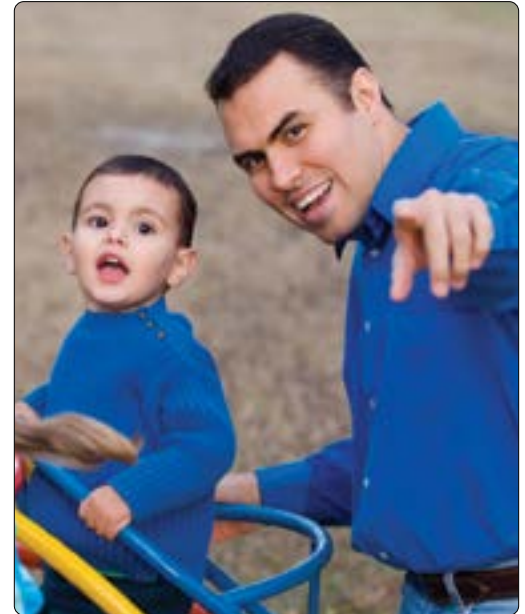
“One of the most helpful tools for fathers is information on developmental milestones.”

Topic 4: Child Development

Background

Picture this situation. A father prepares a meal for himself and his three-year-old son. As they dine, the three-year-old starts to eat with his hands. The father tells his son that he must use a fork. The child uses the fork for a few minutes and then reverts to using his hands. The father becomes frustrated and yells at his son to stop using his hands and pick up the fork, or else dad will take the food away.

What's wrong here? If you said the father shouldn't have yelled at his son and threatened to take away the food, you're right. But why did the father yell at and threaten his son? The primary reason is that dad didn't understand that it's perfectly fine, developmentally speaking, for a three-year-old to use both utensils and hands to eat.



Some of the biggest mistakes made by fathers stem from a lack of knowledge about child development. So it's vital that dads learn about child development and the physical, emotional, and social milestones their children should reach by a certain age. Moreover, it's also important that fathers learn how they can encourage their children to reach these milestones.

In teaching fathers about child development, keep in mind that all children are unique. A father's children might differ from other children in when they reach milestones. If a father is concerned about how his child/one of his children is developing, he should talk with his child's doctor or with a child-development specialist.

One of the most helpful tools for fathers is information on developmental milestones. NFI has print-based and online resources listed at the end of this topic that help fathers learn and track their children's development and milestones. Proceed with caution when teaching fathers about child development and using developmental charts. Tell fathers that when they review charts, and any information on child development, that it's important to take the information with a grain of salt in terms of what they mean about children and the father's role in their lives. Developmental charts in particular can be intimidating. Some fathers think that that if they were a really good parent, they would already know this stuff. Tell fathers that no one knows this stuff cold. Even pediatricians keep copies of these kinds of charts around their offices for easy reference.

The involvement of fathers during the first three years of their children's lives is critical to the healthy development of their brains.

The point is that it helps to know something about what might be coming next in children's lives, specifically what comes after where they are developmentally right now. Fathers need to know not to use charts and other information on child development like box scores or report cards. And they should never use this kind of information to compare their children to each other or to other children. They are road maps that give fathers a little guidance about what is coming around the corner. Every dad will appreciate having the right tools to do the job at hand, like a good socket wrench set or software.

Basic Learning Objectives

Children develop at different paces.

Children should reach certain physical, emotional, and social milestones, but not necessarily at the same time as their siblings or other children. Fathers can have a huge impact on helping their children reach milestones.

Fathers should set realistic boundaries for their children that are based on the physical, emotional, and social capabilities of their children.

Fathers must be consistent in enforcing boundaries.

The involvement of fathers during the first three years of their children's lives is critical to the healthy development of their brains.

The most critical period in brain development occurs during the first three years of a person's life. Proper brain development affects every aspect of a person's life, from their emotional stability to intelligence.

Research has shown that there are 40 assets that help children grow into healthy adults.

Parents play a huge role in helping build these assets. To learn more about the assets, visit The Search Institute at www.search-institute.org.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- What is my current level of knowledge about child development, especially regarding which milestones my children should have reached by now? What can I do to learn more about child development and how to encourage my children to reach their milestones?
- How can my unique contributions to my children help my children develop into healthy adults? How can I support the unique contributions of the mother of my children so that my children can grow into healthy adults?
- Do I set appropriate boundaries for my children based on their ages? If not, what do I need to do to begin setting appropriate boundaries?
- Do I consistently reinforce boundaries with my children?
- Am I modeling healthy attitudes, beliefs, values, morals, and behavior for my sons or daughters? If not, how can I become a healthy model?
- How can I build the assets in my children that they need to avoid risky behavior (e.g. smoking, drinking and drug use, and violence) and grow into healthy adults?

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Topic 5:

Raising Boys, Raising Girls

Background

Are boys or girls harder to raise? Is there any difference in the way a father should raise a son compared to a daughter? These are questions that can weigh heavily on the minds of fathers. Perhaps you have asked yourself these questions.

The answer to the first question is that boys and girls pose different challenges at different stages in their lives; so, as a general rule, neither boys nor girls are harder to raise. The answer to the second question is that the basics of fathering sons and daughters are the same, but it's the ways in which fathers engage their sons and daughters that must sometimes be different. If, for example, a father must have a serious talk with his son, it might be better to engage his son first with a game of basketball and then talk. With his daughter, it might be better and easier to immediately sit down at the table and have a serious discussion.

The real challenge that fathers face in raising boys and girls is that they are different and present different challenges. The differences begin earlier than you might think. All children are female at conception. If the fetus is to become a boy, it will experience a surge in the hormone testosterone at about four to six weeks after conception. That surge starts the production of the male brain and sex organs. This process sets in motion the differences between the sexes.

The differences between boys and girls are rooted in biology and can be seen immediately after birth. Infant girls and boys behave differently. Boys, for example, tend to cry more than girls and can be harder to console. Girls tend to speak and develop the ability to read other people's emotions more quickly than do boys. Boys are usually better at tracking objects. More differences emerge as children age. School-age girls, for example, are better, on average, at tests of verbal skills. School-age boys usually fare better, on average, on tests of mathematical and spatial skills. Research has revealed that the brains of boys and girls (and men and women) are different, and that the sexes use their brains in different ways to perform the same tasks.



A father serves as a role model for a boy who looks to his father for a model of how to be a man and father ... and serves as a relational model for a girl who looks to her father for lessons on how she should relate to men and how men should treat her.

Biology, however, is only part of the picture. Immediately after birth, the influence of the environment starts to contribute to the differences. The environment—namely, the ways in which parents raise children and the norms of a culture on how to properly raise boys and girls—acts in concert with biology to create the differences we see between boys and girls. (Refer to “Topic 2: Masculinity and Fatherhood” for more information on how boys are raised to be men and fathers.)

In working with fathers on this topic, help them understand that, biologically speaking, children come into the world **hard wired** for both a mother and a father. A father serves as a **role model** for a boy who looks to his father for a model of how to be a man and father. A father serves as a **relational model** for a girl who looks to her father for lessons on how she should relate to men and how men should treat her. As boys and girls age, they naturally look to their fathers for guidance and nurturance at different ages and stages of development. (See “Topic 4: Child Development” for more information on fathers and child development.)

Culturally speaking, fathers must become aware of the influence that their environment (i.e., culture) has on how they relate to their sons and daughters. Many fathers, for example, learn the inaccurate lesson that they have a greater influence on their sons than daughters. (This lesson partly explains why many fathers spend more time with their sons than daughters.) Fathers must also become aware of the negative influences that their culture can have on the healthy development of boys and girls, and how to counteract those influences. Fathers, for example, have a huge impact on the body image of their daughters. A father who praises and compliments his daughter’s intelligence and athletic ability—as well as her physical appearance—and who helps her understand that most women do not look like supermodels will help his daughter develop a positive body image.

Basic Learning Objectives

Raising boys and girls requires the same basic skills.

But there are differences between boys and girls that require different approaches to using basic skills and that require some unique knowledge about the ways boys and girls develop.

The differences that we see in boys and girls are created by the interaction of biology and the environment.

Fathers are “role models” for their sons and “relational models” for their daughters.

Sons look to their fathers to learn what it means to be a man and a husband, and how to treat women and children. The relationship between daughters and their fathers teaches girls what a relationship between a man and a woman is supposed to be like and how to relate to other men. If a father doesn’t model healthy attitudes, beliefs, values, morals, and behavior for his sons and daughters, his children are more likely to grow up having problems in relationships.

Fathers should become aware of the negative influences that the environment (e.g. the media and entertainment industry and their own culture) can have on boys and girls.

Fathers should teach their children about these influences, set boundaries that reduce their children's exposure to these influences, and do and say things to counteract these influences. At the same time, fathers should tell their children about and expose their children to the positive influences that the environment can have (e.g. positive portrayals of fathers on television).

Basic Questions for Fathers

- How much do I know about the differences between boys and girls?
- What does it mean to be a “role” model for a boy and a “relational” model for a girl?
- How much do I know about the impact that a father has on the lives of his sons compared to his daughters?
- What are the most important negative influences of the environment on sons and daughters? How can I counteract them?

For fathers to properly discipline their children, they must first understand the difference between discipline and punishment.

Topic 6: Discipline

Background

“Just wait until your father gets home!” is a common refrain heard from mothers across America. Dad as disciplinarian has defined most fathers throughout history. So it’s not difficult for fathers to grasp the idea that a basic role for them is to discipline their children. But what’s not so clear to fathers is how to use appropriate discipline (i.e., when to use it and proper techniques), and that they must model self-discipline if they hope to raise healthy children.

For fathers to properly discipline their children, they must first understand the difference between discipline and punishment. Too often, dads and moms think they’re one in the same. Discipline involves teaching children to respect authority, to control their emotions, and to appropriately react to the behavior of others. The goal of discipline is to develop the character children need to succeed and to instill proper values in them.

Punishment involves inflicting physical or emotional pain when someone does something wrong. If your parents took away a privilege, put you in “time out,” or grounded you when you did something wrong, they punished you in an attempt to teach you right from wrong. The problem with punishing children is that it rarely works. Punishment causes parents and children to become disconnected, which increases the chance that children will engage in risky behavior. When fathers punish their children—which should be rarely—they should use a system of punishments and rewards.

The bottom line is that fathers don’t need to punish their children to teach discipline. And they should never discipline with physical or verbal violence, because it can lead children toward anti-social and delinquent behavior. In helping fathers learn how to discipline properly, always remember to teach them to restore the relationship with their children after they discipline them. Children need to know that they are forgiven for what they’ve done, and that their father loves them unconditionally.

Raising healthy children also involves learning how to practice self-discipline. If a father tells his children to do one thing and he does just the opposite, it sends the message to his children that he really doesn’t mean what he says. Children pick up on even simple things, like making the bed. If dad says that his children should make their beds in the morning and he doesn’t make his own, what does that say to his children about the value of keeping a tidy home?



Fathers should sit down with the family and develop appropriate rules for behavior in the home.

Fathers must walk the talk. Dads who smoke, drink alcohol heavily, become angry easily and yell at their children, and who can't stick to a healthy diet and an exercise plan will have a more difficult time raising healthy children than will fathers who have healthy lifestyles marked by self-discipline.

When discussing self-discipline, you might discover, or at least get an indication, that a father has a serious addiction, such as smoking, alcoholism, or drug addiction. Be prepared for this possibility by having a list of individuals or organizations that the father can turn to for help.

Basic Learning Objectives

A father is his children's teacher—one who guides his children.

Discipline comes from a Latin word “discipulus,” which means “to teach and to guide.” The follower of a teacher is called a “disciple.” Children are the disciples of their fathers. A disciple practices what is or was taught by their teacher.

The two keys to disciplining children are appropriate discipline (i.e., when to discipline and proper techniques) and practicing self-discipline.

There is a difference between discipline and punishment.

Fathers should rarely punish their children. They should instead rely on appropriate discipline and rewarding acceptable behavior.

Fathers should reward acceptable behavior.

Rewards such as praise, privileges, gifts, and hugs are more effective in teaching children the right way to behave than punishments are in teaching children not to behave in the wrong way.

Fathers should sit down with the family and develop appropriate rules for behavior in the home.

The family should write the rules down and place them in the home where family members can see them often. Children should help develop these rules, because they will be more likely to follow rules they helped create.

Fathers should not slip into the role of being the sole disciplinarian in the home.

Mom must also discipline children. When both mom and dad discipline, children learn that mom and dad are a team. Children learn that they can't run to one parent and get their way when the other parent has disciplined them. (The role of sole disciplinarian can't be avoided in a home where mothers aren't present and involved in children's lives.)

Basic Questions for Fathers

- What do I need to learn so that I can discipline my children appropriately?
- Do I know the difference between punishment and discipline?
- Do I tend to punish my children more than I discipline them? Do I tend to focus on punishing my children for inappropriate behavior instead of focusing on rewards for acceptable behavior?
- How self-disciplined am I? Do I have habits or addictions that send contradictory messages to my children? (If yes) Which habits or addictions do I need to rid myself of so that I can become a better model of self-discipline?

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Topic 7: Gender Communication

Background

You might wonder what gender communication has to do with fathering. It has a lot to do with fathering because when moms and dads effectively communicate, it helps them raise healthy children. It also helps fathers raising daughters to know how their daughters are “wired” to communicate and vice versa.

Many years ago the book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* by psychologist John Gray created a craze around gender communication. This book spawned a talk show and a board game, and Gray wrote several spin-off books. In a nutshell, Gray discusses the differences between men and women that create conflict in relationships. He says that conflict

arises in a relationship over time because men and women don’t understand their differences. If they come to understand and respect their differences, men and women can communicate effectively.

One of ideas that Gray focuses on is the difference in the way that men and women think. Basically, men lean toward logical, linear thinking that isn’t emotional. Men use fewer words to communicate ideas. Men like to get to the point instead of “talking out” an issue. When conflict arises, a man likes to go into what Gray calls the “cave” and think about the problem before discussing it with his partner. Women typically think in non-linear terms and with a great deal of emotion. They’re more process-oriented than are men. They like to talk about the dynamics that surround an issue before they address it directly, and they’d rather deal with the problem immediately than go off somewhere to think about it first.

Gender differences have a cultural and biological foundation. Culturally speaking, boys and girls learn how to communicate from their parents, older siblings, friends, and society. The biological piece to the puzzle involves everything from differences in the way that the brains of men and women are structured to the effects of hormones. Have you ever heard that men are “left-brained” and women are “right-brained?” This stereotype exists because the left side of the brain houses our ability to think logically, objectively, systematically, and rationally—ways of thinking typically associated with men. The right side of the brain is the seat of our ability to



The bottom line is that men and women use their brains differently, and this fact partly explains differences in the ways that men and women communicate.

think creatively, intuitively, subjectively, and holistically—ways of thinking typically associated with women.

The fact is that this stereotype is limited because the left side of the brain also serves as our language center while the right side serves as our mathematics center. Women tend to be more skilled in language than are men, and men tend to be more skilled at math than are women. So, both sides of the brain serve men and women very well. The bottom line is that men and women use their brains differently, and this fact partly explains differences in the ways that men and women communicate.

In working with fathers on gender communication, it is important to tell them that there are “typical” ways, or patterns, in male and female communication. Avoid messages that say all men communicate in one way and all women in another way. Some men will communicate in ways more typical of women and vice versa. Fathers should use new knowledge about gender communication to more effectively communicate with the mothers of their children and with their daughters, and to respect the ways in which mothers and daughters communicate with them.

Be mindful that you can create some tension with this issue among fathers who might take offense to being characterized as communicating in the typical ways that men communicate. And be aware that there are cultural differences in typical verbal and non-verbal communication patterns. Prepare yourself by conducting research to understand the culturally acceptable communication patterns of the cultures of the fathers you serve.

Basic Learning Objectives

There are differences in the typical verbal and non-verbal communication patterns of men and women.

There is a cultural and biological foundation for these differences.

While these differences exist, fathers should not use knowledge of them to assume that their wives/mothers of their children or their daughters will communicate using typical female patterns.

Likewise, their sons—and even the fathers themselves—might not communicate using typical male patterns.

Some of the typical ways in which men communicate make it difficult for women to understand them.

Fathers should be aware of these patterns and develop strategies to enhance communication and understanding. Men, for example, tend to interrupt women during a conversation more often than women interrupt men. Fathers should interrupt less often.

Fathers should give women the time they need to process their emotions and to share them, especially during negative interactions.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- How much do I know about the typical ways in which men and women communicate?
- What are my typical verbal and non-verbal communication patterns? Are they like other men or are they different?
- Which of my verbal and non-verbal communication patterns help me communicate well with women? Which of my communication patterns keep me from communicating well with women?
- What drives me crazy about the ways in which my wife/mother of my children, or my daughter(s), communicates verbally and non-verbally? Why do these patterns drive me crazy? How can I learn to accept her (their) patterns so that I can understand her (them) better?

Topic 8:

Building Healthy Marriages and Relationships

Children look to their father's relationship with their mother as the blueprint for developing their own relationships.

Background

The most important relationship in the home is the relationship between the father and mother. How well the father gets along with the mother affects their children every day. This is true whether the father and mother are married to each other or not. Children look to their father's relationship with their mother as the blueprint for developing their own relationships. If a father's relationship with the mother is healthy, then the children will have a model for what a healthy relationship looks like.

If the father and mother are married to each other, help them keep their relationship strong. If the father is struggling in the marriage, let him know about programs and other resources (e.g. counseling) that offer help. If the father and mother live together but aren't married, encourage dad to think seriously about marrying her. Children tend to be much healthier physically, emotionally, and socially when they grow up with married parents.

If the father and mother don't live together, and there is no hope of them getting together, help the father develop a relationship with the mother in which they support the other parent's relationship with their children. The father must help the mother to be the best parent she can be, and vice versa. Dads in this situation should do nothing to harm the relationships between mothers and their children. This might be tough at times because of the history between couples and because mothers often act as gatekeepers preventing or making it very difficult for non-custodial and non-residential fathers to spend time with their children.

The most significant barrier that you might encounter in working with fathers on the topic of marriage is resistance within your organization to even mentioning the "M word." Many people believe that marriage, and relationships in general, are private issues and that an organization shouldn't get involved in "promoting" marriage. All too often staff will allow their personal



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histories with relationships—such as failed marriages or growing up in a divorced home—to color their professional decisions about whether to discuss marriage with their clients.

If you encounter this barrier, there are two actions you can take to overcome it. First, educate yourself and then your co-workers about the facts on marriage and child well-being. National Fatherhood Initiative® has some excellent resources listed at the end of this guide on the benefits of marriage for children, men and women, and society. Second, position the importance of addressing marriage on the concepts of **choice and building healthy and mature marriages**.

You don't have to bludgeon fathers with messages about the importance of marriage—just give them the facts. Indeed, the organization should avoid shoving marriage down people's throats. The organization should help married couples who have already **chosen** marriage to have the healthiest and most mature marriage possible. If a couple is not married and has decided to get married (e.g. they're engaged), then the organization should help them prepare for marriage—to learn the skills they will need to build and maintain a healthy and mature marriage. If, however, a couple does not want to marry, the organization should present the couple with the facts about marriage and child well-being, help the couple develop the skills that will keep their relationship strong, and accept the couple's decision not to marry.

Basic Learning Objectives

The most important relationship to the health and well-being of children is their parents' relationship.

Children learn so many critical things from their parents' relationship.

They learn how important it is: (1) for mom and dad to put their relationship first; (2) that mom and dad support each other; (3) that mom and dad respect each other; (4) that mom and dad trust each other; (5) that mom and dad solve conflicts in a healthy way; and (6) that mom and dad show affection towards one another.

If the father's relationship with the mother is not healthy, it's okay to seek help.

Some fathers find it very difficult to seek help for any problem they have, let alone problems with their relationships. Fathers often think that they should be able to solve problems on their own and to not do so is a sign of weakness and failure.

Children, on average, are healthier physically, emotionally, and socially when they grow up with their two married parents.

This fact does not mean that a child is doomed to failure if they grow up in a home with a single parent or cohabitating parents. It means that, on average, the child is at a reduced risk of poor outcomes if they grow up with married parents.

The success of a marriage depends as much on the skills of the partners in navigating the ups and downs that come with marriage as it does on the love between them.

Love waxes, wanes, and evolves during a marriage. The most successful couples understand this fact and know that it is their relationship skills that will help them maintain the health of their relationship. The most successful marriages are marked not by the lack of conflict, but on how well couples resolve conflict.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- How healthy and mature is my relationship with the mother of my children? What are our problems? How can we overcome our problems for the sake of our children? Do we need help in addressing the problems?
- Do I have the skills I need to develop and maintain a healthy relationship with the mother of my children? Which skills do I need to work on the most?
- How much do I know about the importance to children of growing up with two married parents?
- What did you learn from your parents' marriage or their decision not to marry? How is this affecting you now?
- (If a father is not married to the mother, but living with her) Should I marry the mother of my children? Do I want to marry her? Does she want to marry me? Why haven't we gotten married? Have we discussed getting married?

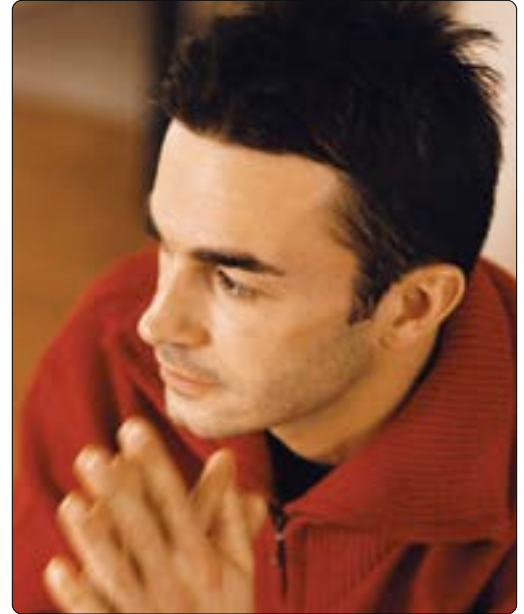
“In almost all cultures, men learn that to express emotions—especially those associated with pain and sadness—is a sign of weakness.”

Topic 9:

Dealing with Emotions

Background

Many years ago a report on CNN recounted the horrific story of a man who entered a home in Atlanta and killed all the members of a family except one—a ten-year-old boy. The boy locked himself in an upstairs closet to escape the carnage. The police found him as they searched the home after the killings. Outside the hospital where doctors had examined the boy, a reporter interviewed the minister of the church this boy’s family had attended. When asked how the boy had held up through this tragedy, the minister said with his face and voice full of pride, “If he wasn’t a man before, he sure is now.” It was amazing that this minister was proud that a tragedy of this magnitude had made a man out of a ten year-old boy. He had likened the tragedy to a right of passage into manhood.



The socialization of American boys to deny their feelings begins early. Nowhere is this socialization more evident than in sports. During the first soccer game that this author’s eldest daughter ever played, the father of one of the boys playing that day ceaselessly berated his son because the boy chose not to play. It was this boy’s first soccer game, and probably his first experience with sport. The boy came to his father looking for comfort, but his father refused to hold him. The boy cried. The father yelled at his son to stop crying. The boy continued his attempts to connect with his father in the only way he knew how—for his father to hold him. His father spurned him, again and again, as he continued to berate the boy for his choice not to play, and because the boy cried. The father lashed out, “We signed you up for soccer, and you will play!” The boy turned his attention to his older sister. He walked over to her and sat down in her lap as she wrapped her arms around him. When the father saw his daughter holding his son, he screamed, “Let him go! Don’t show him any pity!” The daughter let go and left the boy to cry alone. This boy was only four years old.

Fathers are not the only parent who socializes their sons in this way. Some mothers also socialize their boys to disconnect from their feelings and their bodies. During the same game, the mother of another boy prevented her son from leaving the field after he injured his knee. The boy limped to the sideline. His mother raced onto the field and forced her son to continue to play, despite his complaints and cries that his knee hurt.

It's critical that fathers learn to connect with their emotions and to express them appropriately.

As noted in “Topic 2: Masculinity and Fatherhood,” men in all cultures learn a set of instructions that create a model of what a man and father should be. In almost all cultures, the model of masculinity that men subscribe to requires that they ignore and suppress most emotions. They learn that to express emotions—especially those associated with pain and sadness—is a sign of weakness. “Emotional” men are often called sissies, wimps, or worse. Anger is the emotion that men are most often allowed to express. But because they suppress their other emotions, men sometimes express anger inappropriately, and it often develops into rage. The inability or unwillingness of men to express emotions often leads to physical and mental disease.

If fathers are to raise healthy children, they must first learn that it is manly to express their emotions and connect with and understand their emotions. They must then learn to express their emotions appropriately. You might encounter some fathers who uncover long-lost feelings and, perhaps, who have suppressed memories that will require the help of a professional counselor. You might also encounter fathers who need help getting their anger and rage under control. Be sure to have a list of resources to refer fathers for assistance.

Basic Learning Objectives

It's critical that fathers learn to connect with their emotions and to express them appropriately.

Contrary to popular opinion, real men are in touch with their emotions and aren't afraid to express them. Men vary in the ways they express emotions.

Men and women process emotions differently.

Research on the brain shows that men use their brains to process emotions in a different way than women do, but that men are just as capable of expressing emotions as are women. Just because a man expresses his emotions, it does not mean that he is “wo-manly.”

In some instances, it's good to suppress emotions.

If a father's family is in danger, for example, suppressing fear can help the father focus and get his family out of danger.

Most mothers want fathers to express their emotions.

Most women appreciate a man who can talk openly about his emotions—not as a “cry baby,” but as a man who knows what he feels and who he is. The expression of emotions improves gender communication.

Fathers must teach their children from an early age to appropriately express their emotions.

This fact applies to sons and daughters. Girls can become as out of touch with their emotions, and as angry and full of rage, as some boys can become.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- How was I raised to express or not express my emotions?
- Am I in touch on a daily basis with all of my feelings and emotions, or only some of them?
- Which feelings and emotions do I express? Which ones do I suppress?
- How can I better connect with and express my feelings and emotions?
- Have the mother of my children and I discussed the different ways in which we express our emotions? How can we respect these differences?
- Am I a good model to my children of a man who is in touch with his emotions and who appropriately expresses them? If not, what do I need to do to become a better model?
- Am I teaching my children how to connect with and appropriately express their emotions? (If no) How can I teach them to do these things? (If yes) How do I teach them these critical skills?

“Anger is a father’s shield that keeps people from touching his anger and him from having to deal with it.”

Topic 10:

Grief and Loss

Background

Perhaps the emotion that fathers have the most difficulty expressing is the grief that results from the losses they encounter. All fathers experience loss, such as the death of a loved one, loss of a job, or divorce. If a father doesn’t live with his children, he faces the loss of his children every day. Losses like these can devastate a father emotionally, spiritually, and financially. Other losses are not as obvious or life changing, but they are losses nonetheless. Examples of loss include losing a ball game, losing a bid for a contract or job, and having to cancel a trip you were really looking forward to.

Loss creates grief, a feeling and process that fathers must work through. Denial of loss, sadness over it, anger about it, and, finally, acceptance of it are part of the grief process. If a father grieves his losses, then he will eventually work through the stage of the process that many men get stuck in—anger. The challenge for most fathers is that they’ve never been taught how to grieve. They’ve learned instead that it’s not manly to grieve. They’ve been told to, “Take it like man!” “Get over it!” and “Grow up!”

Because loss is a part of everyday life, fathers must learn to grieve. If they’ve buried their losses deep inside of them, the losses never go away. The only option they have for keeping people from touching their grief is to become angry. Anger is a father’s shield that keeps people from touching his grief and him from having to deal with it.

Buried grief, and the anger that comes with it, is toxic. Anger can become part of a father’s personality and damage his emotional, spiritual, and physical health. It can cause stress, which has been linked to cancer and other diseases. Some angry fathers withdraw from family and friends and begin to abuse alcohol or other drugs. These dads might physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse their wives and children. These dads sometimes end up in jail.

Helping fathers to grieve past losses and learn how to grieve future losses is one of the most important skills you can help fathers acquire. In working with fathers on this topic, it is vital that you realize men and women tend to grieve differently, and to respect these differences. In other words, don’t direct a man to grieve like a woman.



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Compared to women, men:

1. Tend not to care as well for their own emotional health while they grieve (e.g. express their emotions and work through them).
2. Don't want to be seen to care too much about their emotional pain (e.g. statements like, 'It doesn't hurt that bad' or 'I'm okay' are common).
3. Tend to rely on others (e.g. women) to help them interpret their own emotions and maintain a sense of emotional stability.
4. Tend to need privacy to work through their grief (i.e., might take time away or want to be alone to think things through).
5. Might express more anger.
6. Grieve through ritual activities, such as doing or making something.

Not all men will grieve differently than women. Some men might grieve in ways that women typically use to grieve (e.g. talking things out and crying in public).

When fathers begin to grieve, they might uncover memories that they have suppressed for years. These memories could, for example, be of very emotionally and spiritually devastating experiences. Fathers should process these memories under the watch of a trained counselor. Be sure to have a list of resources that can help fathers grieve these kinds of experiences.

Basic Learning Objectives

Loss means to not have something any longer.

Loss comes about through accident, carelessness, separation, and death.

Grief is the emotional response to loss.

Grief is a process that involves several stages, including anger, and it can take years to move through the process in some cases (e.g. the death of a loved one). The danger for men is that many of them get stuck in the anger stage and never move past it. Don't get stuck in the anger stage.

Fathers must learn to grieve past losses and how to grieve future ones.

Unresolved grief leads to chronic anger or depression.

Fathers must show courage in the face of grief by allowing themselves to experience grief instead of covering it up.

Grieving is courageous and manly.

Fathers should communicate with trusted others about their grief and keep the lines of communication open.

Fathers should take time to reflect on their grief and the causes of it.

They should reflect in private if that is their preference.

Fathers should use rituals and other activities to process their grief.

Fathers should reconnect with their faith, which will help them renew their spirit.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- How do I grieve? What, specifically, do I do when I grieve?
- How well do I grieve? How can I grieve more effectively?
- What kinds of rituals and activities can help me grieve?
- When I need to grieve, who are the friends and family with whom I can communicate about it?
- Do I have any unresolved grief? Are there past losses that I haven't fully grieved or not grieved at all? (If yes) What are they? Do I need help from a professional to help me grieve these losses?

Topic 11:

Men's Health

Background

A father's physical, emotional, and spiritual health affects his ability to become the best father he can be.

The health of our nation's men is in crisis! Although women suffer more often from some ailments, such as autoimmune disorders, on balance men are far and away worse off when it comes to health outcomes. Consider these startling facts on the state of men's physical health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: 1) men live an average of five years less than do women; 2) the death rate for men (per 100,000) is higher than women for 9 of the 10 leading causes of death, including suicide (nearly 4 times higher for men); 3) 92 percent of work-related deaths strike men; 4) men perish from drug overdoses at a rate of 18.3 (per 100,000) compared to 11.1 for women; 5) 70 percent of alcohol-induced deaths are among men; 6) more men than women use alcohol, binge drink, and drink heavily; and 7) more men than women are obese.



The picture of health for men of color, especially for Black men, is worse than it is for white men. The life expectancy for Black men is seven years less than it is for white men. The death rate for Black men is higher than the death rate for American men of other races and ethnicities. Compared with white men, Hispanic and Native American men lose more years of potential life to chronic liver disease or cirrhosis of the liver, diabetes, and homicide. The death rate, however, for white men, from all causes combined, is higher than it is for any other racial or ethnic group, except for Black men.

What does this crisis have to do with fatherhood? It has a lot to do with fatherhood. A father's physical, emotional, and spiritual health affects his ability to become the best father he can be. The time that children have with their fathers can be cut short by a father's premature death from poor health. And the time a father dedicates to his children can compete with his desire to engage in unhealthy behavior (e.g. abusing alcohol and other drugs).

Many fathers struggle with healthcare issues every day. Unfortunately, our society does little or nothing for these men. While society has paid some attention to men's health in recent years, the focus of our nation on women's health stands in stark contrast to the lack of attention paid to men's health. This lack of focus on men's health does not reflect a conspiracy against men. The focus on women's health has been so keen that, when combined with the lack of value that our culture places on men's health, we have created an unbalanced approach to the health of all people.

Many men learn to deny the signs of ill health, and ... by the time they seek help; it's often too late to reverse illness.

One of the keys to understanding the state of men's health is how men are raised in this country to be men. (Refer to "Topic 2: Masculinity and Fatherhood" and "Topic 9: Dealing with Emotions" for more information on how men are raised.) What men learn about being a man affects our entire culture, including whether or not we will ever address the crisis of men's health. Many men learn to deny the signs of ill health, and that it's a sign of weakness to seek help for their health. This denial can lead men to avoid help for so long that, by the time they seek help; it's often too late to reverse illness.

Despite the lack of focus that our society places on men's health, fathers are responsible for taking care of themselves. So, it's critical that you provide information on men's health for fathers, including information on issues that affect certain fathers more than others (e.g. prostate cancer for Black fathers). Consider building free or low-cost healthcare screenings into your programs or services for fathers. Help fathers understand the importance of taking care of their physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

Basic Learning Objectives

Fathers must take care of their physical, emotional, and spiritual health to become the best fathers and husbands they can be.

Learn the basics of taking care of physical health, and make them habits.

The basics are eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and getting adequate sleep.

Go to the doctor for annual check-ups and when sick.

Seek ways to reduce stress.

Stress is a leading cause of emotional distress. Chronic stress has been linked to physical illness, including cancer.

Seek ways to balance work and family life.

Many fathers experience stress because they are torn between work and family. This importance of balancing work and family is explored in more detail in "Topic 16: Balancing Work and Family."

Consider joining a community of faith.

Connecting with other people who have a similar faith is one of the best ways for a father to care for his spiritual health.

Consider joining or forming a fathers' support network.

This is another excellent strategy to help fathers care for their emotional and spiritual health. The importance of sharing the challenges of fatherhood and life with other fathers in a supportive atmosphere is explored in more detail in "Topic 15: Power of a Fathers' Support Group and Network."

Basic Questions for Fathers

- How well do I care for my physical health? When was the last time I had a check-up? Have I been having physical problems for a while, such as aches and pains, that won't go away and that I should get checked out?
- What is the health history of my family (both on mother's and father's sides)? What does this history tell me I should watch out for (e.g. heart disease or cancer)? Does my doctor know about my family medical history?
- Do I have a lot of stress in my life? Am I always feeling stressed out? Do I deal with my stress in unhealthy ways (e.g. drink alcohol or become angry and lash out at my family)? How can I reduce my stress in healthy ways?
- Do I need to do a better job at balancing work and family? (If yes) How?

Sexual self-worth for fathers is closely tied to their feelings about their masculinity and overall health and well-being.

Topic 12: Sexuality

Background

How many times have you heard the word “sexuality” uttered by men or been used to refer to men? Do men know the difference between “sex” and “sexuality” or understand the concept of “sexual self-worth?” The sad fact is that most men don’t know the difference between sex and sexuality, nor do they understand the concept of sexual self-worth. Most men, unfortunately, are raised to focus on the physical act of sex as the end all and be all of their sexual nature as human beings.



The focus of many men on the physical act of sex leads many of them away from the notion that they, like women, are sexual beings and that they must care for their sexual nature. Indeed, sexuality has to do with aspects related to being a sexual human being, such as our appearance, smell, and body image. The physical act of sex is only one aspect of our sexual nature.

There are several key aspects of our sexual nature that men must learn if they are to get in touch with their sexuality. These aspects include body image (the view a person has of their body), touch (the ability to give and receive intimate touch), physical sexual response (the ability to give and receive sexual touch and enjoy it), and intimacy (the feeling of closeness shared in emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and sexual communication). The latter aspect—intimacy—is explored in more detail in the next topic.

A father developing a healthy sense of his sexuality is a key to healthy sexual relations between a father and the mother of his children and to a father’s ability to raise children who understand their nature as sexual human beings. It’s also vital to a man’s ability to protect and not violate another’s sexual nature (e.g. via inappropriate touch, molestation, and rape) and, just as importantly, to protect his own sexual nature from violation by others. A healthy sense of sexuality leads to responsible sexual behavior (e.g. delaying sex until marriage) and to respect and trust in relationships.

When working with fathers on this topic, help them develop their sexual self-worth, which refers to fathers’ overall thoughts and feelings they have about their nature as sexual human beings. Sexual self-worth for fathers is closely tied to their feelings about their masculinity and overall health and well-being, two topics covered in detail earlier in this guide. Consequently, as you help fathers develop their sexual self-worth, you will help them create a healthy view of masculinity and, as a consequence, develop physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthier men in the process.

*Fathers
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Keep in mind that adequately addressing sexuality will take more than a lecture or short workshop for fathers to fully explore this issue, especially with fathers whose backgrounds include irresponsible sexual behavior or outright violations of another's sexual nature (e.g. rape and the sexual abuse of children). Be very careful about how and when to introduce this topic. Get advice from a licensed psychologist, therapist, counselor, or clergy on how to address sexuality. And keep a list of community resources on hand so that you can refer fathers for help, if needed, as they develop a healthy sense of sexual self-worth.

Basic Learning Objectives

Human sexuality involves much more than the physical act of sex.

It involves body image, the ability to give and receive intimate touch, the ability to give and receive sexual touch and enjoy it, and intimacy.

Developing a healthy sense of sexuality is a key to healthy sexual relations with the mother of your children.

It leads to responsible sexual behavior within relationships and to mutual respect and trust between partners.

Fathers must respect the sexual boundaries of the mothers of their children.

Fathers have a responsibility to help their children develop a healthy sense of sexuality.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- How do I define sexuality? What does it mean to have sexual self-worth?
- Aside from the physical act of sex, how can I express my sexuality with the mother of my children?
- What is my view of my body (e.g. positive or negative)? (If negative) Why do I have a negative body image? How can I develop a more positive view?
- How often do my wife/the mother of my children and I touch each another intimately (e.g. cuddling and massages) without having sex? (If not often) How can I give this kind of touch more often?
- How often do my wife/the mother of my children and I have intimate emotional or spiritual discussions? (If not often) How can we have these discussions more often?
- Am I able to ask for and receive intimate touch and enjoy it? Do I most often give intimate touch for the pleasure of my wife/the mother of my children? (If yes) How can I also focus on my own pleasure?
- As I grew up, what did I learn about sexuality? What did my father teach me about it? What did my mother teach me about it?
- (If his children are old enough to address the topic of sexuality) How well am I helping my children develop a healthy sense of their sexuality? What more can I do to help them?

When men try to form long-term relationships with women, they often have difficulty understanding that there are other forms of intimacy—namely, emotional and spiritual intimacy—that exist in tandem with and separate from sexual intimacy ...

Topic 13: Intimacy

Background

Before reading the rest of the information on this topic, write down the first few words or phrases that pop into your mind when you hear the word “intimate.” Did you write down words or phrases like “a close friend,” “personal,” “confidential,” “emotional,” or “spiritual?” Or did you write down words or phrases like “sex,” “sexual,” or “making love?”



When some men hear the word “intimate” or “intimacy,” they immediately think of sex because most men are raised to equate intimacy with sexual acts. In the absence of elder men who have historically raised boys to understand that sex is only one form of intimacy, many boys and young men mark their passage from boyhood to manhood when they have their first sexual encounter and by how many sexual encounters they have. Consequently, when men try to form long-term relationships with women, they often have difficulty understanding that there are other forms of intimacy—namely, emotional and spiritual intimacy—that exist in tandem with and separate from sexual intimacy, and that these forms of intimacy are vital to establishing and maintaining healthy relationships.

This difficulty often leads to problems for men in their relationships because women typically seek much more than a sexually intimate relationship. Women often use derogatory terms, such as “shallow” and “tool,” to refer to men who see sex as the only form of intimacy. The problem for shallow men is that when relationships move from the initial infatuation stage and into their natural ebbs and flows, these men run for cover. These “flying boys” are unable to develop truly meaningful relationships as they fly from one relationship to another, never staying on the ground long enough to experience a truly meaningful relationship. The focus on “intimacy-as-sex” prevents men from developing relationships with other men that are emotionally and spiritually intimate. The ability of a man to form emotionally and spiritually intimate relationships with other men is a key to his overall health and well-being and his effectiveness as a father. Unfortunately, many men are uncomfortable developing these kinds of relationships with other men.

When flying boys become fathers, they encounter the same difficulty in establishing emotionally and spiritually intimate relationships with their children. This difficulty is one reason that some fathers abandon their families. Many fathers don’t know how to raise children capable of emotional and spiritual intimacy, so they inadvertently perpetuate a cycle that harms the very spirits and souls of their children.

Emotionally and spiritually intimate relationships with other men are an important factor for fathers in achieving a positive state of well-being.

In working with men on this topic, it's critical that you help them understand what intimacy truly means. An intimate relationship can involve sexual, emotional, and spiritual intimacy. A father's relationship with his wife should involve all three forms. A relationship in which all three forms are present will provide the best environment in which to raise children. Fathers should also create relationships with their children that achieve a healthy level of emotional and spiritual intimacy that is appropriate for the age of their children. Be prepared for a lot of joking and humor from fathers as they address this issue. Cracking jokes and using humor helps some men process sensitive subject matter.

Basic Learning Objectives

Sexual intimacy is only one form of intimacy and is, obviously, not appropriate in all relationships.

Emotional intimacy and spiritual intimacy are two other forms of intimacy that are critical to developing healthy relationships with friends, spouses, and children.

A key role for a father is to develop emotionally and spiritually intimate relationships with his children and to help them to learn and be comfortable with these forms of intimacy in their own relationships.

A father must become comfortable with these forms of intimacy in his own life before he can address them in the lives of his children.

Emotionally and spiritually intimate relationships with other men are an important factor for fathers in achieving a positive state of well-being.

Only in these kinds of relationships can a man and father share his innermost feelings and emotions with people who truly understand where he's coming from—other men and fathers. No one knows what it's like to be a man and father than do other men and fathers. These relationships allow fathers to "get things off their chest" in a safe environment, which helps them to be better dads and to not lean on their wives as their only source of emotional support. The power of men intimately sharing with one another is why fatherhood programs that have a support group as a central component are so effective. Emotional and spiritual intimacy between men is healthy and needed.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- What did I learn from my father and mother about intimacy? Did I learn that there are different forms of intimacy? How has what I learned about intimacy affected my relationships with my wife/mother of my children, my children, and friends?
- How would I characterize the level of the three forms of intimacy (sexual, emotional, and spiritual) in the relationship with my wife/the mother of my children? Do I need to focus more on any of these forms of intimacy to create a truly meaningful and healthy relationship with her?
- How would I characterize the level of emotional and spiritual intimacy with my children? Is that level appropriate for their age? Do I need to focus more on either form of intimacy to create a truly meaningful and healthy relationship with them?
- What am I doing to help my children to become comfortable with emotional and spiritual intimacy in their own relationships? Do I need to do more?
- Am I comfortable being emotionally and spiritually intimate with other men? (If no) Why not? What do I fear from developing these kinds of relationships?

*Becoming
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and
committed
father.*

Topic 14:

Power of Spirituality

Background

Many fathers say that they have been transformed by what their religious beliefs teach about the role of a father. As a result, some fatherhood programs are rooted in scriptural principles, teaching fathers to follow those principles as they raise their children.



Scripture not only guides its followers, it connects them to the “spirit” of their souls. **Spirituality** is our moral, religious, or emotional nature as humans. It is a part of who we are—just like our arms, legs, heads, etc. **Religion** is a set of rituals, traditions, and dogma that reflect certain beliefs about the universe, our place in it, and how we are linked to a higher power. Religion offers a means by which people can connect with their spirit and soul and with one another.

Spirituality and religion can exist together and apart from each other. In other words, a person does not need to be religious to be spiritual. This fact is critical because, in some instances, an organization might be prohibited from using a “faith-based” approach (i.e., one rooted in a specific religion) to work with fathers. These organizations can focus on spirituality without having to discuss religion. Regardless of whether you choose or are able to use a faith-based approach, it is vital that you help fathers connect to the power of spirituality and the impact that it can have on helping fathers to become involved, responsible, and committed in the lives of their children and to create a strong family with well-adjusted children.

Spirituality creates a feeling of membership or belonging to a cause or group, including a family. One of the greatest concerns today is the feeling of disconnection between children and their parents. This feeling is more than the normal misunderstandings that occur between parents and children. It is a modern-day chasm between parents and children created by a lack of time spent together in work, play, and meaningful dialogue. When the members of a family feel disconnected, it damages their spirits and souls—the very core of their being. Children who are disconnected are more likely to do harm to others and to themselves as a consequence.

In working with fathers on this issue, it’s vital you communicate that spirituality is an important part of being a father and of a family. The best fathers use their spirituality as an internal compass that guides them in their fathering. A “spiritual family” is one that feels all its members are part of the family, and is one in which each member feels they belong. The members of a “spiritual family” communicate with and cooperate, love, and respect one another. One role of the spiritual father is to create a sense of connection among family members.

The spiritual father helps his children find meaning and purpose in life.

Basic Learning Objectives

Spirituality is our moral, religious, or emotional nature as humans.

It's an undeniable part of who we are.

Becoming a spiritual father is vital to becoming an involved, responsible, and committed father.

Spiritual involvement is part of involvement from a holistic perspective—that is, involved physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. The spiritual father teaches his children to be spiritual and, if he's religious, the scriptural principles and traditions of his religion that will guide his children throughout life.

The spiritual father creates a family environment in which each member feels they belong and are connected to every other member.

He understands that the most important factor that will protect his children from harm is the love and connection to family. He establishes family traditions that create a sense of connectedness.

The spiritual father helps his children find meaning and purpose in life.

He guides them in using their own spirituality to follow their hearts and minds in developing a meaningful and fulfilling career. He does not live vicariously through his children.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- What is spirituality? Is being spiritual different from being religious? (If yes) How so? Am I both a spiritual and religious man?
- What does it mean to be a “spiritual” father? How is being spiritual a critical part of being an involved, responsible, and committed father?
- Was my father a spiritual or religious man? Was he both? What did he teach me about spirituality? (If he was religious) How did my father use religion (i.e., scripture and traditions) in his own fathering?
- What does a spiritual father teach his children?
- How does a spiritual father develop a family environment in which all members feel they belong and that they're connected to every other member?
- (If the father is religious) What does my faith teach me about being a father? What do the scriptures say I should be doing to become a better dad?
- What do I need to do to help my children find their “calling”—their meaning and purpose in life? Do I live vicariously through my children? (If yes) How can I stop living vicariously through them?

Men with strong social networks are healthier than men with weak ones.

Topic 15:

Power of a Fathers' Support Group and Network

Background

The quality of the relationships that a man has is just as important to his health as is going to the doctor, eating right, and exercising. Men with strong social networks are healthier than men with weak ones. They live longer than do men with weak networks. It's vital that fathers have people in their lives with whom they feel safe to share their feelings and to talk with about the challenges of fatherhood. No one understands better what it means to be a man and father than does another man and father.



The challenge in working with fathers on this topic is helping them develop social networks comprised of other fathers capable and willing to express emotional and spiritual intimacy.

(See “Topic 13: Intimacy” for further information on the struggles some men have with this issue.) Many cultures discourage the formation of intimate ties among men. Indeed, American culture discourages men from seeking emotional and spiritual intimacy from other men. So, in many ways, you will be swimming against the tide when working with men on this topic.

The result of being raised in a culture that discourages emotional and spiritual intimacy among men is that most men seek this kind of intimacy solely from women, which creates a huge and undue burden on mothers to support the emotional and spiritual needs of fathers. The social networks of many fathers include men with whom they might play sports or have a beer. But when it comes to help with a crisis, many fathers, and men in general, have few, if any, male friends they can turn to for emotional or spiritual support. Here is some advice on building a network of dads that can support a father's role as a father and, if he's married, as a husband.

The most effective way to help fathers create an intimate support network is to start a support group. Many organizations use fatherhood curricula designed for a group setting. Contact National Fatherhood Initiative® for information on our fatherhood programs and workshops,

Create a support group for fathers, or encourage fathers to create their own support group.

some of which are referenced throughout this guide, or visit our website at www.fathersource.org. These programs and workshops provide the structure that many fathers need to feel comfortable when sharing intimately with other fathers.

If you are unable or unwilling to create a support program for fathers, there might be support programs in your community, such as those offered in a faith or secular setting, to which you can refer fathers. You can also encourage fathers to create their own support group.

Basic Learning Objectives

Identify which friends you can safely talk with about your emotions and feelings.

Spend more time with these dads. This doesn't mean that fathers should end current friendships as long as these friendships don't discourage fathers from being involved in the lives of their children and family. But they should seek to develop and nurture friendships in which they can talk about the challenges and joys of fathering.

Find another father who can be your mentor on fathering.

A mentor can be an older man or even a younger man. A father should choose someone he admires as a father and man. He should not be afraid to admit that he needs assistance every once in a while.

Join or start a support group for fathers.

Make sure that the group deals with the nuts and bolts of being a good dad and with the emotional and spiritual issues faced by dads and husbands.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- What did I learn growing up about the value of sharing intimately with other men and fathers? Did I learn whether it was wrong to share intimately with other men and fathers? How comfortable do I feel sharing intimately with other men and fathers?
- Have you ever bared your soul to another man? (If no) Why not? (If yes) Describe the experience. How did baring your soul make you feel?
- Who among my friends can I talk with honestly and safely about the challenges and joys of fathering and being a husband? Do I have enough of these friends? (If no) Do I know of other fathers with whom I can develop an emotionally and spiritually intimate friendship? (If yes) Do I spend enough time with these friends?
- Who could I ask to be my mentor on fathering? What do I have to gain by developing these kinds of intimate friendships with other fathers? What do I have to lose?
- Am I willing to join or start a support group for fathers? (If yes) What do I need to do to bring this about?

Work responsibilities are the most significant barriers to fathers being the best dads they can be.

Topic 16:

Balancing Work and Family

Background

One of the primary challenges that fathers confront in becoming involved, responsible, and committed dads is the challenge of balancing work and family. Indeed, NFI's *Pop's Culture* survey (referred in the introduction to this guide and that you can download at www.fatherhood.org for free) revealed that work responsibilities are the most significant barriers to fathers being the best dads they can be.

Even though fathers today hear more often the message that they should be and can be more than a provider, they continue to hear the long-standing message that they must spend long hours at work to get ahead. These competing messages pull fathers in opposite directions, which causes them a great deal of stress in trying to balance the demands of work and home.

Many fathers and employers operate under the myth that if a father tries to balance work and family that he will not be as productive or advance at work. The fact is research shows fathers who balance work and family are more productive at work than fathers who don't. Research also reveals that fathers who balance work and family advance faster and farther than fathers who focus on work at the expense of their families.

Why are fathers who balance work and family more successful at work and at home? Part of the reason is that they are happier with their lives. They have the best of both worlds—success at work and at home—so they are more likely to be focused when at work (e.g. less likely to make mistakes), less likely to suffer the stress associated with unreasonably long hours at work, less likely to call in sick just to spend time with their families or to recover from illness, and more committed to their employers overall.

In focusing on this topic, it's vital that you work with **fathers and employers**. Teach fathers strategies they can use at work and at home that will maximize the time they spend with their children and families. Help employers understand that instituting father-friendly policies is good for employers' bottom line.



Encourage fathers to talk with employers about ways to spend time with family and remain productive at work.

When working with fathers on this topic, keep several things in mind. First, account for the unique circumstances of each father. If, for example, a father works two or three jobs to make ends meet, then he can spend only so much time with his family. Still, there might be strategies he can use to maximize the time he spends with his children and family. Work with these dads to tailor strategies that meet their needs and wants. Second, understand that men are raised to define themselves through work. Their sense of masculinity is often tied up in success at work (i.e., to be a successful man, a father must succeed at work), which is why the provider role has always been central to a man's sense of who he is as a person. Don't tell fathers that work isn't important and that their role as a provider is less important than their roles as nurturer for their children and partner to their wives/the mother of their children. Indeed, providing for the family is a nurturing act and a sign of commitment to the mother.

Basic Learning Objectives

Fathers who balance work and family are more successful at work and at home than fathers who don't.

A father's roles as nurturer of his children and partner to his wife/the mother of his children is as important as his role as provider for the family.

Encourage fathers to take advantage of employer benefits that can help balance work and family.

Find out if employers offer flextime, telecommuting, shift swapping, or other similar benefits.

Encourage fathers to talk with employers about ways to spend time with family and remain productive at work.

Many employers understand the importance of family. Make employers allies in helping balance work and family.

When at home, maximize time with family.

Find simple ways to spend more time with family, such as eating together, watching less TV, and helping children with homework.

Limit work on weekends, holidays, and vacations.

Don't make a habit of working on your days off. You need time away from work to focus on family time.

Basic Questions for Fathers

- What is most important to me—success at work or success at home?
- Do I fear that, if I try to balance work and family, my employer won't value me as much as they do now? Is this fear based in reality?
- How much control do I have over my work schedule? Do I have enough control to be more flexible in when I work so that I can spend more time with my family?
- Does my employer offer benefits that can help me balance work and family? (If yes) Am I taking advantage of them? (If no) How can I encourage my employer to offer them?
- Other than taking advantage of the benefits that are offered by my employer, how can I work with my employer to balance work and family?
- When I'm at home, am I maximizing the time I spend with my family? If no, what can I do or not do at home to maximize my time with family?
- When I'm at home, how often do I work or think about work? (If often) Does this prevent me from focusing on time with family? Is this fair to my family and me?
- Do I tend to work on weekends, holidays, and even vacations? (If yes) Does this prevent me from focusing on time with family? Is this fair to my family and me?

Children develop their relationships with money by watching how their parents handle and talk about money.

Topic 17:

Financial Responsibility

Background

“I want my two dollars!” is a familiar refrain of children when allowance time rolls around. These days, of course, children might demand more than two dollars. Regardless of how much of an allowance parents give to their children, it’s often the first strategy parents use to teach their children financial responsibility. An allowance, when tied to chores, teaches kids that they must earn their money. Many parents take the idea of earning pay one step further by setting up savings accounts so that their children learn the value of saving money for the future—a lesson in delayed gratification.



An allowance instills more in children than a first lesson in financial responsibility. It begins a life-long process of developing a **relationship with money**. Everyone has a relationship with money, and it comes with all of the emotions present in relationships between people. Children develop their relationships with money by watching how their parents handle and talk about money. Think about your childhood. What was the relationship your parents had with money? Did your parents often talk about money? Moreover, how often did they fight about money? What did you learn about the value of a dollar (or peso, yen, or euro)? Did your parents teach you to save money, or was their focus on spending every penny they earned? Your answers to these kinds of questions form the foundation of your relationship with money.

Unfortunately for many fathers, they did not learn how to be responsible with money. They might be in debt up to their eyeballs or have an addiction to gambling. They might exist on either end of the “spend versus save” continuum—they spend everything they earn or hoard their money and never spend it. And there will undoubtedly be differences in the ways that they and the mothers of their children relate to money. A father’s relationship to money is something that he will teach directly and indirectly to his children.

Fortunately, there are many excellent resources you can use to teach fathers how to be financially responsible. These resources refer to financial responsibility by a variety of names, such as “money management,” “personal finance,” and “financial literacy.” They typically focus on debt

“One of the most important things that a father can teach his children is to have a healthy relationship with money.”

consolidation, saving, investing, developing a healthy relationship with money, and, in some cases, teaching children financial responsibility.

The challenge in working with fathers on this topic is to tailor a program to meet the needs and wants of the fathers you serve. Survey them to find out their needs, wants, and interests. Two of the best resources on financial responsibility are the **National Endowment for Financial Education** (www.nefe.org) and the **National Institute of Financial Education** (www.niofe.org). Both offer free online lessons, programs, and other resources that address a number of issues within the realm of financial responsibility that you can use to design a lecture or workshop for dads.

Basic Learning Objectives

People have a relationship with money just as they have relationships with people.

This relationship comes with all of the emotions that a father will find in his relationships with people. To achieve financial success, it's vital that fathers develop a healthy relationship with money.

One of the most important things that a father can teach his children is to have a healthy relationship with money.

How he and the mother of his children handle and talk about money helps his children develop their own relationships with money.

Fathers and mothers should identify the similarities and differences in their “money-management styles.”




They should develop a financial plan for the family that rests on their similarities and respects their differences. The plan should be based on values that the mother and father share (e.g. sending their children to college). How they spend their money should be linked to their common values.

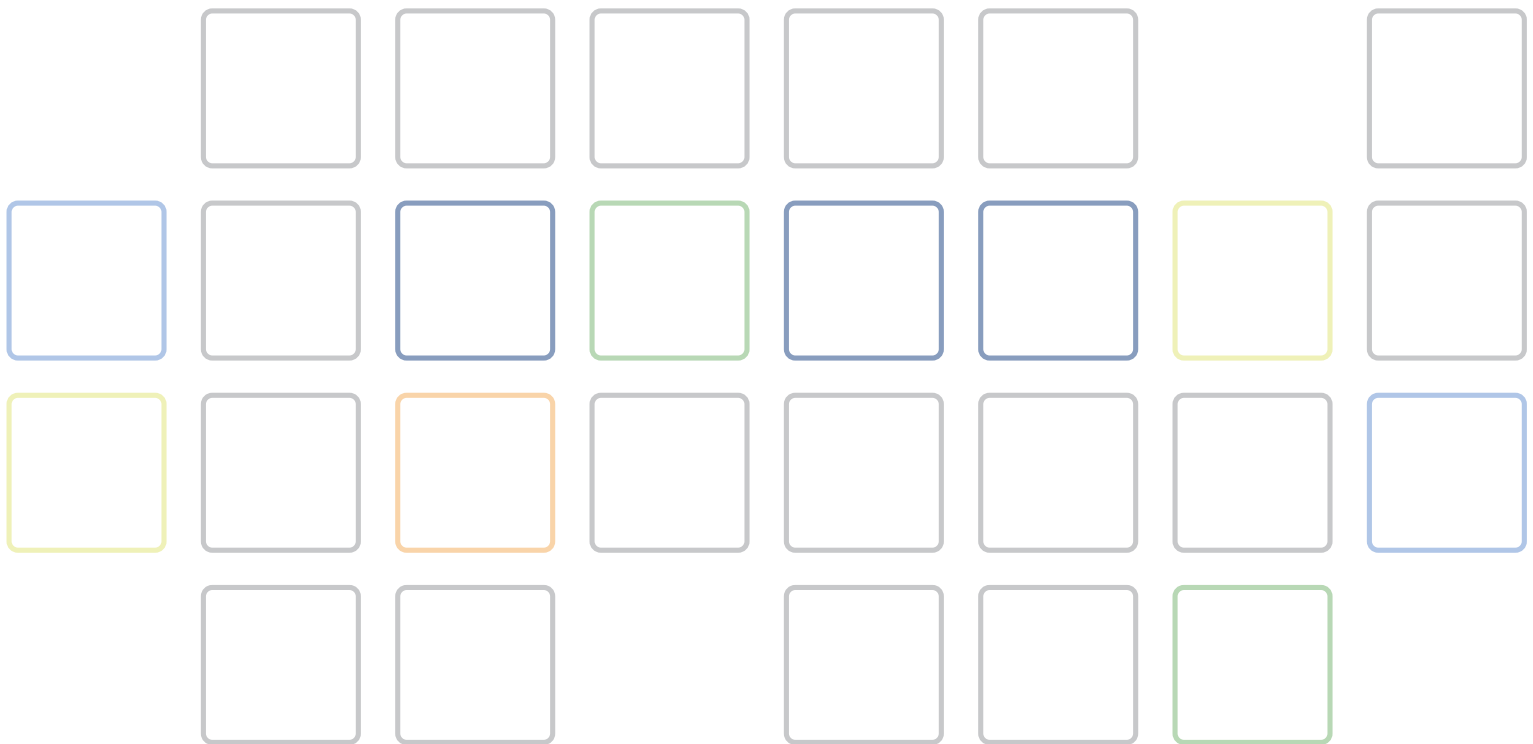
Basic Questions for Fathers

- What is my relationship with money? Do I tend to spend or save everything I earn?
- What is the money-management style of my wife/mother of my children? How does it differ from mine? What conflicts do our differences create?
- How often do my wife/mother of my children and I fight about money? How often do we fight about money in front of our children? What's the real reason we fight about money?
- What do I value in life? How can I link my financial plan to my values (and to those of my wife/mother of my children)?
- What did I learn about money from my parents? Who controlled the money in my parents' home?

National Fatherhood Initiative®

PO Box 37635, PMB 84123
Philadelphia, PA, 19101-0635
301-948-0599 ■ fax: 301-948-6776
info@fatherhood.org
fatherhood.org ■ fathersource.org

 www.fatherhood.org/championing-fatherhood
 www.facebook.com/nationalfatherhoodinitiative
 @thefatherfactor



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