MY DAD IS AWESOME

Being a Dad is the most important job you will do...

You’re a DAD FOR LIFE.

What sort of a Dad do you want to be?
Why do men think that their partners are much better at baby-handling skills such as changing nappies, bathing and settling them to sleep? Why do you think some people are better at playing the piano than others? Could it be just practice?

It’s time to get involved – no handballing when you can kick a goal yourself!

- Every man will handle a baby differently. And guess what? Those differences can result in an improved coordination for your baby, which can be beneficial in physical development and sporting skills. That’s right! You have an amazing and very positive effect on your child’s development.
- The different ways of handling a baby have a positive influence on brain development.
- AWESOME DADS get involved to develop a bond, a lasting bond, between father and child. Changing nappies may not appeal to you but it’s a great opportunity to develop a strong physical and emotional relationship with your child.
- Everyone loves a cuddle, and so do babies and children.
- Talk and sing to your baby – let them know you are there for them.
- After a few weeks, take your baby for a walk in the pram because the walk will also do you plenty of good too.

AWESOME DADS need to be prepared for hospital themselves?

- Camera
- Energy food and drinks
- Something to read
- Clean clothes, toothbrush, deodorant
- Coin for the snack bars
- A note book and pen
- Baby Capsule with anchor points securely fitted in the car
- Your positive words to help your partner

And that moment you may feel like a pressure cooker?

If you feel overwhelmed by the responsibility or you’re just knackered, talk to your partner, a friend, or a relative who has had children and knows exactly what you are talking about.

There’s plenty of help available.

Your local Maternal and Child Health Nurse also offers a free consultation to support you and your family. Dads are welcome to make an appointment to go alone, or with their partner and/or baby.
BABY ON THE BRAIN

You don’t have to know everything all the time. In fact, babies, children and parents learn from each other. The more we can understand about our children early, the more we can help them grow and develop.

Let’s explore a little Science...

The human brain takes time to develop. By birth, the brain has developed the main functions necessary to life – breathing, keeping your heartbeat steady, sucking, sleeping. The rest of the brain takes years to develop.

Knowing more about your child’s developing brain is a good way to understand how children think, feel and behave. Young children have limited ability to think and be reasoned with – they can’t link their feelings, thoughts and behaviour in their early years. The sections of the brain responsible for these areas are not ‘switched on’ in early childhood.

Understanding how children’s brains develop gives us insight into the questions parents often ask.... WHY?

✓ Why do they do that?
✓ Why don’t they listen?
✓ Why do I have to say the same thing over and over?

The developing brain

Genes and environment interact at every step of brain development but play very different roles. Genes are largely responsible for the ‘basic wiring plan’ of the brain. Experience is responsible for fine tuning and strengthening connections within the brain.

What type of experience are you going to provide for your child?

Our brains are continually changing in response to our life experience. Children’s brains are more impressionable or ‘elastic’ in the early years. However, the brain remains elastic throughout life, shaping and reshaping, as we continue to adapt to new experiences and learning. The brain is made up of many parts or regions that all do different things. Neurons are the ‘wires’ that connect the different areas of the brain. The number of connections and how they are organised influences how we make sense of our experiences, understand relationships, remember things and learn.

Different parts of the brain develop at different ages and in a set order. Thus different kinds of experiences are important at different ages to strengthen each part of the brain.

DADS HELP SHAPE A CHILD’S FUTURE

Young brains are very sensitive to experience. Early experiences and environments have a very strong influence on the development of children’s brains. Therefore dads and families help shape the biological structure of children’s brains.

Supportive, caring and consistent relationships between children and their parents are the key to healthy brain development. It is equally important to maintain a respectful, loving, and caring relationship with your significant other. Little people learn from you and imitate their learning for the rest of their lives.

So what can an AWESOME DAD do?

✓ Talk and read to your child from infancy.
✓ Provide lots of opportunities for repetition and practice as your child acquires new skills. This helps to strengthen connections in the brain.
✓ Play with children as much as you can.
✓ Encourage children to do physical activities, like tumbling, riding a bike, playing with a ball, jumping and running.
✓ Support children to be hopeful and optimistic.
✓ Establish consistent routines.
✓ Encourage and praise your child as they experiment with new experiences.

• By the 17th week of pregnancy, your unborn child already has 1 billion brain cells, more than an adult.
• At 7 months, your unborn child has 100 billion brain cells.
• At birth, the most complex parts of the brain are least developed, yet most affected by the environment that they live in.
• At your child’s first birthday, the brain has doubled in size and by the age of three, their brain is approximately 90% of the weight of an adult brain.
WHAT THE GOO, GAA AND WAAMAH MEANS...

UNDERSTANDING YOUR BABY’S COMMUNICATION

Baby slept well at the hospital but nobody told you that you’d be up all night once you got home and that it could last for months!

The main task of caring for a new baby is to make sure the baby’s needs are met. The needs of new babies are very basic: babies get hungry, tired and uncomfortable. Guess we all feel bit like that at times too, don’t we?

Some of the things that feel uncomfortable to a baby include:

- being too hot or too cold
- needing their nappy changed
- have a pain (earache, stomach ache), for older babies this can include toothache
- being frightened, lonely or bored
- not being well (perhaps a high temperature)

Babies have a range of ways to gain their parent’s attention and communicate their needs. AWESOME Dad’s learn, over time, what these signals are and how to respond. At the beginning, though, it is easy not to recognise the signals or misinterpret them. It takes a while for the babies’ signals to be decoded and understood. It might be like working on your tractor, a computer, or even rigging up a fishing rod for the first time. If there’s the will, there’s usually a way! Choose an AWESOME Dad’s way!

Make an appointment with your Maternal and Child Health Nurse to learn new baby settling techniques to help your family get some well deserved rest.

A loving and nurturing environment will help your child develop in the best way possible.
Baby Sleep Cycle Tip:

- Newborns in their first few weeks will show signs they are ready for sleep after 1 to 1.5 hours of wakefulness.
- Babies three to six months need sleep after 1.5 to 2.5 hours.
- Sleep improves at night when babies experience natural light during the day.
- Babies learn to settle themselves between four and six months.

Cry Babies..

Why Do Babies Cry?
Did You Cry as a Baby?

The main signal a baby uses to get attention is to cry. AWESOME Dads will soon learn to recognise that the baby uses different cries for different needs. Babies only cry when they need something.

Babies don’t cry to “annoy” or “get at” their parents. Babies can only feel, they cannot think, anticipate or manipulate. They don’t know how their crying affects others, they only know they need something and this is the only way they have to let someone know what they need. A baby cries to survive so a parent must respond to these signals.

As you learn more about your baby you realise that babies communicate through many other ways as well.

Watching a baby’s face can reveal many ways they communicate. Parents learn to read these and anticipate their needs before the baby needs to cry. Babies’ faces are very expressive, they are adept at creating “worry” lines above their nose, which in some babies can be the first indication of a nappy soon needing to be changed.

Babies’ mouths are also very expressive and babies will contort their lips and use their tongue to communicate.

As well as their faces, babies also use their hands, especially their fists, to indicate they need something. Parents learn to recognise the clenching of fists as a signal perhaps of discomfort, or impending hunger. Babies also use their whole bodies to alert parents to their needs, often arching their backs and kicking their legs.
MONKEY SEE, MONKEY DO

WHEN LITTLE THINGS GROW . . . LEARNED BEHAVIOURS

WORDS AND ACTIONS CAN HURT

The way we talk to and act with children influences how they feel about themselves. Our behavior often speaks louder than words.

What are you saying to your child?

The things we say to children act like a mirror, reflecting back to children ideas about who they are and what they will become.

Hurtful words can last a lifetime. As a parent you may sometimes do or say things to your child that goes against your better judgement. Generally children are strong enough that occasional hurtful or negative comments have no lasting impact.

However, the more often we communicate negative messages to children through our words and actions, the more they will come to believe them.

HOW DO WE RAISE HAPPY AND CONFIDENT KIDS?

Ways to tell children they are important

- Tell them often that you love them for who they are.
- Show them that you love them by spending time together, listening to them, giving them lots of hugs and smiles.
- Celebrate their achievements, no matter how small.
- Praise them for trying, no matter what the outcome.
- Keep special reminders of their successes and milestones.
- Let them help you do things.
- Let them know it is OK to make mistakes, it is all part of learning.
- Help them to build on their strengths.
- Ask their opinion on family matters. It shows you care about what they think.
- Help them to solve their own problems. Show them that you have faith in them.
- Make limits and expectations clear and consistent.
- Give feedback about inappropriate or unhelpful behaviour, but don’t criticise your child.
- Feedback should aim to teach, not hurt your child.
WHAT ABOUT DATE NIGHT?

Kisses for baby, kisses for Nan and Pop, kisses for the visitors ... any leftover for Dad? You’ve heard it before, “It’s a two way street, a partnership!

There will be times; you’re so exhausted, hungry, tired and irritable.

Here’s the news.... Your partner will be feeling exactly the same.

It’s going to be important to keep talking to one another and sleeping when the baby does no matter what time of the day. The washing may pile up and meals may not always be ready on time, it really doesn’t matter for the moment, you can both catch up on that later once your routines are established.

Date night is a great way to escape from it each week or fortnight...... consider a trip out to the movies, ordering takeaway and having a picnic in the park, a simple walk together, while a friend or relative watches the baby for a couple of hours.

HAVE I TOLD YOU LATELY THAT I LOVE YOU

✔ The things our parents say to us as children often stay with us forever.
✔ The things that you say to your partner also often stay with them forever.
✔ Children need to feel loved and accepted just for being themselves, not only when they do things well.
✔ Every child is unique.
✔ Individual differences in children should be encouraged and valued.
✔ Every child has his or her own contribution to make to family, friends and the community.
✔ Children need to feel good about themselves.
✔ Positive self esteem is feeling good about yourself, feeling that you are worthwhile.
✔ Self esteem gives children confidence and hope in their future. Children need to like themselves, to feel that they are important, capable and that they can achieve in their lives. Children with a healthy self esteem feel more confident about learning and trying new things.
✔ Put the hard yards in early and the love will last a lifetime!
WHEN A NAPPY HITS THE FAN!

Be an AWESOME DAD - your kids will love you for it.

Make an appointment with your local Maternal and Child Health Nurse

PICK UP THE PHONE

✓ Parentline 13 22 89
✓ MensLine Australia 1300 789 978
✓ Maternal & Child Health Line 13 22 29
✓ Upper Murray Family Care (02) 6051 7900
✓ Beyond Blue 1300 224 636
✓ Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia PANDA 1300 726 306

References:
www.raisingchildren.net.au

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