

AS A FATHER... I'M INVOLVED

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**Booklet
on father
and mother
involvement**

**USEFUL FOR HER,
BUT DESIGNED
FOR HIM! :)**



THE FATHERS IN ACTION PROJECT

This booklet was produced as part of the Fathers in Action project. Bringing together 11 Family Community Organizations from five of Lanaudière's six RCMs, the goal of the Fathers in Action project is to foster recognition of the importance of the father's involvement in family life, as well as to develop activities and adapt services to meet the current needs of fathers. This booklet is part of a broader initiative to place greater value on fatherhood.

Father, fatherhood or male figure?

Father involvement is expressed through participation and concern for the well-being and physical, psychological and social development of the child. The paternal role can be played by a father, a grandfather, an older brother or any other significant male figure.

2

Perfect fathers, like perfect mothers, do not exist!

To be involved, a father does not need to meet all the criteria mentioned in this booklet. This document invites you to discover different aspects of a father's role and is not intended to define new standards for father involvement and presence.



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organismes communautaires
Famille de Lanaudière (TROCFL)
ISBN-978-2-9814402-1-1

Legal deposit: April 2015
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec
National Library of Canada



DIMENSIONS OF FATHER INVOLVMENT

DIMENSIONS

EXAMPLES

An interacting father

Plays hockey with his child, visits a museum with his child, talks about school with his child, shops with his child, helps his child get dressed, answers his child's questions.

A care-providing father

Feeds his child, bathes his child, takes his child to the doctor, offers support during difficult times, listens and gives advice.

A loving father

Provides security, helps his child develop good self-esteem, takes the time to communicate, listens to and talks to his child, smiles, holds his child in his arms, plays contact sports with his child (play fights).

A proactive father

Calls the babysitter, makes rules, updates the health booklet, concerns himself with his child's school success, attends report card meetings, gives advice in choosing a trade or profession.

A providing father

Provides for his family's needs, pays alimony, buys school supplies, supports his child in recreational activities.

An expressive father

Looks at pictures of his child, talks about his child, tell stories and shares memories, tries to find solutions to his child's problems.

A citizen father

Is an active member or an administrator of a father's committee in a Family Community Organization, volunteers at school, advocates for the well-being of families.

A teammate father

Considers the mother's opinion when making decisions, recognizes the strengths and values of the other parent, respects differences, avoids quarrels or contradicting the other parent in the presence of the child.

Note: These dimensions also apply to the mother.

Inspired from *Changing fathers, evolving practices* participant's guide.

5 MYTHS ABOUT FATHERHOOD

Dads have to be "men"

The patriarchal vision of the family belongs to another era. Today, men are fully involved in household chores. They are not ashamed to change a diaper or give a bottle.

Dads raise their children the way they were raised

Some fathers tend to reproduce their father's behaviour,, while other fathers develop a completely different approach to raising their child.

Dads don't suffer from postpartum depression

Sometimes fathers also suffer from depression following the birth of a child. The stress caused by a newborn's crying or colic, or the difference between what the father had expected (a rosy view of fatherhood) and reality can cause depression.

Dads don't know how to care for young children

Fathers, like mothers, can take care of young children. Everyone learns parenting as they go. If you spend time with your baby, you'll become sensitive to his or her needs.

Dads are always too busy

Society has changed and today women are as professionally active as men. A good division of tasks allows for a better work-family balance. Organizing your time is essential to having quality time with your family.

*Inspired from
Le Néo organization.*



PRENATAL INVOLVEMENT



I'm a father!

My wife just announced the news and I'm already asking myself "Where do I fit in?"

Prenatal classes, childbirth support services, and belly massages are just some of the ways you can demonstrate your desire to be involved with your baby. You can also take care of the mother and prepare the room with her.

Learn to touch the mother's belly and invite your baby to feel the comfort of your hand. Your baby already recognizes your voice and your touch. You can learn to play with and rock your little one, and develop a close relationship with him or her. You can also invite the baby's brothers and sisters to join in the fun.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Hearing is the fetus's most acute sense. Hearing develops between the 26th and the 28th week. Studies show that babies can remember sounds they heard frequently in the womb.



FATHER'S ROLE WITH CHILDREN 0 TO 2 YEARS OLD

DID YOU KNOW...?

Carrying your baby in your arms in different ways encourages your baby's development. Most mothers carry their baby facing them, which promotes a sense of safety and comfort, while fathers carry their baby facing forward, which favours exploration and openness to the world.

Sometimes these ways of carrying a baby are naturally reversed. What matters is that babies need comfort as much as exploration.



6

The first paternal activity is often feeding the baby or bathing the baby or changing the baby's diaper. This routine is essential to the child's basic needs. It is reassuring for the baby, but not always pleasant for the parent...

It's important that your children know they can always count on you when they are scared, worried or feel misunderstood. Trust and attachment can also be built slowly but surely by making funny faces, smiling, making funny sounds, singing songs and doing silly things together...

FATHER'S ROLE WITH CHILDREN 3 TO 7 YEARS OLD

Several activities can create precious moments with your child. This not only makes you available and accessible, but also present in your child's day-to-day life.

- Play in the sand with trucks.
- Build houses out of blocks.
- Go see your child's hockey game or attend your child's dance classes.
- Play horsey with a stick you found while on a walk in the forest.



Chances are, you'll get wrapped up in the game and, very possibly, have as much fun as your child, if not more!

Remember: quality over quantity!

When you write a note in your child's school notebook—such as, "Well done, sweetie, I'm so proud of you!"—you are concretely motivating your child and really showing them the place they occupy in your heart.

"Playing battle games allows the child to learn to control their aggressive emotions, to trust themselves in competitive situations, to take their place and to assert their rights in a socialized manner."

- Daniel Paquette, researcher,
Psychoeducation Department,
Université de Montréal



FATHER'S ROLE WITH CHILDREN 8 TO 11 YEARS OLD

Are you the type to strum the guitar? Involve your children, they'll be thrilled! Having a child allows you to get to know and discover new things about yourself.

The saying "don't cry, you're a guy" has long made men hide their emotions. Fortunately, more and more fathers are now allowing themselves to express their feelings.

An "I LOVE YOU" can also be conveyed with a wink or a smile. A tap on the shoulder is a sign of recognition. Play fighting also brings people closer together. These affectionate gestures will benefit your long-term relationship with your child.



FATHER'S ROLE WITH TEENAGERS 12 TO 17 YEARS OLD

Adolescence is a transition period that requires adaptation—for both the parent and the teenager. Here are some benchmark suggestions to help make this transition period smoother and to guide you on how to support your teen:

- Even at that age, family traditions are good for relationships (e.g., Sunday brunch, game night, etc.). However, they should not be imposed.
- A teenager needs stability, boundaries and fairness, so it's important to be consistent in your choices and rules.
- What you want is not necessarily what your teen wants. He or she will appreciate hearing anecdotes from your own youth.
- Nothing can replace the presence, attention and affection of a father (e.g., calls, texts, a "like" on social media).
- Just because your teen doesn't talk much, doesn't mean you should do the same. Communication is important. Lectures and interrogations can be an obstacle, just try to understand where they're coming from.
- Your teenager no longer sees the home as a nest, but rather as a home base where he or she can return regularly for reassurance and security.
- Above all, your teen wants a close bond with you, not a friendship.



FATHER'S ROLE WITH YOUNG ADULTS

Your child is now in the big leagues, but still needs your support.
You can:

- Show pride in their successes and the symbolic steps in their transition to adulthood (driver's licence, graduation, first car, etc.).
- Let them deal with their own paperwork, budget, administrative and medical appointments, while providing support and advice.
- If they still live at home, maintain your house and family rules. Your home is not a "4-star hotel." 🤨
- Trust their ability to make decisions. They won't always make perfect choices, but like us, they will learn from their mistakes.

One day you may be a grandparent and your child will, in turn, be inspired by the values they learned from you, by what you taught them, and the role you played in their life.

At this point, after the road you've travelled, you can safely say that there's no instruction manual for parenting.



CO-PARENTING

The word co-parenting means:

The father and mother sharing the rights, roles and responsibilities for their children.

Co-parenting is based on the fact that a child always has the right to maintain a relationship with both parents, even if they are separated or divorced.

Generally, three factors are required to establish a good co-parenting relationship:

- Sharing family responsibilities
- Respecting the other in his or her parenting role
- Adopting common values and attitudes about the child's education and socialization

At all times, the child has the freedom to express to one parent their love for the other parent.

Don't forget, difference can also mean complementarity.



CO-PARENTING CHARTER



Co-parenting Charter

- ★ Each parent believes the other parent always does his or her utmost to act in the best interests of their child.
- ★ Each parent believes that the other parent is always the best possible "babysitter" for the child if something unexpected comes up.
- ★ The parents consult each other on major issues concerning their child's guidance, education and health, and documents related to these matters are accessible to both parents.
- ★ The parents share in financially supporting their child according to their respective means.
- ★ Each parent reflects a positive image of the other parent to the child.
- ★ The parents engage in effective communication regarding their child.
- ★ The child always has the freedom to express to one parent their love for the other parent.



LETTER OF COMMITTMENT



*Because my child's well-being
matters to me,*

FATHER:

I hereby agree to be involved with my child, in person, on the phone, by text, etc.

I agree to partner with the mother of my child, in the interests of my child.

I recognize that one can be an ex-spouse, an ex-husband, but not an "ex-father."

I agree to let the mother of my child have HER space.

Father's signature: _____

MOTHER:

I hereby agree to be involved with my child, in person, on the phone, by text, etc.

I agree to partner with the father of my child, in the interests of my child.

I recognize that one can be an ex-spouse, an ex-wife, but not an "ex-mother."

I agree to let the father of my child have HIS space.

Mother's signature: _____



THE SPACE MOTHERS LEAVE TO FATHERS...

EVERYONE HAS THEIR STRENGTHS

Children need to feel they have their parents' full attention in order to discover themselves. But they also need boundaries (often established by the father) to figure out their own limits and to learn to take others into consideration. Children learn to discover their world, but also how to navigate other realities in order to survive and grow.

Since children need their father as much as their mother, each parent must give the other parent the space they deserve. Their role will take shape through the stages of family life and according to each person's values.

For example, the mother-child attachment mostly develops through the mother's caregiving role, while the father-child attachment mostly develops in a context of physical games. Let creativity be your guide!

14



Note that these parental roles can sometimes be reversed or combined in different ways.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2007, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially recognized that a father's attentive and constant presence gives the child better social, cognitive, academic and psychological adaptability, as well as better self-control.



Decisions about your child should be made together as much as possible. Remember, you're a team! Harmonious interactions will lead to greater success.

15



Teamwork! A key to success.



SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

At the table...



Diaper change...

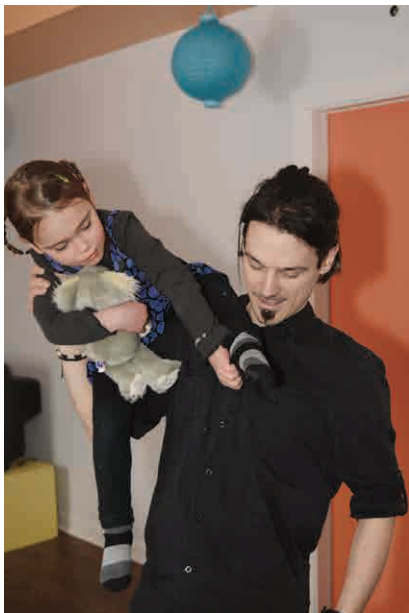


Note: Don't worry, no children were harmed during this photoshoot.



SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

Getting dressed...



17

What dad does...



What mom sees...



Caution: Don't try this at home. Actors were used in these photos.

TEST: ARE YOU A GOOD DAD?

MARTIN LAROCQUE, DAD 24/7

When you get to daycare to pick up your 3-year-old son, he welcomes you dressed up as a princess and says his name is now Lily.

- a) You leave with another child.
- b) You tell him you've always wanted a girl.
- c) You sign him up for hockey.
- d) You try to get the daycare closed down.



Your 2-year-old has a temper tantrum because he wants to have a bath in the toilet.

- a) You tell him the water is too cold.
- b) You plug the bottom of the toilet so that his feet won't get stuck.
- c) You distract him by telling him about the time his mom clogged the toilets in a restaurant.
- d) You tell him that if he takes a bath in the tub, you'll give him \$20.



For you, *Caillou* is:

- a) The French word for pebble.
- b) A playful swearword in French used in a Québec TV series.
- c) A children's hero that's making a lot of money for a multinational.
- d) A DVD character that allows you to cook dinner in peace.

Your child comes back from kindergarten using swearwords that you yourself would never use. You say:

- a) "As long as her mother doesn't hear it!"
- b) "As long as my mother doesn't hear it!"
- c) "As long as the neighbours don't hear it!"
- d) "As long as my buddies hear it!"



TEST: ARE YOU A GOOD DAD?

It's 3:22 a.m. and your child starts coughing uncontrollably.

- a) You play dead.
- b) You hope her mother gets up.
- c) You cough louder.
- d) You bring her to the emergency in pajamas to wait eight hours only to be told she has a cough.

The teacher calls home because your child has done something wrong. You say:

- a) "Honey, it's for you!"
- b) "Sorry, wrong number!"
- c) "His grandmother just died..."
- d) "He'll lose 10 minutes of TV."



Your child tells you he ate a piece of a worm.

- a) You tell him to brush his teeth really well.
- b) You don't serve him meat with his meal, telling him he's already had his protein.
- c) You reassure him by telling him the other half of the worm will survive thanks to a natural process.
- d) You challenge him to eat the rest.



RESULTS

Whether you answered a, b, c, or d to the above questions, it doesn't matter...

Your child's education is your responsibility. You do your best every day, every step of the way, and with every new discovery you make as a father.

IN DADS' WORDS

"My father had his own ways, but I have to create my own model of fatherhood based on the good I see around me." - *Francis*



"My children help me discover things about myself that I never knew..." - *Martin*

20



"Playing my role as father is difficult. For me, there's the culture, so I have no clear references. I didn't grow up in the same context as my children. So, it's the culture AND the difference between my father's role and mine that makes it difficult for me to find my feet as a father." - *Djibril*

"Since I've taken up my "position" as a father, alongside my wife, I've realized that I'm just as capable of taking care of my child. I just do things differently." - *Jérôme*

"What it takes to be a dad: love, education, responsibility... above all, love." - *Vincent*

IN KIDS' WORDS



"My dad fell asleep in the sun, he lost the lotion of time."

"Oh no, daddy, it's dark outside.
The time ran away!"



"WOW! Look at the big numb truck!"

"Dad, if you go too fast, the police will attest you."

Father: Mikael, it's time to go to bed!

Child: NO!

Father: Why not?

Child: I was there yesterday!!!



"Daddy, who was I as a baby, I can't remember??!?"



A FAMILY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION NEAR YOU...

22

Ateliers Éducatifs Les Petits Mousse	450 759-3327
Action Famille Lanoraie	450 887-2624
Action Famille Lavaltrie	450 586-0733
Association Carrefour Famille Montcalm	450 439-2669
Carrefour Familial des Moulins (Terrebonne)	450 492-1257
Cible Famille Brandon (St-Gabriel)	450 835-9094
Défi-Famille Matawinie (St-Jean-de-Matha)	450 886-0458
Joujouthèque Farfouille (Joliette)	450 752-2587
Maison de la Famille Aux quatre vents (Berthierville)	450 836-3770
Maison de la Famille la Parenthèse (Repentigny)	450 582-2677
Maison Parent-Aise (Joliette)	450 752-0582
Maison de Parents Matawinie Ouest (Rawdon)	450 834-5179
Marraines Coup de Pouce (Repentigny)	450 582-2677
Mouvement Organisé des Mères Solidaires M.O.M.S (Terrebonne)	450 961-9107
Parentants de Mascouche	450 474-6431

To find them on the Internet:
www.trocfl.org/repertoire/

**FATHER
APPROVED**



Other resources for fathers...

Maison Oxygène Joliette-Lanaudière	450 499-2617
Maison Oxygène L'Assomption	450 591-2617
<i>Temporary accommodation for fathers and their children and psychosocial follow-up for fathers in distress</i>	
Au cœur de l'il	1 800-567-8759
<i>Group approach for improving relationships with others and with oneself</i>	
Centre de ressources pour hommes du sud de Lanaudière	450 961-1241
<i>Listening, group discussions, collective kitchen, thematic workshops and seminars</i>	
Centre prévention suicide de Lanaudière	1 866-277-3553
<i>Telephone intervention during suicide crises and services for bereaved loved ones</i>	
English Community Organization of Lanaudière (ECOL)	450 834-2268
<i>ECOL offer the English-speaking population of the Lanaudière region a variety of programs and services that they otherwise may have difficulty accessing in their language.</i>	

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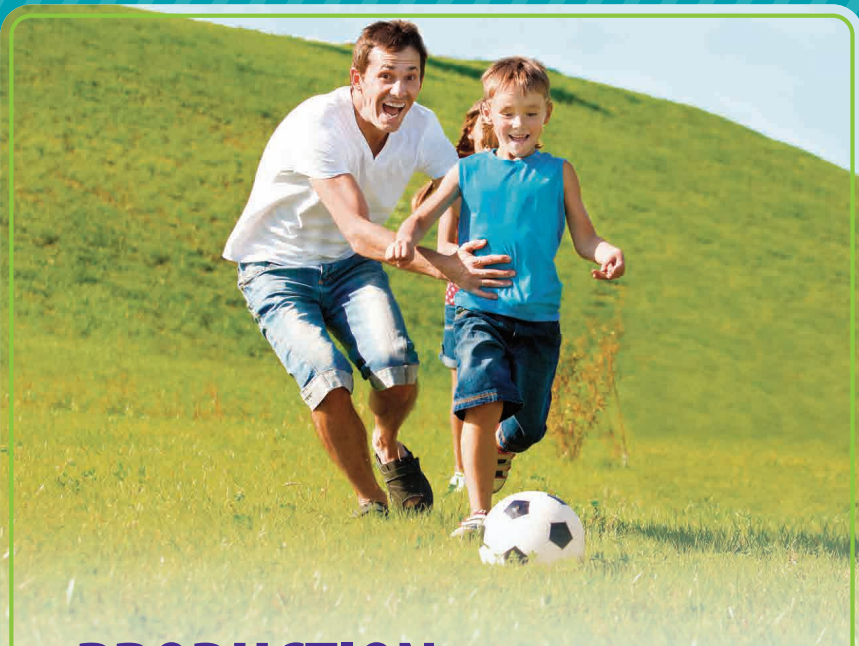
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**The fathers, mothers and children
in the photographs**

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Carolane Lejeune-Roy, photographer

Jenny Garguilo, graphic artist



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