



FACTSHEET

Resources for families

The difference a dad makes

Historically, dads have been more actively involved in their children's lives than many people believe – but the 1950s 'mum knows best' ideal remains fixed in our collective consciousness.

To suggest that dads' role is important is not to minimise mothers' vital input, but rather to redress the balance by looking at the evidence about what counts, from children's point of view.

Over recent decades researchers from a variety of academic disciplines have used a wide range of techniques and approaches to explore fathers' impact – and the overwhelming message is that children do best when they have a confident, hands-on father (or fathers, or father-figure/s) in their lives.

Here are ten key benefits, for children, of having a confident, hands-on dad:

1. Higher IQ
2. Better health outcomes
3. Fewer behaviour problems
4. Less emotional distress
5. More resilience to stress, less depression and fewer phobias
6. Less delinquent behaviour
7. Lower criminality and substance abuse
8. Greater capacity for empathy
9. Higher self-esteem and life-satisfaction
10. Non-traditional attitudes to earning and childcare

Studies suggest that children with 'good enough' dads are:

- More curious
- More open to strangers
- More trusting
- More resourceful
- Less impulsive
- Less aggressive
- More tolerant

They also have a greater internal locus of control (in other words, they believe more strongly that they can control the events that affect them), and more self-control.

Their social skills are enhanced, so for example they make better friendships with better-adjusted children, and as they grow older, forge healthier relationships with their peers (both as adolescents and adults).

And the benefits continue into adulthood. Once they've flown the nest, children who've grown up with positively involved fathers tend to enjoy:

- Greater economic success and occupational competence
- Access to greater financial resources
- More satisfying adult sexual partnerships
- More successful marriages.

Prepared by Jeremy Davies of the Fatherhood Institute

More resources for employers, service providers and families are available at: www.yearofthedad.org

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