

## Honouring your parents; Celebrating Fathers

Written by admin

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 08:49 -

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Children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behaviour, and avoid high-risk behaviours including drug use, truancy, and criminal activity.

**"Train a child in the way which he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" Proverbs 22:6**

Father's day is a day for honouring fathers and is celebrated on the third Sunday of June in 52 of the world's countries and on other days elsewhere. The establishment of Father's day has taken long but is slowly taking root even in Kenya.

When the idea was first suggested in the US in the early 20th Century, it was often met with laughter because most people did not see fathers as caregivers. In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge recommended Father's day to various state governors noting that "the widespread observance of this occasion is calculated to establish more intimate relations between fathers and their children, and also to impress upon fathers the full measure of their obligations."

In many places in the world, fathers' involvement with their children has improved greatly with time. In the USA, single fathers now make up almost 20% of single parents living with their children; 32% of fathers regularly work evening or night shifts and are the primary source of care for their preschoolers during their children's mother's working hours; and there are about 150,000 "stay-at-home" dads, defined as married fathers with children under 15 years old who have remained out of the labour force for more than one year primarily so they can care for the family while their wives work outside the home.

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In Kenya also, fathers are increasingly getting involved with the care and upbringing of their children. Many are involved in keeping them clean, playing with them and teaching them how to do things. This builds a very strong long term bond that makes the child a well adjusted member of the community.

According to research findings, a loving and nurturing father improves outcomes for children, families and communities.

Recent research results show that fathers who live with their children are more likely to have a close, enduring relationship with their children. Other results show that children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behaviour, and avoid high-risk behaviours including drug use, truancy, and criminal activity. Other results show that children who live separately from their biological fathers are more likely to be poor, to use drugs, to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioural problems, to be victims of child abuse, and to engage in criminal behaviour than their peers who live with their married, biological (or adoptive) parents

One of the most important influences a father can have on his child is indirect—fathers influence their children in large part through the quality of their relationship with the mother of their children. A father who has a good relationship with the mother of their children is more likely to be involved to spend time with their children and to have children who are psychologically and emotionally healthier. Similarly, a mother who feels affirmed by her children's father and who enjoys the benefits of a happy relationship is more likely to be a better mother. As the popular saying goes,

**"The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother."**

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Indeed, the quality of the relationship affects the parenting behaviour of both parents. They are more responsive, affectionate, and confident with their infants; more self-controlled in dealing with defiant toddlers; and better confidants for teenagers seeking advice and emotional support.

One of the most important benefits of a positive relationship between mother and father is the behaviour it models for children. Fathers who treat the mothers of their children with respect and deal with conflict within the relationship in an adult and appropriate manner are more likely to have boys who understand how they are to treat women and who are less likely to act in an aggressive fashion toward females. Girls with involved, respectful fathers see how they should expect men to treat them and are less likely to become involved in violent or unhealthy relationships. In contrast, research has shown that husbands who display anger, show contempt for, or who stonewall their wives (i.e., "the silent treatment") are more likely to have children who are anxious, withdrawn, or antisocial.

Caring, involved fathers exist outside of marriage. They are more likely, however, to be found in the context of marriage. There are numerous reasons for this, not the least of which being the legal and social norms associated with marriage that connect a father to the family unit. Promoting and sustaining healthy marriages is therefore very important. This can be done through a variety of activities, including programs to teach couples marriage and relationship skills, and equipping both women and men to be responsible parents through skill-based parenting education.

All fathers can be important contributors to the well-being of their children. The government can encourage and promote father involvement (even when the parents do not live together) through its programs and policies. And everybody can support fathers, by encouraging those who take time to bond with their children and mother, and by changing the traditional attitude of what a real father is supposed to do.

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Appreciate your father on Father's day. and on every day.

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