

What Dads Do



Sep 2013

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A fatherhood special by Dr Justin Coulson

Sep 2013

This Month...



Su 1	Ordinary Time 22 Exult the Humble Father's Day
Tu 3	St Gregory the Great
Su 8	Ordinary Time 23 The Cost of Discipleship The Birth of Mary
Mo 9	St Peter Claver
Su 15	Ordinary Time 24 Mercy Our Lady of Sorrows
Su 22	Ordinary Time 25 Honesty
Fr 27	St Vincent de Paul
Su 29	Ordinary Time 26 Heaven and Hell Archangels Micheal, Gabriel & Raphael

Father's Day is nearly here!

In Australia it is anyway. For many children - and lots of dads - this is a day of celebration. Homemade cards will reassure fathers that they are the best dad in the world. New socks and ties will be unwrapped, breakfast will be in bed (burnt and/or soggy), and extra hugs will be shared.



But not everyone will be celebrating. There are many homes where dad is not spoken of. Or perhaps he's not there. **About 17% of Australian children** are being raised in homes where dad doesn't live with them.

While the circumstances surrounding dad's departure are often complicated and emotive, our kids are rarely better off without their dads. And **their dads do better when they're with their kids**. Decades of research affirms that what good dads do (if they're around) is uniquely important and all too often ignored or missed



The Alpha Male Challenge

“ As our children have grown, Byron’s role of father has become more prominent and conspicuous. One of the dynamics that emerged is the ‘Alpha Male Challenge’. Our middle son declared an annual arm wrestle with his father at age 15. I watched in horror as the two of them grew red in the face with the exertion of trying to beat each other. Of course my protestations were ignored –it’s all part of the drama. Fortunately, the wrestle ended with Byron maintaining his Alpha Male title.

However, it was a different Byron walking into our home office a few minutes later nursing his arm and cursing about the acute pain. Right on cue I asked – “Are you an idiot? For goodness sake, let him win – you’re going to hurt yourself”. Wisely, he said. “I can’t. He’s not psychologically mature enough to beat me yet. And when he does, for it to mean anything it has to be a real conquest.” Wisdom of the father. I still don’t fully understand it, but I know when I’m outclassed in this area of parenting. Even for the girls he’s largely the one right now; which is a whole other story. Its not that I don’t matter, but right now it’s the fathers love that is having the greater impact on their formation. ”

Francine



Dr Brad Wilcox, director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia has co-edited a recent book, “Gender and Parenthood: Biological and Social Scientific Perspectives”, and points out that fathers provide unique and distinct experiences for their children that build resilience and wellbeing.



1. Fathers get physical

Dads generally play (and roughhouse) with their children in ways that mums and older siblings don't. They create excitement around physicality, but also predictability. They give their children (especially boys) opportunities to learn about masculinity without fear of being hurt - well not too much, and certainly not on purpose.

2. Fathers encourage risk

When it comes to their children, fathers are less risk-averse than mothers. They encourage their children to climb that tree, jump off that wall, or ride down that hill. They promote taking on challenges and push their children to be more independent. As a general rule, dads dislike cotton wool and bubble wrap around their kids.

3. Fathers protect

Fathers generally offer a physicality that children feel safe with. Their physical size, their strength, and their confidence or 'presence' gives children a secure base, a place to come back to and feel safe.

4. Fathers discipline

Research fairly consistently shows that dads are generally firmer with discipline than mums. They're also more consistent with discipline and limits.



Mums can do all of that too

While it's true that mums can play and roughhouse, encourage independence, protect, and discipline frequently and firmly, there seems to be something different about what dads do and how they do it. And it's these differences that appear to lead to important and positive outcomes for children, especially girls.

For example, recent research from the University of Bristol shows that, in a sample of over 5000 children, girls whose fathers were absent during their early childhood were more likely to become depressed in their teen years than girls whose fathers remained in the home. Other research indicates daddyless daughters are more likely to be sexually active at younger ages than their friends whose fathers are present.

Research also tells us that both boys and girls do better at school when fathers are present, and enjoy more social competence and success. The list goes on and on.



Kids need their dads

Many who are reading this are wonderful people who were raised without a father present. Many reading this are amazing mums, raising remarkable children without a father in the home. And most of us know great families who are doing it without dad.

But just because it can be done doesn't mean that father's don't count - or that we should tell fathers they are secondary in their children's lives. To the contrary, research tells us that our children need their fathers as much as ever before.

True, some dads need to step up, whether they live at home or are nowhere to be found. And yes, many people have tried and tried to make it work, but it hasn't.

According to the research, absent fathers can effect our children's wellbeing. But we all know cases where that hasn't happened, and children have thrived, regardless. We must make sure their absence doesn't annihilate our children's future.

But where possible, let's keep kids involved with their dads in positive and meaningful ways, because those children are far more likely to flourish. And dad will too.



What Your Child Needs from You: Creating a Connected Family

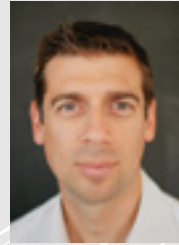
Dr Justin Coulson

A practical manual for creating a connected family, delivering concrete strategies to help parents build meaningful relationships with their children.

What your child needs from you outlines the methods through which parents can cultivate emotional availability with their children and so learn to really understand them.



Happy Families
inspired parenting



Dr Justin Coulson is a parenting expert and the author of *What Your Child Needs From You: Creating a Connected Family*

available from ACER press.

He is available for speaking engagements via his website.

Justin and his wife Kylie are the parents of 5 children.

About the Author

5 Ways to Love your Man

Francine & Byron Pirola

Men and women experience love in different and complementary ways. However, a woman will generally express love the way she experiences it, not the way her husband does. Most women primarily experience love through gestures of cherishment, while men experience love most powerfully through the medium of respect.

Here are five ways you can nail it in the love department for your man this Father's day (or any day of the year).



1. Cut the criticism

Nothing makes a man feel more disrespected and unappreciated than being criticized and put down, especially when it's in front of others. This applies also to the way we speak about our man when he's not present.

2. Avoid Nagging

Not only is nagging almost never effective in bringing about the desired reform, most men will dig in and resist all the more forcefully when they feel nagged. If you need a behavior change, make a respectful and unemotional request.

3. Express Admiration

Identify the virtues and strengths of your man and tell him! It's great for him to hear it, and it's good for you to remind yourself as it's all too easy to focus on what is lacking and overlook the many ways he gives without you even noticing because it is so constant.





Take Home Activity: Identify one of these behaviours that you do most poorly on... commit to redressing it as your personal father's day gift for your man. At the end of the day, he doesn't need more socks or undies nearly as much as he hungers for your respect.

4. Wait till asked

Whether it's driving the car, finding your way without a map or assembling the furniture without the instructions... butt out! Let him drive, navigate and create without your constant suggestions. You may think you are being helpful, but if he wants your help, he'll ask for it.

5. Give him the Benefit of the Doubt

It's common practice when we feel wounded by our husband to make assumptions about his motives; every little gesture and word is interpreted as proof of his mean-spiritedness, selfishness, carelessness etc. So when he does or says something that upsets you, suspend judgment and make a choice to assume loving, generous motives rather than negative ones.



Fathers Day!

Celebrate Father's Day with more than just the standard socks, undies and Old Spice. Here is a list of simple craft activities and recipes to mark this special day and thank Dad for all he gives to the family.

Mini Footy & Hole-in-One Savory Bites

Business Card mini Photo Album

Pope John XXIII's Prayer for Fathers

Spring has arrived

At least for us in the Southern Hemisphere. Now is the time to start emerging from the house and getting outside! Have a look at some of these ideas to add a faith twist to your outdoor activities:

Mary Garden- Build yourself a little grotto! No space is too small and watch your family's faith grow!

Fire- never underestimate the power of fire to open the conversation with your kids.



