

# 'Honey I'm Pregnant'

A DAD'S MANUAL THAT EVERY NEW DAD SHOULD READ

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## Introduction

'Honey I'm Pregnant' dad's manual offers some reflection on what it will be like to be a dad; it doesn't represent the whole picture and should only be taken as suggestions to consider.

You might be one of those guys who may feel totally unprepared about becoming a dad. You might have a mix of feelings from being totally excited to thinking this is pretty scary stuff. You could be questioning are you responsible enough? You might be thinking hey I can't even look after myself let alone a baby! You may ask yourself what sort of dad will you be? What was your old man like? Did he leave you with a good example of how to be a dad? Now it is your turn to be a dad, let the adventure begin.

Don't be just a father...  
be an awesome Dad



[dadstheword.com/](http://dadstheword.com/)

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## What's your experience of, 'I'm Pregnant'?

*"When I heard those life changing words of 'Honey, I'm Pregnant!' I first thought, gee that was quick, we only started trying to get pregnant a few weeks ago! I was both excited and scared at the same time. A sense of extra responsibility grew and I really questioned if I was ready for this whole fatherhood thing".*

Most new dads feel this. One moment they are excited and then feel an overwhelming sense of fear and responsibility that leads to: 'I'm not cut out for this', 'I don't feel prepared', 'the responsibility is too much', 'I cannot be a dad I don't even know how to care for myself let alone care for a baby!'

I encourage new dads to take some time to be alone, breathe deeply, slow down and remember that since mankind has existed on planet earth millions of men have become dads, it is very natural. You will be fine!

You might have been trying to fall pregnant for so long and can't believe it has actually occurred. Or you might have just started to try and you can be a bit disappointed as it has been rather fun having so much sex! But the reality will start to sink in and you actually realise that you have got her pregnant!

Creating a child is pretty mind blowing when you think about it and becoming a dad could be summed up as a relationship between you and your child. The rest of this dad's manual will attempt to explore how to develop this relationship and give you a kickstart into a rewarding family life. This dad's guide will start with how you can connect with bub in the womb, and then what to expect at the birth from a dad's point of view and then finally progress on to being a dad to your child.



## What can my baby hear from the womb?

Your baby can hear from around 23 weeks into the pregnancy. Sounds like music in your home or car, house noises, mum and dad's voice, the television.

Talking to your baby allows your baby to get to know your voice. So get up close to mum's belly and have a chat. Talking to your baby even singing will get him/her familiar with your voice. Why is this important? When your baby is born it will be much easier for you to bond if they know your voice.

### How do I bond with my baby?

Many dads comment that they don't feel connected with their baby, especially when the bub is in the womb. They feel they are looking from the outside in to where all the action is.

Quite a lot of dads say that when their baby is kicking and they put their hand on the mother's tummy to feel it, bub instantly stops. Why does this happen?

Some dads believe the baby goes to sleep and doesn't like them. But I think a much more logical reason could explain why the baby stops moving and that the baby is simply not used to the dad's presence. Sometimes dads can become discouraged by this and give up trying to feel bub move. However it doesn't have to be this way.

The baby can sense the mother all the time because the baby is inside her. When another human being is close could they sense it? It is unlikely that the baby can actually feel the dad touch them due to the many layers of muscle, womb and fluid separating the baby from the outside world. I have found that increasing my contact with the baby by resting my hand on my wife's tummy while watching a movie or while spooning in bed increased the connection I had with bub. The end result was that I was able to feel the kicks and movement without them stopping.

This will be a very rewarding moment with your child and will add to your bonding experience.

Touching your baby – this is possible especially when the baby is close to the outside of the womb. Sometimes you may feel a foot or part of the body.



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## Getting to the hospital

- It is important not to panic. Rushing around can stop the contractions.
- So keep calm, you may be excited but keep calm.
- Grab the right bag ready for the hospital.
- Don't speed to the hospital, this too can cause panic in the mother and labour can stop. The mothers' body can interpret your frantic driving as not a safe time to give birth.
- Most mammals in the animal kingdom choose a quiet dark solitary place to give birth.
- Even at the hospital the bright lights and activity together with the unfamiliar settings have been known to stop the contractions.
- You could ask for the lights to be turned down, maybe some music might help.
- A peaceful environment is important to maintain in the birth process.

## What's the best time to take off from work?

This is a good question as some dads take time off work and go on annual leave as soon as the mum goes into labour. It is important to realise that this is a personal and a practical decision. You might only have a week of annual leave to use, so how can you make the best use of the time you have? Let's say labour starts on Tuesday the bub is born Wednesday, time in hospital will be two days maybe longer. Discharge from hospital would likely be Friday or Saturday. Taking your annual leave from the next Monday will give you a good solid week at home with mum and bub. If you take a week's annual leave back on Tuesday then you may waste your annual leave while mum is in hospital. You can't be there 24/7 and she will be taken care of wonderfully well while she is there. It is worth considering.

## Antenatal classes

I would recommend that you attend antenatal classes. It is a good time for both of you to understand the birth process and ask the midwife any questions. Connecting with other couples can help after the baby is born. Developing good support networks can help answer any questions you may have about raising your baby. Mothers and dad's groups have been known to start from these connections.

Some hospitals have a dad's group as part of their antenatal session. This is a time for dads to talk about the birth of their child and what their expectations of fatherhood are. Many antenatal classes across Australia have these dad's sessions. Please enquire at your hospital to see if these sessions are available.

## The Birth

The birth was a very surreal experience for me. It was like being in a dream. The wakeup call was actually seeing my baby boy being born. During the pregnancy the baby had been hidden for nine months. I first experienced headaches from the stress. It is not nice watching your partner go through extreme amounts of pain and not being able to do anything about it. I wanted the midwife to inject me with a Pethidine shot as well to help with my stress levels!

Every birth can have its differences and your experience will be unique. But here are a few suggestions: Take off your rings – Why? A woman giving birth can gain incredible amounts of strength and if she is holding your hand and squeezing it hard then maybe you might experience some of the pain she is going through as your finger is being severed off!

Sometimes you are asked to help rub her back, get cool cloths and move from one request to the other. Go with the flow. Sometimes you will feel frustrated by not knowing what's going on. Keep calm! Ask the midwife or the doctor questions if you don't understand what's going on.

If you start to feel light headed sit down, because a dad crashing to the floor is not a good look and is the last thing the doctor and midwife need to tend to while assisting the birth of your child.

Try to remember your partner is pushing out something the size of a football so if she asks you to do something, do it, if she turns nasty ignore it, if she gets really angry at you, ignore it, if she throws anything at you, ignore it, if she bites you, ignore it and finally if she blames you for all this, ignore it!

Some dads like to be involved in the birth. I had the opportunity to actually deliver my second son. No one told me he was going to be very slippery and I nearly dropped him on the floor! My rubber gloves made it worse, I would recommend lots of little suction cups on them, or bare hands might work just as well?

Down at the business end. Some dads like to see the baby's head come out and the whole birth of their child. Other dads like to be up the other end encouraging and holding the mum's hand. I would suggest you talk this over together before the birth.





You may find yourself panting and pushing too! It does absolutely nothing to the birth process but you may catch yourself doing it all the same.

One thing to note here is that your partner may be totally naked while she gives birth. Through our four births my wife started out with a gown on and then, somewhere in the whole birthing process off went the gown. Other dads I have talked to have said the same thing. Now this might be a very natural thing for a woman to do - well it's close to nature and who wants clothes on? I can understand that. But here is where the problem lies, I found it a little difficult to see my wife there buttnaked and in the birthing unit. It seemed as though every Tom, Dick and Harry was coming in to have a look. I remember one birth in particular where I knew the midwife, clinic nurse and the doctor but there were people filing in that room like a blooming highway and I didn't have a clue who they were.

After the birth, I might add, my wife became a little self-conscious and wanted to cover up. She must have been very focused during the birth process not to notice, as she had nothing on and didn't seem to care.

During the end stages of the labour your partner might give up and say 'I can't do it anymore'. This is your time to step up and be encouraging - when I heard this for the first time I panicked. I said, 'what do you mean you can't do it, you're nearly there, and you can't give up!' Little did I realise that this can be a common thing women say in labour. And little did my wife know that when the next contractions started she had no real choice but to go with it.

If I could compare my wife's response to the first birth to the last birth it would be two extremes. The first birth she didn't really know what to expect. Although the birth process is a very natural thing her body had never carried it out before. There was pain - lots of it! The last birth she took total control. She stayed home for a lot of the pre-labour contractions in a dark room, very focused and



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rather peaceful. Then she announced it is time to go to the hospital, we were there in two minutes and out our daughter came, with no pain or discomfort.

When my child was born it was as if time stood still. It is a very cool moment and you may find yourself taking it all in. I counted the little toes and fingers and was amazed at how tiny and complete they were, even with finger prints!

Bonding with the baby right after birth is important for both you and mum. So take the time to enjoy your baby, don't rush it. This can be a crucial time to start your own relationship with your baby.

I would highly recommend attending antenatal classes together prior to the birth. Some hospitals run dad's sessions which will give you a better understanding of what other dads are experiencing. I facilitate these dad sessions at our local hospital several times a month and every group of new dads are keen to have great discussions about becoming a father.

"Beer and bubs" sessions might be more your scene. This is where a group of dads-to-be gather in a pub and a female facilitator talks to the men about what to expect about the birth process. Check out their web page and see if they have sessions in your area?

**[www.beerandbubs.com.au](http://www.beerandbubs.com.au)**

### *Cutting the umbilical cord*

Some new dads don't give this much thought and others are very keen to do it. Let me share my experience of cutting my first umbilical cord. My third son had just been born. I was in a daze taking in the moment watching him on my wife's belly. The midwife elbowed me in the side and said, 'hey Dave do you want to cut the umbilical cord?' My reaction was thinking no I don't want to. The midwife responded, 'sure you do, it will be great'. The midwife assured me that it does not hurt the baby nor mum as there are no nerves in the umbilical cord. This was reassuring for me to know, but it all sounded gross. So with sterilized stainless steel scissors in my hand I aimed for the umbilical cord. It felt strange having something like scissors near my naked baby boy and my wife. As I proceeded to cut I was shocked to discover how tough this umbilical cord was. I thought the scissors must be blunt, the midwife has handed me blunt scissors! The scissors were not blunt the umbilical cord is really tough. But it was like cutting a leather strap. After a couple of attempts I successfully cut the umbilical cord. The baby was then free to move about and have a cuddle with his mother and myself. I fully recommend cutting the umbilical cord; let the midwife know before the birth.

At the birth of my first child the midwife had to cut the umbilical cord because he wasn't breathing and needed some quick suction on a nearby table. So you might not have the opportunity to cut the cord if some medical intervention is required.

## *The placenta!*

After the birth of the infant comes the placenta. Delivering the placenta is a strange moment in the birth process; I thought we were having twins as it can be similar to labour for some women. The midwife said to me if you don't like the sight of blood you might like to leave the room. Apparently it is about 300mls. Well it was the largest 300mls I had ever seen in my life; it was more like three litres of blood! I know this was not the case, but there was a lot of blood.

The actual placenta is a weird looking thing. The midwife was fascinated by it as she was checking it out like some nature show on the Discovery Channel. She motioned to me to come over and take a look – in my foolishness I did look, I nearly threw up and thought what am I doing? For the other births of my other three children I left the room during the delivery of the placenta. You will probably have to experience the placenta coming out at least once and then you can decide, or stay up the other end.

## *What about male circumcision?*

I didn't give this much thought. Do I want my sons to be circumcised or not? Circumcision of new born males is not routinely carried out in State and Territory hospitals in Australia. There are many different points of view on whether circumcision is necessary. Sometimes for medical reasons a male might have to be circumcised. One of my sons had to be circumcised when he was a teenager for this reason.

**[www.circinfo.org](http://www.circinfo.org) does not support circumcision**

**[www.circumwise.com.au](http://www.circumwise.com.au) does support circumcision**

## *First weeks at home*

This is a very important time to get mum and the baby settled – it can be called nesting. Having as much time off as you can is a good idea. Don't think you will have time to build that shed or strip down an engine on your time off because caring for the new bub can be all consuming. You may have some sleep deprivation and need to catch forty winks during the day. Spending quality time with the mum and bub can help this coming home to be less stressful and become the most rewarding moments of your life.

### **Be involved with the baby**

Don't think it is women's business. Change the nappy, bath the baby, settle the baby, get up at night to tend to the baby and don't pretend to be asleep! Helping keep the house clean will help lower the stress levels in your partner. Take the baby for walks in the pram, it might feel a little weird at first but when you get use to it you will be a proud dad walking through the park showing off your new arrival.

## *Will you have a quiet home or a noisy home when bub is asleep?*

This can cause some tension in the home between yourself and your partner. You may want the home to stay the same as it was when bub was in the womb, whereas your partner may want the home to be quiet. This may involve talking quietly when bub is asleep, no music and simply no noise what so ever.

Things to consider and talk about with your partner: What noises did the baby hear whilst in the womb? It could be assumed that these similar noises will be familiar to the baby when it is born. Did you play music in the house? Did you talk and laugh with friends and neighbours? Creating a different environment to one the baby was used to in the womb may cause problems when trying to keep your baby asleep. The baby may be comforted by the familiar sounds they hear around the home. If either parent has to be quiet when they are not used to it, possible tension in the relationship may arise. It is amazing what bubs will sleep through when they are used to it. Keeping the normal running of your house going may create a smooth transition for everyone.



## Is my life over when the baby comes home?

- Yep, sure is! Only kidding!!!! But life as you knew it might change.
- This is not true even if your work mates may say it! Your life may well indeed begin to change and you'll enter a whole new phase called family life.
- Don't stop doing the things you love to do; it may be hiking, camping or a hobby of some kind. Many dads do put these things away and can't remember the last time when they had some time to themselves or with their mates. But these activities may be the very thing that you do with your child and helps you to bond with your son or daughter as they grow older.
- You may find that you become a little more responsible and start to prioritise your life because of your baby.
- You might start driving a little bit more sensibly because you have precious cargo onboard.
- Buying things for bub instead of for you might be a different change in priorities.
- Looking after bub instead of going out is an obvious change that you need to embrace, your time is not always your own.

If you are away too much from your home and your child, you may feel disconnected. Guess what, you probably are! I suggest you make some changes in your lifestyle. Be home for tea as much as possible. Be there to put your child to bed. Be involved in the whole bed routine!



## Questions you might ask when your baby is crying?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is my baby hungry or thirsty?</li><li>• Is my baby cold or hot?</li><li>• Is my baby tired?</li><li>• Is my baby uncomfortable?</li><li>• Does my baby have a wet or soiled nappy?</li><li>• Does my baby have wind and needs to burp?</li><li>• Does my baby need comforting?</li><li>• Is my baby lonely and just needs to</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>see and be with you?</li><li>• Does my baby need to get up after a sleep and wants attention?</li><li>• Is my baby teething? (ask your health nurse or doctor about this)</li><li>• Does my baby have a nappy rash?</li><li>• Is my baby in pain or hurt itself?</li></ul> |
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## Calming the baby, here's a few tips:

When your baby is crying you need to go through the checklist found under the heading 'why is my baby crying?'

If you have checked off these and the baby's basic needs have been met what do you do if your baby is still crying?

Bring your baby close to your body. This is very important because if you hold your baby out in front of you there may be a tendency to shake the baby. **DO NOT EVER SHAKE THE BABY!** Babies that have been shaken have sometimes died because the baby's brain has impacted with the inside of the skull causing haemorrhaging (bleeding).

**With your baby close to your body** you will have the tendency to rock from side to side. An instinctive motion that is not just for mums, dads can do it too. It all stems from being in the womb and the constant rocking from side to side. Being in a rocking chair or a hammock has the same affect.


When rocking the baby close to your body allow the bub to **touch the skin** of your neck or chest. Often a baby's face is touching your clothing that may not be very soft and comforting.

**Skin contact** has many benefits of allowing the baby to have direct skin to skin human contact. Smelling your scent/hormones that identify you from mum's unique smell will allow the baby to begin to recognise you.

**The warmth** of your skin also provides more comfort.

If the baby is able to have skin contact on your chest or near your heart area the baby can also hear your **heart beat**. This will remind the baby of hearing mum's heart beat throughout the pregnancy.





**Talking to the baby soothingly** while the baby is near your neck or chest will vibrate through to the child. Take your open hand and place it on your neck and talk, you will be surprised to feel the vibration. This vibration resonates into the baby and can be very soothing. Try **humming or singing a tune** to further soothe your baby.

**Patting your baby** lightly on its back is a common thing you may find yourself doing whilst trying to settle your baby. Why do we do this? My guess is that it could represent the mothers heart beat. Take note of how many pats you complete in a minute and you will find that it can be as high as 200 beats! Try patting at a resting heart beat which is **60 beats per minute** two pats per second. One pat slightly firmer than the second. This will imitate a heart beating rhythm of the two chambers of the heart. It takes a bit to get used to but has the desired effect of settling your baby. I think we pat quickly to express our anxiety but it does not settle the baby nearly as well as slowing the pats down.

### *More tips on how to soothe your baby:*

- Have a bath or shower with bub
- Put on some soothing music – opera music can have surprising results
- Go for a drive in the car, with the baby!
- Do a gentle baby massage (check with your midwife before leaving the hospital about how to do this)
- Put the baby in the pram and go for a walk (this is great for both of you!)
- Sing to your baby
- Cuddle your baby in a rocking chair or hammock
- Stroke your baby's head very gently
- Lower your level of stress as this can pass on to your baby
- Talk gently to your baby – even if you're not in the same room let the baby know you are still there
- Apply teething gel, give your baby a teething ring/rusks
- Apply nappy rash cream to sore areas. Take off nappy for some fresh air and sunlight
- Comfort baby if he/she has hurt themselves
- Spend time with the baby
- Whisper in their ear
- Take them outside and look at the stars – the change in temperature for a short while can stop the crying and help you distract the baby's attention.

## *What temperature should the baby bath be?*

Answer: low to mid 40 degrees. There are baby bath temperature units that go into the bath to let you know the correct water temperature range. You can purchase bath temperature gauges at most baby shops. Using a soft tender part of your skin can also guide you to have a more tempered bath.

## *Sleep deprivation*

Sleep deprivation will likely occur when your baby comes home. Broken sleep can take a lot out of you. It is important to have good self-care in the first couple of weeks. Some babies wake up every two to three hours. This is because they have a small stomach. When their little stomachs are full of milk it does not last very long and bubs become hungry again.

Your assistance in attending to the baby in the middle of the night can allow mum to rest and keep her milk supply up.

Some dads actually sleep through when their babies wake up. Hard to believe but its true!

Some dads pretend to sleep through. Which one will you be?

**Be kind towards** each other in the middle of the night when you are both up at 2am, your baby is crying and neither of you know what to do. Stay calm, stay calm and stay calm. Think of ways to calm the baby. Yelling at each other won't help! Over the years of supporting new families I have asked various couples what was the most extreme thing they did to get their baby to settle or to sleep. One couple said they bathed their baby at midnight because she was not settling, this worked and the baby went to sleep. Another couple said that the dad went for a two hour car drive in the middle of the night (with the bub, not by himself) and it worked to settle the baby.

## *Dads' role in Breastfeeding*

Encouraging your wife to breastfeed is really important. Some mums find breastfeeding really difficult. She may feel discouraged and give up, therefore encouragement from you is really important. However if breastfeeding is not for her don't make her feel even worse about it. A sense of failure in a mum can lead to postnatal depression. Also, feeling she is not doing a good enough job as a mother can be crushing.

**Benefits of breastfeeding:** There are no bottles to sterilise, no formula to buy and you don't have to warm up the milk in the middle of the night. Breast milk comes out at the right formula, right temperature, and is on tap, so to speak, when required. It is great for bonding, the immune system and bubs general health. [www.breastfeeding.asn.au/](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/) Expressing milk allows dad to take care of the baby while giving the mum some 'time off'. This can be very rewarding to the dad who can have an outing with bub. Talking

about breasts: when they start breastfeeding, some mothers find they don't like their partner touching them as much, or at all anymore. Some males find it difficult to adjust to their partner's breasts being not available since the baby came along. Often the mother realizes that this is what her breasts are for and not just for the guy's pleasure. It is important not to resent the baby!



*Sex before and after birth is an interesting subject!*

Most men want to have sex far earlier than most women after birth. Guys need to understand that a baby has come out of down there (it's called a vagina) and things can get somewhat torn up. It would be like you pushing out a football! Would you like to have sex? Let's be honest, you wouldn't. Rushing into sex too early can have a negative impact on the relationship. Putting pressure on your partner to have sex can add more stress to a new mother and you may find that she pulls emotionally away from you even further. Sometimes waiting can be difficult but I encourage you to do just that. Talking about sex with your partner may help. Some couples plan a special weekend away when the time is right. But I would recommend that it is your partner's call on this one. You may be one of those guys that has not had sex for a while, and shortly after your wife became pregnant the sex stopped altogether. This does happen in some relationships. Once a woman becomes pregnant the need for sex may diminish.

**One thing to keep in mind** here is not to resent her or the baby, it is not their fault. Some women after the first baby is born have a drop in their sexual desire. There are a number of reasons for this: hormones, the body gets older, priorities change for the female as she becomes more directed to motherhood. However, most men don't have a drop off in this department, the more they don't have sex the more they become obsessed about it. It is believed that most males think about sex up to 13 times a day! Some relationships are defined by the sex they have, and when this reduces or stops it can be a terrible strain on the relationship. Some relationships get stuck at this point. The male wants sex the female doesn't, resentment creeps in and relationship strains can take their toll.

## *What is the answer to all this?*

Suggestion, guys chill out a bit and realise that there will likely be a change in the amount of sex you have and accepting it is better than fighting against it. Enjoy sex when it occurs but don't live for it anymore! Harsh words but it may save you from seeking fulfilment elsewhere. If you do find sex elsewhere it is likely that your relationship will not handle it. But your relationship WILL handle a reduction in sexual activity. All these changes can make a stronger relationship rather than a weaker one but it depends on how you handle it! All these changes have the potential to make you stronger as a male as well.

**Some new dads have found that** helping around the house is a new type of 'foreplay' they have found works. It is called 'floor play' and it is when the dad picks up the broom and sweeps and washes the floor.

## *Baby Blues*

This is known to occur in many new mothers and can be evident in the first week to 10 days. The mother may have a very emotional time during this period. Symptoms emerge such as excessive crying and general feelings of inadequacy together with the inability to cope or feeling she is not competent as a mother. Troubles with breast feeding can bring this on. These feelings usually pass relatively quickly. However, if the baby blues stay around for more than a couple of weeks, seek professional help as postnatal depression may be developing.

## *What's Postnatal Depression (also known as peri-natal depression)*

- This is a very important subject and can affect **you and your** spouse.
- It can be when individually or both of you feel down and overwhelmed. This may be emotionally, physically or have to do with hormone levels.
- Often it occurs in the mother but can also affect the dad.
- If depression occurs in the mother, it is the dad who often first notices that their partner is not coping too well. The mother can deny that anything is wrong. Sometimes mothers do this because they do not want to be seen as a bad mother and not able to cope. They may fear that the child will be taken off them by the authorities.
- It is important for the dad to speak up and seek professional help (see below under the section, '**What support can the dad offer?**')

### **The key signs can be:**

- A lack of bonding with the baby or being over protective.
- Not getting out of bed for long periods of time – days, even weeks.

- Disinterest in life in general and herself.
- Very moody, feeling down and inadequate as a mother.
- Crying a lot and being emotional about things.
- Over reacting about things that may be illogical or seem irrational.
- Troubles with breastfeeding.

There are many reasons why a mother may develop postnatal depression. These can include the age of the mother. The national average age of Australian first time mothers is around 30 years of age. These mothers can often have a career, and a sense of independence and self identity. When a baby is born it is often the mother who has to let go of this rather than the dad. This sudden change can be huge and difficult to adjust to.

There are also hormonal causes and even hereditary issues to consider.

If other females on the mother's side of the family have had postnatal depression this may increase the chances of your spouse having postnatal depression

Beyond Blue web for information about depression  
[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) or phone **1300224636**

### *What support do you need as the dad?*

Make sure you're not doing it alone. Often dads whose partners have postnatal depression are toughing it out, caring for mum and bub plus working, this can become all too much. Reach out and get assistance. Good Beginnings Australia has parent help and may operate in your area. **[www.goodbeginnings.org.au](http://www.goodbeginnings.org.au)**.

**Parenting centres nation wide can be worth contacting. Search for them on the web to locate the nearest one to you in your state or territory.**

**Make sure you are getting proper emotional support;** this might mean talking to a mate, seeing a counsellor and talking to your **family doctor** about your wellbeing. When you are in a better frame of mind you are more likely to be able to give valuable assistance to your family.

### *What support can you offer your family?*

- Help around the house as much as possible to lighten the load of caring for the baby.
- Keep in mind that some men do feel depressed and may need to get some professional help too.
- Help with the baby so it is not just left up to the mum.
- If you, as the dad, are feeling overwhelmed seek help from your Doctor, Midwife, Counsellor, Pastor, family or friend.
- Encourage mum to get outside and not be inside the house all day.
- Encourage her to go for a picnic, shopping, see her friends, family or work colleagues.
- If you feel it is serious it probably is and it may be up to you as the dad to seek further assistance, Good Beginnings Australia has home help available [www.goodbeginnings.org.au](http://www.goodbeginnings.org.au).
- Contact your Doctor; make the appointment requesting a home visit if possible. A short dose of medication might help.
- Contact your Child Health Nurse. These nurses visit the home after the baby is born for checkups.
- Contact the Health Department in your state and request assistance.
- Ring Men's Line Australia on **1300 78 99 78** [www.menslineaus.org.au](http://www.menslineaus.org.au)
- Check out beyond blue [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)
- Check your local hospital in your state for services that support mum's with postnatal depression.
- **Take care of the baby** for a while to give mum a break. As you grow in confidence with this it will become easier.
- The golden rule about Postnatal depression is don't ignore it, speak out and don't let your efforts to get support be dismissed or minimised by a well meaning friend. Postnatal depression is a very serious condition and can have dramatic effects on the mother and child bond and may have negative consequences on the relationship between you as a couple.
- Contact a support group of other mums that are going through postnatal depression [www.panda.org.au](http://www.panda.org.au) phone **1300 726 306**, 9am - 5pm for support.
- Contact the hospital where the baby was born and speak to the **midwife** that either attended your birth or conducted your antenatal class for assistance.



**Placenta Encapsulation:** (Is when the placenta is dried and placed into capsules for the mother to consume).

Around the world there has been an increasing understanding of the benefits of the mother consuming their own placenta. Reports of increased energy levels in the mother, increased milk supply and most importantly no signs of postnatal depression. This is fantastic news and yes it sounds weird.

In Portland USA placenta encapsulation has been carried out for many years with good research statistics. Their web address is: [placentabenefits.info/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Placentophagy](http://placentabenefits.info/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Placentophagy)

For further details on placenta information and encapsulation in Australia:  
[www.australiandoulacollege.com.au](http://www.australiandoulacollege.com.au)  
[www.doula.com.au](http://www.doula.com.au)

### *What was your dad like?*

Wow what a question! This can provoke some real emotions in you as a new dad. You may feel uncomfortable with the thought of what went on between you and your dad.

If your father has passed away then a real sense of loss can occur as you think he will not see your child.

What if you don't have very pleasant memories of your father? What do you do with that? He may have let you down or not been there for you. You may have a specific thing he did or a general way he was a dad that you didn't like. Here is your opportunity to **BE THE DAD YOU WANT TO BE.**

You can be different you don't have to fall into the same patterns of behaviour and blame it on your father. I have seen plenty of new dads become better fathers than their own dads.

If your dad was great and your best mate he would have spent time with you. He may have taken you fishing, camping and showing you the things he knows about. Then you have had a great introduction into fatherhood and now pass this on to your children and they in turn will pass it on to theirs.

Your dad if he is around will now be a grandfather because of your child. Many dads I have spoken to have reported that their dads have become a better father since having a grandchild around.

What was your relationship like with your grandad? Your child will have all these relationships around them including uncles.

### *What sort of dad do you want to be?*

This may be largely answered in the above section – however you may have some ideas of what sort of dad you want to be. You might want to be a fair dad, a fun dad, or a dad who is there for his children. You may want your children to be able to talk to you about anything. The list is endless and I would like to encourage you to take the time to think about the sort of dad you want to be.

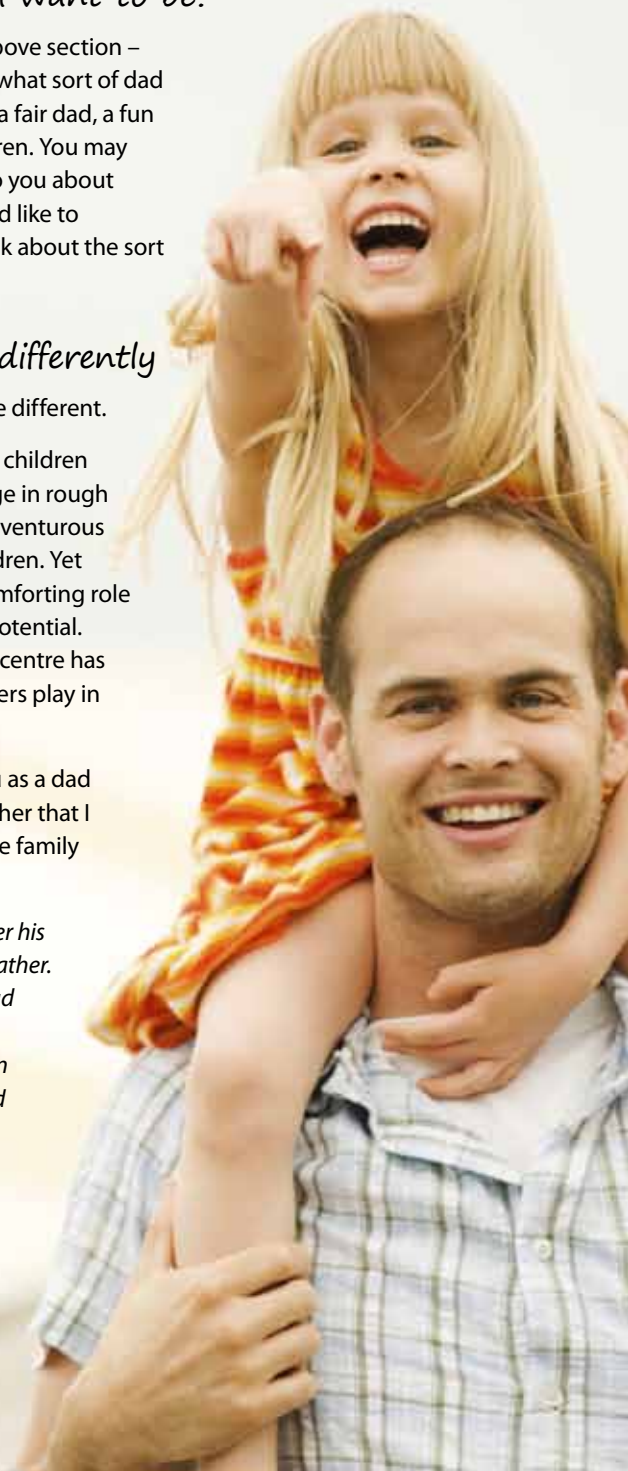
### *As a dad you will parent differently*

The way dads and mums parent will be different.

Dads will often tend to challenge their children more to extend themselves and engage in rough and tumble play. Dads can be more adventurous and encourage risk taking in their children. Yet they also provide a safe and secure comforting role so their children develop to their full potential. [www.newcastle.edu.au](http://www.newcastle.edu.au) family action centre has conducted research into the roles fathers play in raising children.

Here is an example to explain how you as a dad parent differently from the child's mother that I heard whilst doing some training at the family Action Centre Newcastle:

*A dad's five year boy came up to him after his birthday party was over and said to his father. 'Hey dad I don't feel like I am five.' The dad was up on the roof at the time cleaning out the gutters. The dad proceeded down the ladder to talk to his son. (What would you do in this situation, what would you say?) I was very impressed what this dad said. He said he took hold of his sons hand and guided him up the ladder and there they both sat on the roof of their home and looked out over the neighbourhood. They sat there taking in the view. They could see many*



*things from up there and pointed out things in our neighbourhood. Then the son turned to his dad and said, 'guess what dad? I feel like I am five now!' Just then his mother came out the front door! She wasn't happy and said in no uncertain terms that he better get their son down or else. The dad said it is time to go down now. In this way he honoured the mother's wishes and was demonstrating that he respected her. His moment of allowing his son to be adventurous, daring and courageous, allowed his son to think that he was now all grown up, to at least five anyway. This dad instinctively knew how to create a small rite of passage for his son who now felt on top of the world, able to conquer anything.*

You might not have had a dad but have watched other males in your life. You may have taken cues from your friend's fathers. In any case you have had some guidance and started to make up your mind about what a dad should be like.

You have things to pass down to your children. Things like skills, interests, talents, hobbies and sporting talents. All you need is to give your time to them.

Your child is part of you and may well have some of your talents and interests. This can create a common interest between you and your child and can develop a rewarding relationship through into adulthood.

When do you start? Start at a young age and slowly. Often dads can be full on and scare the child. It can be too much too soon. Children learn best by watching you and then by being guided by you and then doing it themselves with your supervision.

#### **Parenting as your baby becomes a toddler.** It occurs surprisingly quickly!

Encourage and praise your child's small attempts of exploring the world around them. Have fun with your child it doesn't have to be all serious. Don't use threats or an angry voice to get your child to do things. If a child has a bad experience early on in life, they are likely to resist attempting to do that particular activity ever again. Some dads think it is funny scaring their children and believe it may toughen them up. A child that is scared of something that they really shouldn't be, may have this fear for the rest of their life.

Don't compare their efforts to other children or siblings as this will make them feel inferior. Many parents do this hoping in some strange way to encourage the child to be better than the other child, but it doesn't work and will only discourage the child.

There will be times when your children will ask you to go outside and play with them. I have said 'NO' but I should have said 'YES'. My child wanted to spend time with me and that's what is important. The reading of the paper can wait. When your children want to spend time with you I would suggest giving it to them. They look up to you as their hero and proudly say to other kids **my dad's the best dad in the world.**

## *Becoming an engaged dad*

Being an engaged dad means getting involved with a wide range of things. You might like to write a few down that are relevant to you. Be bold enough to ask your partner what they think!

Write your own thoughts down here:

- Play with your child.
- Spend time with them.
- Go for a walk with them.
- Go shopping with them.
- Put them to bed, change nappies, settle and comfort the baby.
- Read them a story on a regular basis – this is very important.
- Praise, encourage and tell your children you love them!
- Take them to sport events.
- Attend school events and carnivals.
- Get involved with putting on a great birthday party for them.
- Paint with your child.
- Play hide and seek.
- Gentle play wrestle – let them win most of the time.
- Build a cubby or tree house.
- Make a kite, boat or paper plane, and then play with it together.

The list could be endless – but I think you get the picture.

## *Being a stay home dad*

I had the joy and challenge of being a stay home dad when my four children were in their primary school years. I must say it was without a doubt the hardest thing I have ever done, yet the most rewarding. The first years of any child's life are very impressionable. A child's social development is remarkably shaped between 0-5yrs. Therefore I found it a real privilege to be an active influence for my children's development during those early years.





I was able to teach them many things at that age being with them all the time. Things like riding a bike, throwing, kicking a ball and reading lots of stories together. You are able to better guide their values, share what you believe in and show them how to act socially.

**I found that keeping a routine** with the children was difficult but very beneficial. Children love and respond well to routine. Things like eating and sleep times being consistent. Having things for them to do is a great help throughout the day. These activities could be, play dough, drawing, Duplo or Lego building. I found it was also worthwhile to have a trip out of the house and go for a bike ride, take them to the beach or go to a playgroup.

**Playgroups were interesting times** as I often was the ONLY dad present. I found myself in the sand pit with my child playing with toys that we didn't have at home, while the mums sat and talked together in little groups.

The thing that stands out for me as a stay home dad was learning to cook for my children.

**My wife gave me recipes on scraps of paper for the evening meal.** From these scraps of paper I learnt how to make a half decent meal for the family and that the kids would actually eat. They would often refuse to eat the meal I made simply because mum had not cooked it! Their critical comments weren't helpful to a dad learning how to cook. I started to involve the children in preparing the evening meal. As they became engaged with the meal they were less critical of it. Eventually I heard those lovely words come from the mouth of babes, 'this is not bad dad, it is sort of like mum's cooking! From this steep learning curve I put together a cookbook for dads. The cook book's purpose was to assist new dads into the art of cooking for the family. How do you serve up a meal not overcooked, on time and hot? I would often hear my children say, 'what's for tea dad?' so that's what it is called. The cookbook encourages dad to involve his children in the cooking experience and then record those moments with a photograph. This scrapbook style can make the cooking experience a real family journey.

**Sample of the cookbook** [www.whatsforteadad.com.au](http://www.whatsforteadad.com.au)



An example of a recipe in the cookbook:

## GRILLED PUMPKIN

Rating: Very easy

Cooking time: 5 min

This is surprisingly a nice quick snack or a light meal.

Trim fat and rind off 4 rashers of bacon.

Chop bacon into pieces.

Chop an onion.

Grate some low fat cheese.

Chop some parsley.

Mix all together and add a splash of Worcestershire sauce.

1 tablespoon of tomato paste - put in mixing bowl

Slice butternut pumpkin and grill one side under griller.

Turn and put topping on the other side and continue grilling until topping is slightly brown.

Alternative is to use sweet potato instead of a Butternut pumpkin.

Very yummy!

**Being a stay home dad** I would often wonder, 'where has the time gone?'

**Looking back** to the emotions I felt holding my new born baby to the first day at school could only be described as whoosh! It happens so quickly. For the first years of their life they are in your care 100% and then they start school and start to come home with all sorts of character and vocabulary changes!

**On the home front** I used to remember saying to my wife "so what have you been doing all day?". This can be read two ways, as one that is curious and generally wanting to know what has she been up too with the children and another side of which says, 'gee the house looks messy what the heck have you been doing all day!' When I was a stay home dad, breakfast dishes still in the sink, young children running around not fully dressed, washing still needing to be done, I had it totally together, not. My wife could have easily said on many occasions and I recall at least once "so what have you been doing all day?" How easily the roles change. In saying all this, I would not have passed up the opportunity to be a stay home dad. I figured I am not going to have my children this young ever again, so I might as well approach this opportunity in a positive way.

**If you have the opportunity to be a stay home dad**, I would encourage you to take it.



## What could you look forward to if you were a stay home dad?

- **A stronger relationship with your children** is the first obvious benefit you will receive. A strong relationship will serve you well as your children grow into adults. They will be more willing to trust you more about what they talk about.
- **Spending time with your children when they are young** they are more likely to want to spend time with you as they get older. It's up to you whether you want this to occur or not. If you desire family times together, such as family dinners, BBQ's, games night and just hanging out together then you have to invest earlier in your children's life for this to occur.
- **Children's early years are very impressionable**, therefore if you are around to guide and train them then they are more likely to pick up your values and learn from you.
- **It is very rewarding yet demanding to be a stay home dad.** You might struggle with an identity crisis. After you have realised that you have come to terms with being a stay home dad and realised it is the most privileged job in the world you do just fine. Many may challenge you about what the heck are you doing. **If this occurs take some time to look at your children while they sleep. Ask yourself who else is going to raise them?**
- **You may notice you may be the only dad** at the supermarket shopping with your children or walking along your city's boardwalk with the pram or taking them to the local park for a outing. In saying this, I have noticed in recent years a growing number of dads are doing these activities with their children. This is fantastic to see.
- **If you are in agreement with your partner about being a stay home dad** then go for it, don't look back. Do it for as long as needed and I don't think you will ever regret it.

### Parenting?

This is a very interesting subject. It begins when we are very young by hearing our parents' voice. How they raised you, what they said, is recorded in your mind ready for later use when you become a parent. We can even swear and declare, 'I will never do what my old man did' but actually catch yourself saying and doing the very things you didn't like as a kid.



Often relationship tensions begin when you start to parent your child. Both mum and dad start to exhibit traits of their own parenting. Seeing your mother-in-law or father-in-law in your partner might not be the best moment in your relationship. Pointing this out in each other could make the situation worse!

Remember what it was like when you were a kid hearing and experiencing how your parents raised you. If these were good things keep them, if they were not so good then don't use them in your own parenting.

The way you were raised may differ from your partners and may not necessarily be right or wrong. If different parenting styles start to cause tension and mixed messages begin to confuse your child, talk about this with your partner. Find a way to negotiate a middle ground. Being in agreement with your partner is the key here. If your child sees that his/her parents are divided they will often use this to their advantage! The child can then start to play one parent off against the other. To stop this little merry go round, both parents need to talk about how they will parent away from the child in private and decide on a united decision.

Being consistent in the area of parenting is important; much stress can be caused when one parent slackens off on an agreed rule!

## Raising boys

**Generally boys seek a few things from life which will follow them into manhood and that is:**

**To be adventurous** – the world is there to discover and explore. They seek new experiences and challenges. Many boys will challenge themselves to jump the creek, climb the tallest tree, go fast on their bikes. Your scars and scares can have a story to tell and you may have some proud or stupid moments where you have pushed your own limits. In saying that there are some girls that could also just be as adventurous as any boy.

Boys also seek to know they have what it takes to do these daring adventurous things. They also seek to leave their mark on the world by digging a hole in the ground, by changing the course or dam a river, by leaving skid marks with their push bikes or cars on the road.

Many dads will find their parenting supports some of these driving forces within their developing son. This may be seen as irresponsible behaviour by the mother but perfectly natural for the dad. A dad may believe a few lumps and bumps won't hurt him and is good for him. The dad may go on and say 'he needs to spread his wings and experience the world a bit'. All this may rub the mother the wrong way. Could I suggest that both are possibly needed.





**Often the dad may be the first** to let their son go down to the shop alone, whereas the mother may resist it saying he is too young. Here there are differences between how a dad and mum may parent. Mum will more likely wrap the son in cotton wool and bubble wrap, whereas the dad is busy trying to get him out there to experience the world with minimal protection. Being in agreement on these things is what is important here. A balance between protection and adventure is needed so your child can thrive and survive. What is important here is that the child sees mum and dad complement each other and be in agreement as much as possible.

**Here are some ideas to develop a relationship with a son as he enters boyhood:**

Take him on an overnight camping trip; sleep in the tent together and rough it.

Tell him your stories as a boy growing up.

Give him big hugs and tell him you love him no matter how old he is.

Teach him how to treat a lady, respectfully and kindly.

Give him your old wallet leave \$10 in it.

Tell him his muscles are big and brag out loud to his mum how big they are.

Make up your own handshake that you do together when you meet.

Read to him, take time to be with him just the two of you and show him what you know.

## *Do Males like eye to eye contact?*

Do you like direct eye contact yourself? Direct eye contact may come from moments of conflict from a parent, teacher or a bully who engages in a direct face to face contact. Eye to eye can come in time of intimacy and can be very pleasant. Some males like direct eye contact as it can reinforce their point of view. My point here is that you need to know the most effective way to communicate with your son. What works for you may not necessarily work for him.

Yet some may see it as disrespectful not to look someone in the face when you are talking. Maybe they don't feel adequate in front of that person. Some men and boys can be so distracted by what they see they do not retain what is being said. If they see an angry face they may react they will do one of three things: be aggressive back, run away, or freeze unable to move or think.

If your child or partner is talking to you I would suggest putting down the paper, look away from the computer or television. This will enable you to remain focused on what your family is trying to communicate to you.

**One effective way to engage a boy is side by side or shoulder to shoulder.** Some dads have said the best times they have had with their sons are in the car, fishing on the bank of the river or standing at the BBQ flipping snags. Doing something while talking to your son is important. Out in the shed making a model plane. If it is a joint task there will be a common interest and attention will be maintained.

**Boys and ants in their pants.** Most boys go through a moment in their life where they have more energy than they know what to do with. You may have noticed young boys at the supermarket hanging onto the trolley but they are fidgeting. Their feet are going left, right and centre doing a little dance and not much is staying still. Or they are swinging around a pole outside a shop or jumping off the seats along the footpath. We have all seen it; however you may have also seen a mum or dad growling at the boy. But it can get worse if the parent ridicules the child; I have heard things like, 'Stop being a clown, don't be such a bloody idiot.' You may have heard similar things. Often the young boy's reaction to this is complete surprise, am I an idiot? Is this what idiots do? Their self esteem can be seriously altered negatively when this occurs. Suggested reading S. Biddulph book on Raising boys.

Boys will jump about and fidget and do things that may seem embarrassing to you as the parent, but not to others watching. The thing to consider is this, is the boy really doing anything that warrants a scolding or is he doing something that is completely harmless and part of his development? Is he really hurting anything? Raising a confident healthy boy is more important than saving face in public.



## Raising girls

**Generally speaking, most girls desire to be told they are pretty by their fathers.** So when your daughter dresses up in a fairy outfit or as a little princess and spins around and asks, 'am I pretty daddy, am I pretty?' please be sure to answer her in the positive, 'yes you sure are'. Also girls can tend to desire for their father to watch them do a cart wheel or a somersault. So you may hear as your daughter grows up, 'watch me daddy, watch me'.

Second universal element that little girls want is to know their father notices them. Often it is the girls that will say, 'watch me daddy watch me', 'am I pretty daddy am I pretty?' the answer is yes! Whereas little boys are out in the back yard alone attempting the impossible jump on their bike and come back inside to be fixed up ready to go and try it all again. From Wild at Heart by John Eldredge 2001.

**Spending quality time with your little girl is very important.** Playing tea parties with dolls may become a common way of engaging with your little daughter. This may lead on to going to the movies or out for coffee when she grows older. Some dads take their daughters on a date and in doing so model how a male should treat her. He may open the car door for her, show her respect, comment on how pretty she looks and, whether it is a meal or just a hot chocolate, engage in conversation and be interested in her life.

Knowing your daughters love language is important.

[www.5lovelanguages.com](http://www.5lovelanguages.com). Look up the web site and discover which one works for your child. Is it, '**words of affirmation, gifts, quality time, touch or acts of service?**'

Having a positive relationship with your daughter, that includes encouraging that she can achieve anything she puts her mind to, is vitally important. She will hang on the very words you say and if they are positive she will shine. If they are negative, then the opposite will likely occur.

Treating her with respect will build in her a self dignity that will monitor what she will expect from other guys. If she is used to feeling proud about herself and has high level of dignity she chooses her male friends that treat her the same way.

**Here are some suggestions that could build a strong relationship with your daughter:** Learn the names of her dolls, when she is playing ask if you could join in. Have a photo of her in your wallet, when she is in earshot when answering the phone say, "This is \_\_\_\_\_, the proud dad of the most beautiful daughter in the world." Plant a flower garden together, take her out on a date at a café and have some hot chocolate together, attend her school plays that she is a part of. These are taken from Family Life.

© 2003 <http://www.familylife.org.nz>



### Some good reading about raising daughter:

*Strong Fathers-strong daughters-10 secrets every Father should know*  
Dr Meg Meeker [www.strongfathersbook.com](http://www.strongfathersbook.com)


**A dad is very important in a daughter's life** as he will teach her the qualities she will need to look for in her mate. Often a daughter will find a partner that is similar to her father. If you show her respect and believe the best in her she will find a male that continues to do this. On the negative side, if you constantly put her down and belittle her she is more likely to find a male that treats her like this. Heavy words, but as a relationship counsellor I have seen this time and time again in father – daughter relationships.

## The subject of parenting/discipline is huge

This booklet is not meant to turn into a parenting fest. But here is a tip. Praise or thank your children as you ask them to do chores. An example could be, 'I would like your help with the dishes son' Thank you for that, 'I really appreciate your help.' Even before they do the task you have thanked them. It can have surprising results. Don't react to them saying 'No' otherwise a full on argument may eventuate and a battle of wills is imminent. Allow a little time to pass. Sometimes a parent can ask a child to do a chore right in the middle of their favourite program. This will not work very well and a little common sense here will reap dividends. Give the child a gentle time warning for example, 'In 5 minutes I would like you to finish playing and pack up your toys ready for bed, thank you.'







I, 2, 3 magic parenting strategies highlight three stages of guiding a child to do a task and these are **'state, restate and don't negotiate.'** Engaging with a child in the reasons they don't want to do the thing you have asked of them can be futile and getting off track. The child may say, 'I'll do it later' and you know it will not happen or they may say, 'it's not fair, I always have to do this.' Check that your request is not unreasonable and if it is not go through the 1, 2, 3 principle.

### *An example*

A teenage son doesn't do the drying up before going to football training, the dad usually becomes angry at this. It was affecting his relationship with his son, because apart from the dishes they got on fine. The son wanted his dad to take him to football training. So the dad was able to say 'I will be glad to take you to football training when you have done the dishes', the son said 'the coach will get real mad if I am late'. The dad replied, 'I am sorry the coach will get really mad because you have not done the dishes'. Consequently the dishes were done and father and son went off to football practice. The issue of dishes has not been a problem since.

...three stages of guiding a child to do a task and these are **'state, restate and don't negotiate.'**

## *What does Time + Play = Relationship mean?*

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I realised early on that my greatest gift I could give my children was my time. I could choose to use my time either for myself or for my children.

I have had a formula that has served me well throughout my fatherhood and that is Time plus Play = Relationship. This has helped to shape who I am as a father. 'Time' is my greatest gift to my children. We all have 24 hours in a day no one has any extra time. It is what we do with this time that counts. I can choose to have that time for myself or give it to my children.

Play equates to doing something with your children that is age specific. Play could also be a Recreational activity. The way you engage and play with a new born is different to playing with a 5, 10, or 15, 20 year old son or daughter.

Equals a relationship means a relationship will be built while you are spending time with your child. Talking side by side, gardening in the veggie patch, playing with a train set, beach combing are all great ways to start conversations and get to know your child.

Ask them what's going in their life, how was their day? Tell them about your day that is suitable to their age. They don't need to know all the adult worries and concerns but tell them about your joys, success and even mistakes.

Being interested in your child's pursuits; getting to know their friends, attending their school events will help develop a strong relationship with your child.



Many new dads who attend the antenatal dad's classes along the North West Coast of Tasmania say, 'they want their children to be able to talk to them about anything' especially when they are teenagers. Two things come to mind when I hear this. Firstly, a relationship with your child starts early on in their life, it doesn't suddenly occur when they get older. Over a period of time from birth to puberty take consistent time together so each of you can get to know each other. Secondly, your child needs to trust you enough that they will share anything with you and respect you enough to take your advice which you most likely will give.

### *Men can usually focus on one thing at a time*

Most men cannot multitask like women. This is not a bad thing and is very useful if you have to concentrate on a job that needs your complete attention. However if you're watching the television, playing on the computer, reading the newspaper, it can be very difficult to engage in a conversation with your children or your partner.

You will most likely be unable to concentrate properly; your children might become frustrated with you and interpret this behaviour as not caring.

A word of advice put the paper you are reading down, look away from the television or computer, maintain eye contact with your child. You will show them that you care and this will go a long way to building a positive relationship with them.

### *Work-life-family balance*

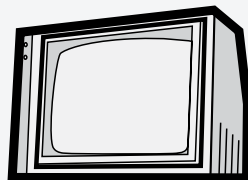
This is an interesting subject, as most men tend to throw themselves into work as they feel very driven to provide for their family. However, in doing this they may miss out on the family gems along the way. You as the dad might not have been there when your son kicked his first goal; hit his first six or when your daughter went for her first pony ride at the fete. This is not meant to be a guilt trip but is aimed to encourage you as a dad to have a balanced approach to life.

Some dads adjust their work life balance by coming home a little earlier so they can have tea with their family and put the kids to bed. In doing so they can stay connected with their family.

Give up a Saturday/Sunday and spend some time with the children. The more a dad gives of his time the more comfortable he is around his own children. Avoidance is not the way

Save the television time to when the children go to bed.

When you come home is the perfect time to play with the children.



to go here. Go fishing with your children. Take them on an outing to the beach or the park. This will help make most of the time you have off and build a better relationship with them.



Balance is the key – there may be financial pressures to take care of which cause you to work too much. However, working long hours can have serious negative effects on your family relationships which over time lead to increased stress and disconnectedness. Sometime a cheaper car will do and a moderate home that is within your budget can reduce substantial financial pressure and allow more time for what matters most to your family.

Dads will often set the mood in the family home. If you are always grumpy and tired then this is what your family will expect. The children's mother might say don't bother daddy because he has worked hard all day. I would encourage you to consider not giving 110% at work and saving some energy for your family.

When you are travelling home use this time to go from a work mind set to a family man, a dad, a husband. Try not take work past the doorway of your home if at all possible. I am not saying don't talk to your wife about it but don't let it consume you.

Often guys find it beneficial to get changed out of their work clothes and have a shower. This helps them refocus on the family needs and engage with the kids.

Sitting down relaxing in your arm chair when you come home from work may not be very helpful. Your child will probably want to play a game with you and if mum is preparing tea this can keep the little one out from under her feet. Offer to help get tea ready, allocate a task for your child to do to help assist as well.

Save the television time to when the children go to bed.

When you come home is the perfect time to play with the children. They will be excited to see you especially when they are young. This play time can occupy them if mum is cooking the tea.

Don't have a beer as soon as you come home! This might be a very un-Australian thing to say but many dads come home and the first thing they do is go to the fridge and crack a tinny. Hold off on this because straight after cracking the tinny you go and sit down in the lounge chair, kick off your shoes and switch on the television.

By avoiding the beer you will be more inspired to go outside and play a game with your children. While you're playing you can talk about how their day was.

Children love routine: Tea time, bath time, story time, bed time and then you can relax! Welcome to fatherhood at its best. You will enjoy it if you put your children's needs first.

## How do I keep the relationship side of things going?

Often when a bub comes along the relationship between you and your partner can drop. Most couples look forward to having a child and it is expected that the new family model will make them happier. Couples having their first born child need to remember not to neglect each other.

Have time just for you and your partner – these can be special times like a date or some quality time.

Keep doing the things you used to do as a couple. This may be regularly going out to dinner, visiting friends, or an activity that you both have regularly done together in the past – keep it up after the bub has arrived.

A lot of attention is directed to bubs and some dads can feel put out and even jealous by mums spending more time with bub and not with them.

Even the breasts are now the bubs and may not be for you!

Having three people in the house can feel very different when you are used to only yourself and your partner. I can't stress enough to allow time for just you and your partner so you can keep connected through this parenting journey.

### Understanding each other's love languages can be very helpful.

These are: Touch, Gifts, Words, Quality time and Acts of Service

<b>GIFTS</b>	Some people love receiving and giving gifts.
<b>TOUCH</b>	Some people love cuddles and human touch.
<b>QUALITY TIME</b>	Some people love spending quality time with the people they love.
<b>ACTS OF SERVICE</b>	Some people love doing acts of service for others. Things like odd jobs, cleaning the house, mending things, even going to work and bringing home the bacon to some dads is an act of service. <a href="http://www.5lovelanguages.com/">www.5lovelanguages.com/</a>

The question to ask is when do you and your partner most feel loved? Is it when there are nice words spoken? When you are holding hands or having a cuddle? Is it when you receive or give a gift? Is it when you set aside time to be with each other? Or is it when you have helped each other out cleaning up the yard or got on top of the house work?

Each person has a different love language. There might be one in particular that makes you or your partner feel loved or several that they like. The important thing to know is:



How do you fill your partners love tank? It is not meant to be guess work and unknown because if it is the relationship side of things might start to drop. Most couples find the first 18 months after their first child is born the most difficult on their relationship. This is due to not having a clue how each other's love tank is filled. During the honeymoon period of any relationship it is predictable that most of the five love languages may be met. Having a date together quality time, giving a gift like flowers, lots of cuddles, touch, kind loving words and the willingness to do chores for each other, acts of service. Yet most couples would not know exactly which of the five love language they are meeting in their partner.

Couples are more likely to separate within two years of the birth of their first child. (Taken from counselling and mediation figures from Centacare North West coast of Tasmania 2006-2012) There can be a number of reasons that this relationship dynamics between mum and dad start to shift in a negative sense. Babies are a lot of work and so the relationship side of things tends not take such a priority.

Some mothers can say; 'the baby is my first priority now' my partner takes second place. Dads who find themselves in this position can often start to feel resentment and start to disengage from mum and the baby. He can start to throw himself into work or being with his mates or seek some extra marital affair. I would strongly advise you to not do this. It only makes the matter worse. Work through any issues you may have and talk openly with your partner about them. You might say, yeah right as if she will listen! I have often found that the female could be thinking the very same thing that, you don't listen or seemed to understand. If this doesn't work seek professional counselling. Your relationship and your sanity are worth protecting.

**It is important to realise that the new baby will change your life and the relationship you have with your partner.** It can be a big mind shift for men. Some guys think they can still live a single man's life when bub comes along. Often mothers embrace motherhood first. However the guy can still be out all hours of the night with the boys. Some women start to think they have another child in the house. To avoid all this I strongly encourage you as the dad to take up your role as a father and a husband. Women want this desperately in their men, so it is up to you whether you're up for the challenge should you choose to accept it.



There is another human being in the house, it is not just the two of you anymore. This is the time that men shift the most, realising that they are moving into a new and exciting world called fatherhood. This world has new possibilities, adventures and self-sacrifices all in the name of a little person who you helped to create. More change will occur to men becoming fathers than any other activity a male might set his mind to do. It will change him more than climbing Mt. Everest.

You think stepping foot on the moon was significant for mankind. We all know what Neil Armstrong said, 'One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind' May I reword this quote and direct it towards fathers who have completed the wonderful joys of getting her pregnant. It could read:

**'One small sexual act for man one giant leap into fatherhood!'**



