

Newsletter 115  
Parent Edition  
June 2008

*This Month's Theme:*  
**The Important Role of  
Fathers**

Fathers play an important role in the everyday lives of children. The father in their lives can make a great difference in how children about themselves and the world around them.

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*Summer Reading Issue*

## The Importance of Fathers and Men

Men are an important part of your child's life. The man she looks to may be her father, or perhaps, a special grandfather, uncle or friend. The research suggests that male role models influence your child's development. While women hold their children close and protect them, males tend to lovingly push their children out in the world and the result of this gentle push is a less fearful child, one who is more likely to be strong in herself and make important decisions wisely. Children who have fathers in their lives do better in school (National Center for Educational Statistics), have greater ability to take initiative and demonstrate self control (*Fatherneed*, Pruett, 2000). Children with strong male figures in their lives take fewer drugs (USD Department of Health and Human Services, 1993) and they are half as likely to drop out of school (National Center of Health Statistics, 1993).

If you are in the position of being a single Mom by choice or circumstance, you are fully capable of raising healthy, responsible, intelligent children. There is no value judgement made in these studies. The research should be used to educate both parents and educa-

tors on how we can best help our children become strong members of society. We must also acknowledge that single



Mom households tend to be homes where money is scarce, leading to additional social challenges and these can alter research results. However, a Canadian study published in 2007 (NLSCY) found a discrepancy in children's social and emotional health in households where money was plentiful, but there was an absence of any male figure. Can having a good man in your child's life make him more able to handle this complicated world? What do men do that's so important?

It appears that men, more than women, encourage chil-

dren to take on more challenges. In some ways they are the opposite of Moms. Moms protect, feed and hold children close. We know how essential that bond is and how positively it effects later relationships. Babies also bond with their Dads, but there appear to be some differences. Infants who have more contact with their fathers are less sensitive in strange situations. (Kotulcheck, 1976). Even at five months, baby boys who spent more time with their fathers were more friendly with strangers (Pederson, 1979). We can all remember seeing a father tossing his baby in the air, while the Mom is begging him to be careful. The balance of that push and pull appear to be very important. We know that a child's self esteem is not built on what we tell him, but rather what he does successfully. Having a role model who pushes a child to his learning edge and then helps him succeed may be why having a male present tends to help a child feel more powerful. While Moms are perfectly capable of fostering this sense of accomplishment, they tend to want to keep the child they love close and safe and may be less likely to push a child to the perceived dangerous edge of their capabilities.

It has also been found that fathers engage in significantly more social play with children and children will seek them out for play more than mothers. (Frascarolo-Moutinot, 1994) Social play is how children learn how to be social adults. If Dads spend more time engaged in this type of play than Moms, perhaps their role is to give their

child more practice at dealing with relationships and the sensitive balance of personal power we all need to develop. A little girl who engages in a game of warding off the big bad daddy monster who is buried under a blanket is exercising her ability to ward off the real scary people she may come across in life. Very often you see fathers and sons playing pretend sword fighting games, in which women are less likely to engage. These games may be playing a roll in strengthening their sons' ability to understand power and it's place in their lives.

Study continues in the areas of father-child relationships and why a father's presence makes such a difference. There have been many published studies that found children who's fathers spent more time caring for them were more secure, sociable, played more independently with toys and were more compliant with their fathers. We are only in the very early stages of finding out why, yet there is enough research available to give us cause to make sure there are great male role models available for both our girls and boys.

So on this Father's Day, make a big deal about Dad or another male role model in your child's life. Let them know what an important role they play. If Dad is not a present nor positive role model in your child's life it's even more important to celebrate Grandad or her favorite big brother, cousin or uncle by making a gift and spending some special time with them. If you don't have a strong male living in your household or your immediate family look to

close dependable and permanent friendships that can make a positive influence in your child's life. Make sure you have plenty of books that have self confident male characters. I have found this is a challenge; books in the children's section that contain maternal characters far outweigh those that contain paternal characters, but you can find powerful stories if you take the time. (see page 3)

Studies that imply that we need to pay more attention to parenting issues are always controversial because they get taken out of the education conversation and re-emerge as political footballs. Having men in our children's lives does not mean that women are any less important or competent. It may turn out that women and men have different character traits that will give children the strength they need to succeed in all areas of their lives. The research is complicated. The following excerpt from a North Carolina online newspaper says it all simply and from a child's prospective.

"Cathy Robinson remembers her father Robert Booth, helping her play in the ocean when she was ten. She was both excited and afraid of the waves. "He however, seems to feel no fear as he lifts me effortlessly over the breaking waves. My feet can no longer touch the bottom, and I feel both liberated and graceful. Daddy never lets go of my hand, but that doesn't keep us from gliding over the swells of the waves or floating on our backs....We don't talk very much, but we laugh a lot, and I feel content."

# Books About Men

## **Daddy's Girl by Garrison Keillor**

This Daddy loves his little girl and he wants to tell the world. The rhyming love poem is broken into three sections. The first is about changing a diaper, the second, about his daughter's love of bananas and the third about dancing with his exuberant little girl. Love just dances off the page as this little girl finally falls asleep on Daddy's big shoulders. All the father asks of her is that she someday think about her "old man." The sentiment is so simple and universal. Every parent and child will empathize with these strong emotions. (ages 1 - 5)

## **Now One Foot, and the Other By Tomie dePaola**

Bobby's best friend was his Grandpa. His name, Bob, was almost the same as Bobby's. He helped Bobby learn to walk and play blocks, building tall towers. He told him stories and they watched fireworks after dark together. They were very close. One day Bob got sick and couldn't talk or walk anymore. Bobby's parents said that Grandpa didn't recognize anyone anymore, but Bobby discovered that was untrue. He began to build block towers in front of Bob and slowly, but surely, Grandpa began to come out his deep sleep. This time it was Bobby helping Bob learn to hold a spoon and eventually walk. Whenever Tomie dePaola writes a story the emotion felt in the relationships is clearly conveyed with sensitive simplicity. Children and adults alike will understand the bond that exists between grandfather and grandson. (ages 3 - 8)

## **Thank You, Mr. Falker**

Trisha, the youngest in her family, was so excited about learning to read. She did not expect it would be so challenging. She had recently lost her grandparents, who had given her so much confidence, and now she was beginning to feel she was not up to the task. After the family moves, Trisha gets a new teacher, Mr. Falker. He thinks she is terrific and always pays close attention to what she is doing, defending her from the bullies who tease her about her schoolwork. When he finally discovers she doesn't know how to read, he is even more impressed that she has been smart enough to slip through the cracks this long. His belief in Trisha and the time he chooses to spend with her helps her become the student Mr. Falker always knew she could be. This book is autobiographical. The magic is that the words that challenged the author early in life are the gifts she has chosen to give to children all over the world. There can be no better "thank you" to her fifth grade teacher. (ages 5 - 10)

## **The Daddy Book by Todd Parr**

Daddies are all different. They look different and have different jobs. Some Dads sing and some Dads build sand castles. But the one thing all Dads have in common is that they love their children and want them to be happy just being who they are. The message is as simple as the vivid, heavily black outlined illustrations of the Dads and their children. This is a perfect celebration of fathers for very young children. (ages 1½ to 4)

## **Read Aloud Book**

### **Artemis Fowl by Eoin Colfer**

Many Dads love adventure and adventure heroes. Artemis Fowl is a child's James Bond. He's smart and rich, although his money comes from questionable sources. He also gets into terrific predicaments. In this first book of the series he discovers a whole new world of fairies, trolls and leprechauns. These characters don't just flit around the garden. Their world is just as complicated as ours. Artemis decodes the secret of "The People" and must decide if he will use it to follow in the footsteps of his less than ethical family or forge a new path. (ages 6 - 12)

# Songs, Poems and a Gift

## Dear Old Dad by Ron Brown

This can be read as a poem or sung as song. Go to [www.songsforteaching.com](http://www.songsforteaching.com) for the music.

Who can fix my broken bike?  
Whose strong hands can hold me tight?  
When I need someone to make things right,  
It's my dear old Dad.

Who does things that help me grow?  
Who shows me so I will know?  
When I need someone to catch or throw,  
It's my dear old Dad.

Dads come in all shapes and sizes,  
Big or small, short or tall,  
Someday I hope that I will be,  
Half as great as he.

Who helps me know right from wrong?  
Who works hard all day long?  
When I need someone to sing along,  
It's my dear old Dad.

Dads come in all shapes and sizes,  
Big or small, short or tall,  
Someday I hope that I will be,  
Half as great as he.

At night before I go to sleep,  
I thank the stars for giving me,  
The greatest man in history,  
It's my dear old Dad.  
It's my dear old Dad.  
It's my dear old Dad.



# Happy Father's Day

## Daddy is My Friend

Daddy is my friend.  
The two of us are buddies.  
(Hold up two fingers.)  
I always like the things we do,  
I'm thankful for my daddy!



## Father's Day Gift Always Safe in Your Hands

This is a gift idea for Dad that will require a bit of input from him but will nevertheless be a surprise. Trace Dad's hand and then finish the project when he's not around. If you've traced one for Dad and Grandpa, remember to label them so you know who they belong to. When you and your child have some private time you have some choices.

1. Trace the hand on black paper and cut it out.
2. Have your child color a piece of white paper with crayon or marker and then trace the hand onto the coloring and cut it out.

Once you've completed, take the hand cut in your desired design and paste it on a piece of construction paper. You can have your child choose the color. Next trace your child's hand on a piece of paper using the opposite method you chose for the father's hand. When complete, have your child paste her small hand in the center of Dad's large hand. One will be black and the contrasting hand will be colored by your child. On the bottom of the page write:

"Always Safe in Your Hands"

Have your child scribble her name and then present the art work for Father's Day.

# Games to Play with Dad

## Face Shaving

This is a game Dad can play with his child while shaving or at bath time. You need:

Sensitive skin shaving cream or whipped cream (Use whipped cream when you have children who still put everything in their mouths.)

Large pop sickle sticks or tongue depressors

Mirror

One half hour before this activity do a patch test on your child by placing a dollop of the shaving or whipped cream on the back of his hand. Wipe off the excess and then wait 30 minutes to make sure he is not reactive. Once you know he's safe you can start.

Have your child load his hands with shaving cream or whipped cream, pat it on his cheeks and then scrape it off with the popsickle sticks as if he were shaving. If he doesn't like to do this on his face, let him use his arms or legs. Most toddlers love this, but occasionally you'll find a toddler who is uncomfortable. Don't force him to participate, let him watch and join in when he is ready.

There are a number of good web sites that support Dads in their wish to be the best fathers they can be. The most comprehensive site I've found is

**fathers.com**

from the National Center for Fathering.

Be careful of sites that have rather strong underlying political motivations.

## Bear Hunt

Bear hunt is a chant that can actually be made up as you go along. An adult chants a line and your child echoes the chant. It's also active play that keeps bodies moving and teaches your child prepositions. An example of the chant is below. You can make up any actions, either using your whole body or making up a fingerplay. Take it easy at the end the first time, so your child doesn't get frightened. Once she knows the game, she'll laugh when you surprise her.

We're going on a bear hunt .... (*Children echo.*)

We're going to find a bear.... (*Children echo.*)

Open the door, squeak.... (*Children echo and copy your motions for the rest of the song.*)

Walk down the walk ....

Open the gate, creak....

Walk down the road.....

Over the bridge.....

Have to walk through it.....

Coming to a bridge.....

Can't go under it.....

Have to walk over it.....

Do you see a bear.....?

No (shaking head).....

Coming to a river....

We can't go under it.....

We have to go over it.....

Let's go in the boat.....

Row, row, row the boat.....

We're coming to a cave.....

Let's peek inside.....

I see two dark eyes.....

And lots of fur.....

(*Yelling*) I THINK IT'S A BEAR!

(*Let your child scream and run around the room.*)



# A Day with Dad



## Newark Bears Minor League Baseball

Do you want to introduce your little ones to baseball? Sometimes going to a major league game can be quite a chore. By the time you get there your preschooler may be asleep and you've paid for quite a pricey ticket. Start them out by going to minor league games. The Newark Bears tickets at Riverside Park in Newark are \$10 and children under four are free. At that price you won't feel so bad leaving if you're child has had enough. There's even a Cub Club for older children with lots of benefits. Go to:

[www.newarkbears.com](http://www.newarkbears.com)

## NJ Jackals Minor League Baseball

You can also see the NJ Jackals play at their stadium at Montclair State University for the same reasonable prices. Both stadiums are more family friendly than their major league counterparts. For more information go to:

[www.jackals.com](http://www.jackals.com)

## Turtle Back Zoo

Monday through Saturday 10 AM to 4:30 PM  
Sunday 11 AM to 5:30 PM  
560 Northfield Ave.  
West Orange, NJ 07052

Turtle Back Zoo is the perfect preschool outing. It's not too far, you can picnic, relax and take your time. You can purchase a family membership for \$50, which will cover 2 adults and 4 children. Each additional child will be \$10. Children under two are free. That gives you unlimited visits to the zoo for the entire year. For zoo hours go to:

[www.turtlebackzoo.com](http://www.turtlebackzoo.com)  
or call 973-731-5800

For membership information go to:  
[www.turtlebackzoo.org](http://www.turtlebackzoo.org)

## WARMLINE

Providing you with practical, accurate information on health, behavior issues and regulatory information relating to the children in your care.

**1-800-713-9006**



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### Childcare Matters

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