Parenting as Partners: Engaging Dads

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Presentation objectives

• Highlight the important role that fathers can play in the lives of their children
• Identify barriers that may limit father’s involvement with their children
• Discuss specific strategies that medical professionals can use to engage fathers
Fathers are...

- Clueless
- Abusive
- Addicted
- Incarcerated
- Dictatorial
- Horny
- Immature
- Broke
- Selfish
- Expendable
- Disciplinarians
- Providers
- Playful
- Loving
- Nurturing
- Necessary
- Leaders
- Teachers
- Hopeful
Benefits for children

• Less impulsivity; greater tolerance for stress
• Enter school more patient, curious and confident
• Fewer behavior problems in boys
• Girls tend to be happier, more willing to try new things
• Greater empathy

Children’s Trust Fund
Benefits for mom

- Mothers feel more secure, patient and flexible when supported by partner
- Strongest predictor of breastfeeding is partner support
- Involved fathers improve economic status of family
- Healthy fathering honors motherhood
Benefits for dad

• Can learn to experience a wider range of emotions
• Develop greater empathy
• Develop expanded ability for caring and compassion
• Enjoy the benefits of a life long connection to children
• Experience greater health, income and satisfaction over span of life
Barriers to father involvement

- Busy staff doesn’t see fathers as a resource
- Takes longer to meet with dad
- “Baby Mama Drama”
- Mom says he’s not interested
- Involvement conflicts with dad’s work schedule
- Anxiety in staff and fathers
Father friendly environment

- Start with yourself
- Show empathy for men
- Engage men in informal positive conversation – acknowledge gender.
- Display images of fathers
- Address resistance from staff and mothers
Strategies to engage

• Ask about his life, hopes and fears
• Encourage his interaction
• Explain why he is important
• Suggest specific actions he can take
• Help fathers connect to other fathers
Sources


