

The Impact of Fathers on Child Well-being

Mother/Father Relationships

- A father who has a good relationship with the mother of their children is more likely to be involved and to spend time with their children and to have children who are psychologically and emotionally healthier.
- A mother who feels affirmed by her children's father and who enjoys the benefits of a happy relationship is more likely to be a better mother.
- The quality of the relationship affects the parenting behavior of both parents. They are more responsive, affectionate, and confident with their infants; more self-controlled in dealing with defiant toddlers; and better confidants for teenagers seeking advice and emotional support.
- Fathers who treat the mothers of their children with respect and deal with conflict within the relationship in an adult and appropriate manner are more likely to have boys who understand how they are to treat women and who are less likely to act in an aggressive fashion toward females.
- Girls with involved, respectful fathers see how they should expect men to treat them and are less likely to become involved in violent or unhealthy relationships.
 - Lamb, (2002); Cummings & O'Reilly, (1997); Gable, Crnic, & Belsky, J. (1994).

Cognitive Ability and Educational Success

- Children with involved, caring fathers have better educational outcomes. A number of studies suggest that fathers who are involved, nurturing, and playful with their infants have children with higher IQs, as well as better linguistic and cognitive capacities.
- Toddlers with involved fathers go on to start school with higher levels of academic readiness. They are more patient and can handle the stresses and frustrations associated with schooling more readily than children with less involved fathers.
- Numerous studies find that an active and nurturing style of fathering is associated with better verbal skills, intellectual functioning, and academic achievement among adolescents.
 - Pruett, K. (2000), Sternberg, K. J. (1997), Goldstine, (1982).

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Psychological Well-being and Social Behavior

- Even from birth, children who have an involved father are more likely to be emotionally secure, be confident to explore their surroundings, and, as they grow older, have better social connections with peers.
- Infants who receive high levels of affection from their fathers are more securely attached; that is, they can explore their environment comfortably when a parent is nearby and can readily accept comfort from their parent after a brief separation.
- The way fathers play with their children also has an important impact on a child's emotional and social development. Fathers spend a much higher percentage of their one-on-one interaction with infants and preschoolers in stimulating, playful activity than do mothers. From these interactions, children learn how to regulate their feelings and behavior. Roughhousing with dad, for example, can teach children how to deal with aggressive impulses and physical contact without losing control of their emotions.
- Children with good relationships with their fathers were less likely to experience depression, to exhibit disruptive behavior, or to lie and were more likely to exhibit pro-social behavior.
- Children who live with their fathers are more likely to have good physical and emotional health, to achieve academically, and to avoid drugs, violence, and delinquent behavior.

“A caseworker who understands the important contributions fathers make to their children’s development and how to effectively involve fathers in the case planning process will find additional and valuable allies in the mission to create a permanent and safe environment for children.”

- Yeung, Duncan, & Hill, (2000); Horn (2003); Parke, (1996); Pruett, (2000); Lamb (2002); Mosley & Thompson, (1995); Horn & Sylvester (2002)