



**CARING DADS AND MOMS** — All over the world, across all cultures, a dad's instinct is different than a mom's intuition. However, the desire to feel connected to one's own children is the same for both dads and moms. Each parent expresses different styles, hues, shades, and degrees of emotional connection with children. Here are a few examples of how dads and moms care and parent differently:

**DADS** **PARENTING STYLES** **MOMS**

- More often holds baby at arms length, makes eye contact, tosses into the air, faces baby out against his chest or props on shoulder, underscoring a sense of freedom and exploration.
- Picks up baby 50% of the time to "make something happen".
- Less predictable and more activating interactions.
- Offers less immediate support when a child is frustrated, promoting adaptive problem-solving skills.
- Promotes independence outside the home.
- Promotes exploratory freedom.
- Predilection for action with children.
- Tends to focus on helping a child with emotional regulation.
- Challenges a child to expand vocabulary and linguistic skills: an important building block of academic success.

- More often picks up and wraps baby close to her breast, limits movements, underscoring a sense of comfort, calm, warmth and security.
- Most times picks up an infant to tend to the baby's care.
- More predictable and personal patterns of interactions.
- More likely to intervene more quickly when a child is frustrated and upset.
- Promotes independence inside the home.
- Promotes emotional awareness.
- Predilection for caring for children.
- Tends to focus on helping child with emotional expression.
- Facilitates immediate communication: an important building block in maintaining healthy relationships.

**DADS** **PLAYING AND TEACHING** **MOMS**

- Play less predictable, follows activation-exploration themes.
- Teach via example, emphasize learning from experience.
- More likely to promote a young child's social and intellectual development through physical play.
- Will stress more physical risk-taking.
- Will play to push the child to higher level, and to challenge the child to take more risks, while following rules.
- Spend more time with infant in play:
  - tend to be louder and more boisterous . . .
  - prefer to bounce and excite their babies . . .
  - and chase and play "scary monster" with children.

- Play more conventional, employs traditional themes.
- Teach with focus on the process of learning.
- More likely to promote intellectual and social development through talking, teaching, and while also care giving.
- Will stress emotional security and personal safety.
- Inclined to play at the child's level. Will let the child direct the play, be in charge, to proceed at the child's own pace.
- Spend more time with infant in physical care:
  - are quieter in play . . .
  - tend to cuddle and soothe their babies . . .
  - and calm their children.

*"A wise woman once said to me: 'There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots; the other, wings.'" — Hodding Carter, Where Main Street Meets the River*

**DADS** **AUTONOMY** **MOMS**

- Generally encourage independence, action, and risk taking.
- Tend to see children in relation to the rest of the world.
- Feel it is important to prepare children to cope with the danger and harshness of the "outside world."
- Teaches autonomy and independence even during the child's early years.

- Generally encourage security, safety, care and connection.
- Tend to see the rest of the world in relation to children.
- Feel it is important to protect child from getting hurt by the "outside world" i.e. strangers, illness, accidents, etc.
- More ambivalent about autonomy and independence until the child's elementary school years.

**DADS** **MORAL DEVELOPMENT** **MOMS**

- When interacting with children, focus upon teaching and modeling justice, fairness and duty. Tend to observe and enforce rules sternly and systematically, which teach children objectivity and consequences.
- Discipline with an interest in the societal bottom-line outcome.
- Tend to focus on child's instrumental behaviors: doing.

- When interacting with children, focus upon teaching and modeling sympathy, care and help. Tend to act with grace and compassion in the midst of disobedience, which provide a sense of hopefulness and personal connection.
- Discipline with a focus on impact of behavior on emotional relationships.
- Tend to focus on child's expressive behaviors: feeling.

**GENDER IDENTITY** — Dads help children distinguish masculinity from femininity, and contribute significantly to shaping a child's gender identity. Also, the way dads and moms treat each other influences how children expect to interrelate to adults later in life.

# Dads: Making A Difference

**Understanding and appreciating how different ways of parenting support child development.**

*Based on the research of Kyle Pruett, MD and Marsha Pruett, PhD. For more info review: Partnership Parenting (Da Capo Press 2009) and Fatherhood (Free Press 2000). Reprinted with authors permission.*



*"Anyone can be a father, but it takes someone special to be a dad, and that's why I call you dad, because you are so special to me. You taught me the game and you taught me how to play it right." — Wade Boggs*

## WHY CHILDREN NEED DADS:

Research\* shows when children grow up without positive male role models, responsible fathers, it causes a lifetime of challenges and leads to many serious problems in society. [\\*https://www.fatherhood.gov/content/father-presence](https://www.fatherhood.gov/content/father-presence)

Sadly over 1 in 3 children, more than 24 million, in the United States live without a father in the home.

### According to the National Fatherhood Initiative the presence of a caring, responsible dad:

- Helps reduce moms' parenting stress. Even with dads who live in separate households than moms.
- Significantly reduces child poverty. Without a dad, children are five times more likely to be poor.
- Means children are less likely to be mistreated. Single parenting doubles the risk of abuse and neglect.
- Helps reduce teen pregnancy. Without a caring dad, girls are seven times more likely to get pregnant than peers.
- Means teen boys are less likely to carry guns and deal drugs.
- Helps children do better in school, and reduces behavior and disciplinary challenges with children.
- Improves children's the overall emotional and social well-being, by promoting physical health and safety.

*The info within this FREE brochure should not be used to devalue any type of parenting, gender or sexuality. Share it openly to promote a better appreciation of the rich and dynamic differences between both masculine and feminine parenting, with the understanding individual parenting styles are based more on personal experiences than biology.*

# FATHERING AND MOTHERING IN EARLY LEARNING STAGES:

**Both types of parent nurturing benefit healthy child communication.**

## PRENATAL TO BIRTH

Researchers observe with many women the mothering behavior seems to begin with delivery, as an intimate emotional and biological experience.



The way fathering behavior begins varies. It is more of a social construct. Bonding begins with unique moments for each father-child pair, i.e. first hearing the baby's heartbeat, in the delivery room, or perhaps while caring for his newborn.

- Infants who spend time alone with fathers later show richer social and exploratory behavior than children not exposed to such experiences.

## AT SIX WEEKS OLD

At this age infants respond differently to each parent's voice. A quiet and alert infant will focus more quickly on a mother's voice. While, an upset or fretting infant will calm more readily to a father's voice.

By one month of age, a mother will often pick up and hold her infant the same way 9 times out of 10. On the other hand, a father will pick up and hold his infant a different ways 9 times out of 10.



- A father begins to serve as a second adult to learn from, to provide support and balance the powerful pull of a mother. Dad does this by being interesting, with a different smell, feel, temperament, voice, size and rhythms.

## AT EIGHT WEEKS OLD

In a split screen study older babies who were seated comfortably, showed significantly different responses to an approaching parent. When a baby sees mommy, the eyes narrow, the shoulders relax, heartbeat and breathing decrease. The infant becomes calm in the presence of mom.



When an infant sees daddy, the eyes widen, shoulders raise, the heartbeat and breathing increases. The infant becomes excited in the presence of dad.

- Babies begin to become aware dads typically aren't around as much as moms. Dads seem to pop up at odd times, from this infants learn about comings and goings, transitions, separations and a different nurturing style.

**When asked about the nicest thing of parenting children:** Moms often refer to feelings of love, warmth, and pleasure of raising her child.

## FROM BABY TO TODDLER

A mom will tend to simplify and slow her speech to get and then hold her toddler's attention.

In contrast, a dad uses bigger words, longer sentences and speaks in less rhythmic sequences, perhaps showing a reluctance to baby his child.

When a young child is upset a mother tends to get down on the child's level to soothe her child.

When a young child is upset, a father tends to get down on the child's level in order to redirect his child.

- Fathers help children differentiate his or herself from the mother's personality. Toddlers decisively turn to dad in their second year, as they practice their personal autonomy and differentiation from mom. One of the most critical roles a dad plays during a baby's the transition to a toddler is helping a child safely and securely separate from an intense maternal dependency.



## GROWING FROM TODDLER TO PRESCHOOL

When the child confronts a new situation: a dog, stranger, or new toy, a mom instinctively moves closer, offering the reassurance of her familiar presence.

In similar new situations, a father will tend to stay back and allow his child to explore. He typically stands back three times the distance that a mom will.



In a one-on-one situation a mother will typically use objects from her environment to interact with her pre-school age child: a toy, game, book, doll, puzzle, etc.

When interacting with his pre-school age child, a dad typically (50% of the time) makes use of his body. He becomes a jungle gym, monkey bars, rocking horse, piggy back, or tickles, wrestles, roughhouses, etc.

- For pre-schoolers, fathers have a slight tendency to encourage both genders to play with gender-type toys (i.e. girls with dolls versus boys with trucks).

Dads usually focus on forming, teaching, and building the character of his child.

## Dads: Making A Difference

Men and women have naturally different communication styles, as well as unique approaches to parenting.

Mothers tend to protect their kids, while fathers tend to push them toward independence.

Many professionals advocate "a united front." However, it is much better to understand how to work with parenting differences. At first these differences may seem to cause conflict, but they can actually strengthen the whole family.

When parents individually focus on their own personal challenges, rather than trying to change their partner's approach to parenting, it can make a difference. When parents support each others strengths and unique abilities, it makes a difference.



- Fathers are usually seen as better able to teach sons and daughters assertiveness and long term goal setting.
- Dads can help provide better role modeling experiences for daughters to develop the capacity for intimacy, trust, and even femininity.
- Dads help kids transition into the adult world. This is especially critical for teen boys, who may need affirmation they are "man enough." Without a dad, boys often try to do this through sexual conquest, fighting, drinking, power struggles, coercion and other inappropriate behavior.

**PROTECTIVE FACTORS** — Families confront adversity in many different ways. Parents who learn and use these five universal protective factors can increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect:

- **Social connections:** Developing relationships with others in the community often provides emotional, informational and spiritual support in times of need.
- **Concrete support in times of need:** Knowing about reliable support and services can help with emergent needs and minimize stress caused by adversity.
- **Parental resilience:** Finding healthy ways cope with stress and practicing self-care helps with unexpected challenges.
- **Social and emotional competence of children:** Positive role modeling and making an effort to regularly play, interact, problem-solve and learn with children helps build a sense of self and connection with others.
- **Knowledge of parenting and child development:** Understanding a child's ages and stages, helps focus on caring strategies to support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development.

<https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/>

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