

Newsletter 115
Provider 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 can make a great difference in how children feel about themselves and the world around them.

What's Inside?

Books About Men 3

*Songs, Poems and a
Father's Day Gift* 4

Games for Dad 5

Summer Field Trips 6

Next Month

Summer Reading Issue

The Importance of Fathers and Men

Men are an important part of children's lives. For many, the most important man is their father. For others it may be a special grandfather, uncle or friend. The research suggests that male role models influence a child's development. While women hold 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 (*Fatherhood*, Pruett, 2000). Children with strong male figures 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).

Women who are in the position of being single Moms by choice or circumstance 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 educators

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 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 men in children's lives make them more able to handle this complicated world? What do men do that's so important?

It appears that men, more than women, encourage children 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 relate to the father who tosses his baby in the air, while 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 that 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, which women are less likely to engage in. 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 fathers 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 sure you make just as big a fuss as you did on Mother's Day. Celebrate the men in the children's lives by making Dad, Grandad or the children's favorite big brother a gift and talking about fathers, other male relatives and male teachers. Make sure your child care library contains a number of books that have self confidant male characters. I have found this is a challenge; books in the children's section that contain maternal characters far outweigh those

with paternal characters, but you can find powerful stories if you take the time.

Studies that suggest that we have 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. 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."



Happy
Father's
Day

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 so much 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 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. On the top of white paper print instructions for Dad to trace his hand on the same paper and return the tracing to child care. When you receive the hand you have some choices.

1. Trace the hand on black paper and cut it out.
2. Have the children 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 the children choose the color. Next trace each child's hand on a piece of paper using the opposite method you chose for the father's hand. Make sure you mark the hands so you can match them to the right Dads. When complete, have each 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 the children. On the bottom of the page write:

"Always Safe in Your Hands"

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

Games to Play with Dad

Face Shaving

This is a game you can play at child care and send home, so the children can play with the men in their lives. 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 each child by placing a dollop of the shaving or whipped cream on the back of their hands. Wipe off the excess and then wait 30 minutes to make sure they are not reactive. Once you know everyone's safe you can start.

Have the children load their hands with shaving cream or whipped cream, pat it on their cheeks and then scrap it off with the popsickle sticks as if they were shaving. If they don't like to do this on their face, let them use their 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's ready.

Send these ideas home with Dad. The shaving cream game can be played at bath time. Bear hunt can be played anytime.

Bear Hunt

Bear hunt is a chant that can actually be made up as you go along. The adult chants a line and the child echoes the chant. It's also active play that keeps bodies moving and teaches children 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 the children don't get frightened. Once they know the game, they'll laugh when you surprise them.

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 the children scream and scatter around the room.*)



Early Summer Outings



Essex County Park System

Parks make invigorating field trips for toddlers. The best parks have a safe, shady playground, a body of water for viewing wildlife and wide open fields for running around. Bathrooms are a necessity for a comfortable morning for everyone. A picnic area with refreshments help, but you can always bring a blanket to set down under a tree. A few balls and a frisbee should keep everyone busy for a while. Branchbrook Park in Newark, Brookdale Park in Montclair and Verona Park in Verona are all worth a morning trip. When you return after a picnic lunch, the children will nap peacefully and you can put your feet up for an hour or two. You can find additional parks on the Essex County web site at:

www.essexcountynj.org

The web-site will also give you information about special events for each park.

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
or call 973-731-5800

For membership information go to:
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



Directory

Montclair Office
973-744-4050

Newark Office
973-297-1114

Childcare Matters

June 2008

Newsletter 115

Writer/Editor

Elizabeth A. Allen

Copy Editor

Simona Bana
Susan Boyle

Page Layout

Elizabeth A. Allen

Distribution

Simona Bana
Family Child Care
Department

Published by

Programs for Parents
Beverly Lynn, CEO
20 Church Street
Montclair NJ, 07042
973-744-4050

Childcare Matters is a monthly newsletter published for Registered Family Child Care Providers and parents using their services.